

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Successful individuals and organizations worldwide have realized that there are many dimensions of creative and practical intelligence beyond the Intelligence Quotient (Cooper & Sawaf, 1997). New measurements focus on personal qualities, such as initiative, adaptability, persuasiveness and empathy. These are prime qualities needed in the work place today. Emotional Intelligence is the intelligent use of emotions. People intentionally make their emotions work for them by using them to guide their behavior and thinking in ways that enhance the results (Weisinger, 1998). It is the most important requirement for service providers. (Goleman, 1998). The best verbal communication skills are not enough to create and sustain successful relationships. Good relationships require the ability to communicate emotions without saying a word. Wordless communication conveyed through facial expressions, body language, pace, intensity and tone of voice captures and holds the attention of others and shows a powerful means for self expression. No part of nonverbal communication speaks louder than your emotions – and nothing can have greater influence over others. Emotional recognition and expression is the glue that creates and maintains connections in relationships. Awareness of, comfort with, and respect for your emotions makes you much more sensitive to other people's feelings.

The service rendered to passengers travelling by aircraft is one of the longest services compared to other means of transportation. With a limitation of numbers of cabin attendants compared to the large numbers of passengers on the aircraft: 1 crew for 35 passengers in economy class or 1 for 10 in Royal Business class or Royal First Class (In-flight service Department, Thai Airways International: 2008), and the time limit per passenger a crew has to attend, a lot of emotional control has to be used during the normal situation as well as the unexpected ones. The cabin attendant must have a certain amount of proficiency in communication skills in order to exceed the passengers' expectations.

To be able to improve the quality of service, it is necessary to study the state of emotional intelligence of service providers through their communications. Therefore, the researcher is interested in the pattern and degree of emotional

intelligence communication of cabin attendants of Thai Airways International (Public) Company Limited.

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Travel and Tourism Industry has an important part in the economy of Thailand. In 2005, the GDP was about US\$ 10,108 millions and estimated to climb up to US\$ 13,558 millions in 2006. The forecast annual growth rate is 4.9 % (World Travel & Tourism Council, TSA Research 2006). The airline industry is undeniably the largest element in the Travel and Tourism Economy.

Many departments are involved within airlines to make the aviation industry successful. These are: Reservations, Ground Services, Cargo, Engineering, Catering, Finance and In-flight Services, all of which play equally important parts. Playing a significant role in the airline business is the traveling element when passengers spend a considerable amount of time on board the airplane. The cabin attendants are the group of people who deal closely with the passengers. Therefore, the people who have influence over the passengers' perspective of the airline are the cabin attendants. It depends on whether the service rendered meets the needs and expectations of these passengers or not.

Thus, the in-flight service standard of the airlines is very competitive. It is an indication of which airline is better than its competitor. Good service depends on team work and cooperation among the cabin attendants. They must have good personality and be friendly (Akiyama, 1976).

Akiyama (1976) had emphasized the main responsibilities of the cabin attendants as follows:

1. Security and facilities throughout the route for passengers on board
2. Good communication, including useful information between cabin attendants and passengers

Emotional intelligence includes branches of behavioral, emotional and communication theories, Transaction Analysis and Empathy. By developing our emotional intelligence in these areas, we can become more productive and successful at what we do (Goleman, 1998).

When people communicate, they express their ideas and feelings in a way that are understandable to all of them. They attempt to share information with each other.

Dance (1970) stated that communication is a systemic process which individuals interact with, and through symbols to create and interpret meanings.

The cabin attendants at Thai Airways International are mainly Thai nationals (QV Yearly Report, 2006), with a small group of Chinese, Japanese and Korean nationals. Danai Thienput (2000) stated in his article, “Direction and Role of Human Resource Management in the 21st Century” that there are some specific characteristics in Thai individuals which inhibit the efficiency in developing core competencies to survive after the economic crisis era. Those competencies include customer focus, communications, teamwork, leadership, technical skills, flexibility and innovation. The following characteristics are examples:

First, Thai people do not always express their emotions accurately.

Second, Thai people always believe in the seniority system. This results in a lack of leadership and self awareness, as well as team work.

Third, Thai people have been raised in a patronage system for a very long time. Therefore, there is a tendency that they are prejudiced to others who come from different groups.

At the same time, Thai people have got several emotional qualities which are the fundamentals of emotional intelligence.

