

Box 317  
Belmont, California  
March 23, 1947

Dear Mr. Carter:

In an effort to stimulate more realism in airline public relations practices, the magazine "Air Transport" has reprinted several hundred copies of the attached analysis and is currently distributing them to key management officials in the industry.

I think you may be interested in having a copy, especially since this survey is supposed to be the first of its kind -- certainly the first that has attempted to assist airline policy-makers to re-analyze the efficacy of current practices and assumptions about how to get along with the public.

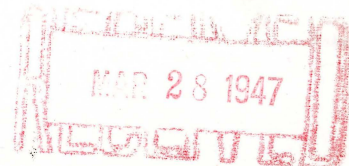
With all good wishes,

Sincerely yours,

*George P. Saunders*  
George P. Saunders

Mr. Amon G. Carter, Director  
American Airlines, Inc.,  
Fort Worth Star-Telegram  
Fort Worth, Texas

Enc.: 1 reprint  
"The Airlines...And the Public"





# The Airlines . . . And the Public

By George P. Saunders

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**Airline managements, as well as airline public relations staffs, are currently pressing for better service and improved relations with the public. Some of the basic issues involved, and suggestions for constructive action, are outlined here by a public relations executive who views the matter from the industry's standpoint and from the public's too. For a "quick fix," try out the check-chart presented below.**

## TEST OF AN AIRLINE'S "PUBLIC RELATIONS I.Q."

For a rough idea of an airline's public relations insight and ability, check "yes" or "no" after the following 15 questions. The answers will not only show how a line rates generally but will also indicate danger spots where organization, technical knowledge, and day-to-day performance may be weak.

1. Company naturally keeps monthly tab on miles flown, load factors, etc.—but does it also have an objective method for accurately charting rise and fall of passenger satisfaction regarding various aspects of the service?..... Yes  No

2. Selling the regular and repeat flyers is as important as selling general public through ads, publicity, etc. Does company know what percentage of deplaning passengers are "sold" and what percentage are "unsold"—and for what reasons?..... Yes  No

3. Company never meets public, except through its individual employees. Does company actually handle its employee relations program as an essential part of its public relations program?..... Yes  No

4. Is company equally as careful to explain unavoidable deficiencies in service to its passengers as it is to publicize favorable selling points? ..... Yes  No

5. Are operating and administrative departments required to "clear" new policies and procedures in advance with a ranking public relations official to make sure that they will not inadvertently cause hostility on part of passengers and the general public?..... Yes  No

6. Are fewer passenger complaints received now than six months ago? ..... Yes  No

7. Does company have an effective employee suggestion plan through which ideas about improving service are regularly channeled from firing-line for top level consideration and action?..... Yes  No

8. Company expects its public relations personnel to handle advertising, news-stories, etc. Does it also expect public relations staff to find out what public dislikes about company, and recom-

mend action to reduce friction and misunderstanding?..... Yes  No

9. Does company's personnel training-program include effective indoctrination on how each particular employee stands to benefit from "keeping public on our side"?..... Yes  No

10. At least every six months, does company survey a cross-section of all employees to find out how well satisfied they are with company, its publications, its policies, and its service?..... Yes  No

11. Does company insist that new measures to please public must be followed up by passenger-opinion tests to measure success or failure? ..... Yes  No

12. Prior to publication, does company regularly pre-test advertisements, brochures, flight-kit materials, and like, to find out if they are both understood and liked by public?..... Yes  No

13. Does company take aggressive action to eliminate poor service by "outside people"—redcaps, operators of airport restaurants, airport taxicab and limousine services, etc? ..... Yes  No

14. Does "head man" in company spend at least 50% of his time discovering and trying to correct sources of dissatisfaction among his customers? ..... Yes  No

15. Has this top man made a personal inspection of company's operation in major cities on system within past six months?..... Yes  No

If airline you have in mind rates 13, 14, or 15 "yes" answers, go right out and buy some more stock! If line rates from 9 to 12 "yes" answers, it is still well on road to having an up-to-date understanding of how to operate an effective public relations and employee relations program. If "yes" answers range from 5 to 8, airline is not more than 15 yr. behind times, from a public relations standpoint. If outfit rates less than 5 "yes" answers, things are really in a bad way. Generally, companies with less than 9 "yes" answers are likely to run into an abnormally high rate of employee turnover, and also face a tough time in carrying on their passenger business, while being wide open to a beating from their competitors.



# The Airlines...And the Public

By George P. Saunders

**A**T A TIME like this, when airlines are caught in the middle of difficult postwar adjustments and when numerous public attacks are being made on their "efficiency," there are two possible approaches to the subject of airline public relations.

One approach to airline public relations—certainly the safest—would be to dismiss all the charges of "backwardness" as unfair and biased. Taking off from there, a palatable case could be made to show that airlines are really pretty good—improving themselves rapidly under great disadvantages, and quite able to win their way back into unanimous public approval without learning anything new or re-analyzing the rpm. of their public relations machinery.

The other approach—certainly less attractive, but far more likely to provoke the kind of constructive thinking and discussion which is needed in a period of change such as the present—is to get right down to brass tacks and admit that *something* must be wrong, otherwise an industry which is doing such a swell job under great difficulties would not find itself at the present time being widely manhandled by writers and the public at large.

Just for the sake of argument, let's take the line of "constructive criticism." Let's back track a bit and re-survey some of the things that may be wrong with airlines from the standpoint of public relations insight, organization, and methods.

First, a few reminders—mostly to the effect that airlines are very young organizations. Nobody in the business, or

outside it, should really expect us to have reached full maturity in our mastery of management techniques, administrative techniques, or public relations techniques. We've been, during our short history, far too busy *surviving* and *growing* to be able now to boast all the expensively-acquired wisdom which some other segments of industry have finally achieved after many years of trial and error.

Until quite recently, airlines never *had*, in a very real sense, the kind of "public relations problems" which the more established industries take for granted. Until shortly before the war, keeping customers *happy* was a problem far secondary to *getting* customers.

In air transport, therefore, public relations came to be thought of largely as salesmanship plus having a pretty stewardess to keep the clientele comfortable and not too scared. Aviation was young, bustling, glamorous—press and public alike were "all for it." Everything an airline did was "news." And every fresh, friendly touch that was tacked onto the glamour of flying—like free meals, cute gals, personal attention to the small numbers of heaven-sent passengers—all this was welcomed with loud cheers.

It was all just dandy . . . but isn't it barely possible that this "Cinderella background" of the industry has done something to hold up the mature development of the industry's "public relations I.Q."? Isn't it just possible that this combination of circumstances—plus low-income levels due to small-volume business—has conspired, finally, to plunge us into a situation

where, suddenly flooded with more passengers than anyone could either handle or keep happy, all of the airlines now find on their doorstep, overnight, a very *real* public relations problem which is *novel* to them, which they have not yet fully *recognized*, and which is going to require a "re-tooling" of mental habits and organizational setups before it can be met and licked?

It certainly won't hurt any of us to explore some of these possibilities, frankly and openly—going right back to fundamentals and drawing as fully as possible on the most expert thinking and experience that has been developed in the public relations field by the airlines themselves (and sometimes quickly forgotten again), as well as by American industry as a whole.

Let's begin the hell-raising by playing one of those infuriating "test yourself" games. This one might be called "Test of an Airline's Public Relations I.Q." Of course, you can apply this quiz against somebody else's airline in case you have ulcers or high-blood pressure. Anyhow, check off "yes" or "no" after the 15 questions which appear on the cover. Be objective. Give the company the benefit of the doubt if you're not sure of an answer. Then size up the results.

The sad fact is that, at the present time, very few airlines emerge with unruffled feathers from such an objective analysis of the *realism* with which they approach matters involving public relations.

There's no reason to be annoyed by it—and certainly no reason to be dis-



couraged. As pointed out previously, nobody worries much about a problem until he has one. The airlines, with their proven flexibility and intelligence, are certainly going to bring public relations approaches up to scratch in short order, now that their attention has been publicly directed to widespread misunderstandings and criticisms. They are also, unquestionably, going to re-analyze the vital connection between sympathetic employees and good service—which will, among other things, cause them to recognize that employee relations, instead of being a vague function to be handled as a routine part of personnel administration, is really a vital part of the overall public relations program, requiring as much top-level attention as any other aspect of the company's p.r. activities.