The training of cabin attendants at Thai Airways International aims at increasing the competency factors that are necessary for service, with the passengers in mind. To have cabin attendants who possess a high level of emotional intelligence communication is among the top priorities. All cabin attendants are expected to gain more social skills, social awareness, self awareness, self regulation and self motivation through their work experience and periodic trainings.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In order to apply the theory of Emotional Intelligence appropriately at Cabin Crew Training Department, it is necessary to find the answers to the following questions:

Main problem

Is there any difference in the state of Emotional Intelligence Communication between newly recruited and experienced cabin attendants?

Sub-problem

Does demographic background of the cabin attendants affect their emotional intelligence communication?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To compare the States of Emotional Intelligence Communication between the newly recruited and experienced THAI cabin attendants.
2. To study the relationship between the demographic background and the state of Emotional Intelligence Communication of THAI cabin attendants.

1.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The sample groups in this study are newly recruited cabin attendants who are undergoing their basic courses and experienced Cabin attendants who are studying their advanced courses. The questionnaires were distributed intentionally to the classes at the same time, without the name of the researcher. The research focused only on THAI cabin attendants who are studying at the training center. The service training methods, service strategies and management policies of each airline may be different. Thus, the result of this study should not be generalized with other airlines.

1.5 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is the ability to sense, understand and effectively apply the power and acumen of emotion as a source of human energy, information, connection and influence. Human emotions are the domain of core feelings, instinct and emotional sensations. When trusted and respected, emotional intelligence provides a deeper, more understanding of oneself and the people around us (Cooper & Sawaf, 1997).

Emotional Intelligence Communication is the emotional expression that affects the behaviors and manners of cabin attendants in providing service to passengers.

Newly Recruited Cabin Attendants are young men and women from different educational and social background who have passed the selection process of Thai Airways International to be the new cabin attendants after completing the basic training programs at Cabin Crew Training Center. Some of them may never have any experience in service business before. They will work only in Economy Class on the aircraft.

Experienced Cabin Attendants are the group of cabin attendants of Thai Airways International who have been working for more than 3 years. They provide service to passengers in Royal Executive Class and Royal First Class after completing the advanced training programs at Cabin Crew Training Center.

R.E.C. is Royal Executive Class, refers to cabin attendants who are attending the advanced course to work in Business Class on the aircraft. This group has at least 3 years of working experience in Economy Class.

Handling relationship is the art or skill in managing emotions in others. They are the abilities that enhance the popularity, leadership and interpersonal effectiveness. People who excel in these skills can interact easily with others.

Interpersonal Intelligence is the ability to understand other people; how they work, how to work with them cooperatively, what motivates them. Successful personnel are likely to be individuals with a high degree of interpersonal intelligence.

Intrapersonal Intelligence is the ability to form an accurate, truthful model of oneself and to be able to use it to operate effectively in life.

Knowing one's emotion is the degree that a person is able to notice one's feelings, knowing them and connecting to the sources.

Managing emotions is the handling of one's feelings in such a way that they are appropriate and are abilities that are built on self-awareness.

Motivating oneself is organizing and using one's emotions to create a positive feeling or productivity.

Recognizing emotions in others is the ability to understand feelings of other people in different situations.

Empathy is the ability to understand how others feel as if it happened to oneself.

EI communication is the term using to refer to Emotional Intelligence communication.

THAI is the term using to refer to Thai Airways International (Public) Co.Ltd.

1.6 VARIABLES

1. The study's independent variables are demographic backgrounds of newly recruited and experienced cabin attendants at Thai Airways International (Public) Company Limited.

2. The dependent variable is the emotional intelligence communication of the newly recruited and experienced cabin attendants at Thai Airways International (Public) Company Limited.

1.7 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

1. Newly recruited and experienced cabin attendants at Thai Airways International (Public) Company Limited have different level of emotional intelligence communication

2. Demographic backgrounds have impacts on the emotional intelligence communication.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The results of the study should significantly be able to:

1. acknowledge the importance of the State of Emotional Intelligence of THAI cabin attendants.
2. help in improving and developing the communication styles of THAI cabin attendants.
3. provide a database for Cabin Crew Training Department to develop training strategies.

1.9 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter One is an introduction of the study, providing the ideas of the research. Chapter Two examines theories and findings from previous researches about emotional intelligence communication. These two chapters are the foundation for the research.

Chapter Three will explain the subjects of the study, the instruments used in gathering the information, the procedures in collecting the information and data analysis.

Chapter Four will be the results of the questionnaires used in collecting the information. They will be short descriptions derived from the data analysis accompanied by tables and charts.

The final chapter, Chapter Five will be the discussion of the research findings. It will include the conclusion of the research as well as suggestions for the further study.

1.10 FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