There is no better place to start this re-analysis than by briefly re-stating the real objectives of a company's public relations program.

The top-man in an airline, if he knows what he's doing, uses his public relations program as a practical substitute for one of those fairy godmothers who used to come in so handy. His "wishes" run something like this:

- 1. Give us increasing numbers of people who want to fly and want to ship cargo and mail on our planes.**
- 2. Give us a reputation for safety, speed, comfort, courtesy, efficiency, economy, and a sincere interest in serving the public.**
- 3. Give us a reputation for contributing to the welfare and progress of our employees, our industry, our service area, our country, and commercial relations with other nations.**
- 4. Give us enlightenment among local, state, and national officials, backed up by an informed public opinion concerning the benefits which air transport—as represented in part by our company—can bestow if proper conditions are provided for our industry's full development.**

These are the targets. They can be hit. Airlines have hit them, to a remarkable extent in the past—partly by luck, partly by shrewd intelligence, partly because circumstances lent plenty of help.

But they're getting harder to hit all the time, now that airlines are "big business" instead of glamorous, strug-

gling novelties that just automatically inspire the sympathy of government, press, and public alike.

Bluntly, the targets can no longer be hit by just blazing away. From now on, they can only be hit consistently by careful aiming, careful thinking, specialized planning, and conscientious performance in the public relations field. The time has come—is, in fact, overdue—for airlines to re-gear their thinking and their public relations activities to get a scientific, businesslike basis in relation to the new-found problems that go hand in hand with bigger operations and volume-traffic.

While we still have a chance to gain maximum benefits, let's be sure we really understand what public relations, in the modern sense, is all about. Let's be sure we know what has to be done in order to get along with our customers and not find ourselves periodically taken aback when an unexpected backlash of resentment breaks out. Let's be sure we know what our methods and organizational setups need to be like in order to get results. Let's be sure, in short, that we not only try to *run good airlines*, but that we know how to make sure that the public *knows* we are running the *best* airlines that *can* be run, at any given time.

### Nature of the Beast

Stated in airline terms, the most important single principle of scientific public relations is this: *It means exactly what it says.* It includes *all* of the airline's *contacts* with the public and—equally important—*all* of the public's *reactions* to the airline.

A problem understood is already half solved—but the painful fact is that few airline managements seem to have "thought through" what actually is concealed under those two innocent and long-suffering words, "public relations." Otherwise, airline p.r. activities would already be set up and staffed in far different fashion than is now actually the case—and it is safe to say that, as a result, the level of p. r. performance would be measurably higher and there would exist considerably more public sympathy and understanding of airlines and their problems.

On the basis of this definition, three approaches should stand out: First, to tell the company's story, through such things as radio, movies, advertisements, pamphlets, and press write-ups that are

good enough to get published. Secondly, to make sure that the traffic, administrative, and operating departments are not, by oversight or inadvertence, performing in such a way as to alienate actual or potential customers. Third, to make sure that the company's policies and methods are such that they will definitely help to create esteem among actual and potential customers.

A public relations program must go far beyond the use of publicity, advertising, and other informational methods for reaching the public. Press write-ups, advertising, and other "story-telling" activities are a necessary part—but *only* a part—of public relations. The "part" can in no way be made to substitute for the "whole"—a mistake that is all too frequently made in actual practice. What a company *does*, and *how*, will always be more important than what it *says*. Scientific public relations has merely re-discovered the trite maxim that "actions speak louder than words."

An airline's administrative and operating departments are properly pre-occupied full-time with the process of running an airline. They know their business—and they are fulfilling the first prerequisite for all public relations success when they run an efficient airline. But they cannot be expected to have the inclination, the time, or the training to keep constantly abreast in order to know how the public feels and what the public wants. The unhappy fact is that an airline can be, from an operating standpoint, efficient—and still not be in all important respects *well-known* to the public or *well-liked* by the public.

The highly technical function of the airline's public relations staff is to bridge the psychological gap between the company and the public—a job which involves not only "telling the company's story," but also keeping tabs on the public's reactions and suggesting improvements which will make the public satisfied with the things the company says and the way it does its job.

### Like Charity, It Begins at Home

The "self-improvement" aspects of an airline's public relations program are so important—and often so inadequately applied—as to merit special emphasis.

The cornerstone has to be an enlightened management. There is no



question that an airline or other company can achieve no greater public relations effectiveness than the top man permits. This is true because only the top management of the company can answer the questions, "How shall we define public relations?" and, "How shall we organize and administer our public relations program?"

Compared with the more established American industries, airlines are in many cases way behind the parade in this respect. In the past turmoil of rapid development, every line wrote its own ticket, insofar as defining the scope and organization of public relations was concerned.

Things are different now. Times have changed. The need for a responsible, skilled public relations approach is the most apparent thing in the world.

As the postwar shakedown period gathers momentum, it seems safe to predict that future improvements will be marked by a steady trend to vest public relations responsibility in a specialized staff headed by one ranking executive *reporting directly to the head of the airline*. The top public relations executive—selected as a specialist just as a lawyer or engineer would be—will participate in all policy-making activities of the company and will maintain the closest consulting relationship with other ranking executives in traffic, operations, and administrative departments.

Rescued from ineffectual oblivion in a dozen isolated corners of the company, public relations personnel of various types will be grouped together functionally under the top P.R.O., where teamwork can be enforced among them and their combined impact will provide the company's management with the kind of objective, specialized public relations guidance that every airline needs. The chart on page 7 shows, in a functional flow-diagram, what the mature airline setup will probably look like if trends in other industries are duplicated in our own.

Management will then know what its public relations problems are, just as accurately as it now knows the load-factors. The top man in the company will be able to initiate all possible action to improve bad situations that are spotted on a week-to-week basis by the public relations staff. Unnecessary public resentment will not so frequently

be caused by inadvertent actions by operating segments of the company, because "public relations clearance" will be automatically enforced—with advance testing of public opinion whenever there is a doubt. Bad situations that can be corrected will continue to be effectively publicized as service improvements; but, at the same time, bad situations that can't be corrected will be faced, too—and explained to passengers *before* a backlash of resentment can build up.

The top man in an airline will then have some sound reason for believing that he has the human factor under control. Public relations will then be serving its real function: To assist management to operate a *more efficient* airline, as well as to win and hold customers.

But who are these public relations geniuses who are going to "know all the answers"?

Actually, nobody's going to know, just out of thin air—and, what's even better, nobody's going to have to pretend to. But the public relations staff of an airline is definitely going to *know how to find out*.

#### Ask the Public!

The answer lies in public opinion polling—sampling, as the boys with the thick spectacles call it. That's what is going to provide answers, where no answers grow today. In the confusing wilderness of human nature and debatable opinions, where so much of airline public relations has floundered in the past, opinion testing is the only reliable compass that can serve to steer an airline's P. R. program toward a continuous understanding with passengers, the public at large, and also the hundreds of employees who, in the final analysis, make or break the company from a public-contact standpoint.

There's nothing new about it. Some airlines have now begun to graduate into long pants and are already using the "asking" technique on occasion, though timidly and apparently without full realization that it should be a *standard* tool, not an occasional adventure undertaken more or less to see what will happen. This testing is one of the really important moves in making an airline's program realistic. There is no question that the testing technique will soon be applied by airlines to every aspect of the public relations program, as well as to the important

passenger-handling activities and operating procedures which involve contact with the public.

A word to the unwary: It's no child's play. It's tricky, technical, and complicated. It costs time as well as money. But it can pay big dividends to an airline that is smart enough to say, "I'm from Missouri." It will never be popular, naturally. There'll be people on the P. R. staff and elsewhere in the company who'll always put up plenty of resistance to finding out what the public thinks of it. But testing is here to stay—because it's the only objective way thus far discovered to keep an airline's public relations program on the beam.

Even the smartest airline needs to take advantage of the testing technique. Neither public relations specialists nor management can keep from being so close to the picture that they lose the public's viewpoint. Current experience alone is enough to make it painfully clear that it is humanly impossible for us to know, simply by use of horsesense and intuition, how well the public understands our problems or likes our operating methods and promotional materials. The only way to find out is to *ask*—not ask each other, but *ask the public*. Here at last is a workable answer to the baffling public relations problem which Bobbie Burns so clearly foresaw: "Oh, wa'd some power the giftie gie us, to see oursel's as others see us!"

And regular use of sampling by trained members of the public relations staff or by qualified outsiders will, among other things, reveal all sorts of unsuspected, minor sources of public confusion and dissatisfaction which can easily be corrected once the trouble is spotted.

If applied in place of the ineffectual "reply envelopes" which now adorn flight - kits, and if simultaneously adapted for handling by I.B.M. machines, the reaction-method can provide management with a month-to-month flow-chart showing what aspects of the service are most liked and most disliked, as well as those which are improving and those which are going downhill. Passenger-reaction sheets—an invaluable new technique to keep airlines closely aware of what passengers think—are used by Western Air Lines in place of old-fashioned passenger-comment envelopes. They give a scientific picture of public reaction to



various airline service aspects, including reservations, ticketing and airport service. Mailed by passengers to president of company, reaction sheets go through I.B.M. machines, and monthly charts are drafted summarizing how passengers feel. I.B.M. runoffs also give indication of which stations are doing a good job and which need improvement.

The asking technique will also spotlight those activities (or defects) which are of most interest to the public, thus giving the company a valuable guide toward spending time and energy on making improvements on first things first.

Finally, and perhaps most important, the very process of asking the public for comments and suggestions is, in itself, a constructive P. R. activity, because it clearly demonstrates to the customers that the company is vitally interested in knowing what customers want and in trying to comply with their wishes.

#### Every Employee a P. R. O.

So far, the major emphasis here has been on how to make friends and influence passengers — the objective being, of course, to send every passenger away from the plane pleasantly aglow with goodwill and armed with enough factual information to serve, on a word-of-mouth basis, as an unofficial public relations officer for the company and for air transport in general. But let's make no mistake about underemphasizing the role of the individual employees who take the passenger under their successive wings while he is sampling the company's service.

If a passenger walks away from that plane feeling friendly and satisfied, it will be largely because he has been favorably impressed by the service provided, and attitude displayed, by the employees. If the employees have created a negative impression in John Customer's mind, none of the more high-flown public relations activities is going to affect his low opinion of the company one whit. On the other hand, if the employees have done a good job, he will think the company is pretty fine, even though the flight kit may be missing, the company's advertisements inferior, and the daily prints lacking in glowing news-stories about the company's triumphs.

In short, the maintenance of good

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• The author, a Stanford graduate, initially had his own public relations office in San Francisco, then went to Washington as public relations officer for the Office of Emergency Management. He subsequently became an aide to the late president of the Philippines, Manuel Quezon and was P.R.O. for the Aircraft Production Board under T. P. Wright. He was trained in journalism and in international affairs, with emphasis on Latin America. He has a reading, writing, and "working" talking knowledge of Russian, Spanish, and French. Moreover, Author Saunders graduated from a CAA ground school in California and completed flight-training at Rockville Airport while in Washington. After four years of wartime duty in the capital, he joined Western Air Lines in early 1945 to organize the company's postwar public relations setup. Having completed the job he initiated for the pioneer airline, he relinquished his duties effective Nov. 30, 1946.

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employee morale is one of the most profoundly important aspects of the company's entire public relations program. The company's external public relations program, plus the efforts of its sales-force, can get passengers; but unless the *internal* aspects of the public relations program keep the employees themselves "sold," the service will not be good and the net result will simply be to send away a larger number of passengers who'll damn the line.

How sold are employees in most airlines at the present time? How much is the service being affected by the fact that they may be less sold or unsold? If changes have taken place in the attitude of employees, what are the causes? What can be done to correct this situation? These are basic questions. There's no point in dodging them.

Let's go back a way, to get a little perspective. Airlines, in the past, have been blessed—far more than most industries—with a small, select group of employees completely sold on their jobs and their companies. Their enthusiasm and friendliness, their individual knowledge of the background and development of their companies, their first-name relationship with many of the top executives, all radiated out into their contacts with passengers, in the form of friendliness, courtesy, and a willingness to be helpful above and beyond most passengers' expectations. Spontaneous success in passenger-relations followed automatically, to an

extent never dreamed of by other types of transportation. It all developed because of a spirit of teamwork; it was an automatic outgrowth of an all-consuming common interest shared by employees and executives alike. There was a certain spirit—it was more like play than work (though there really was work aplenty).

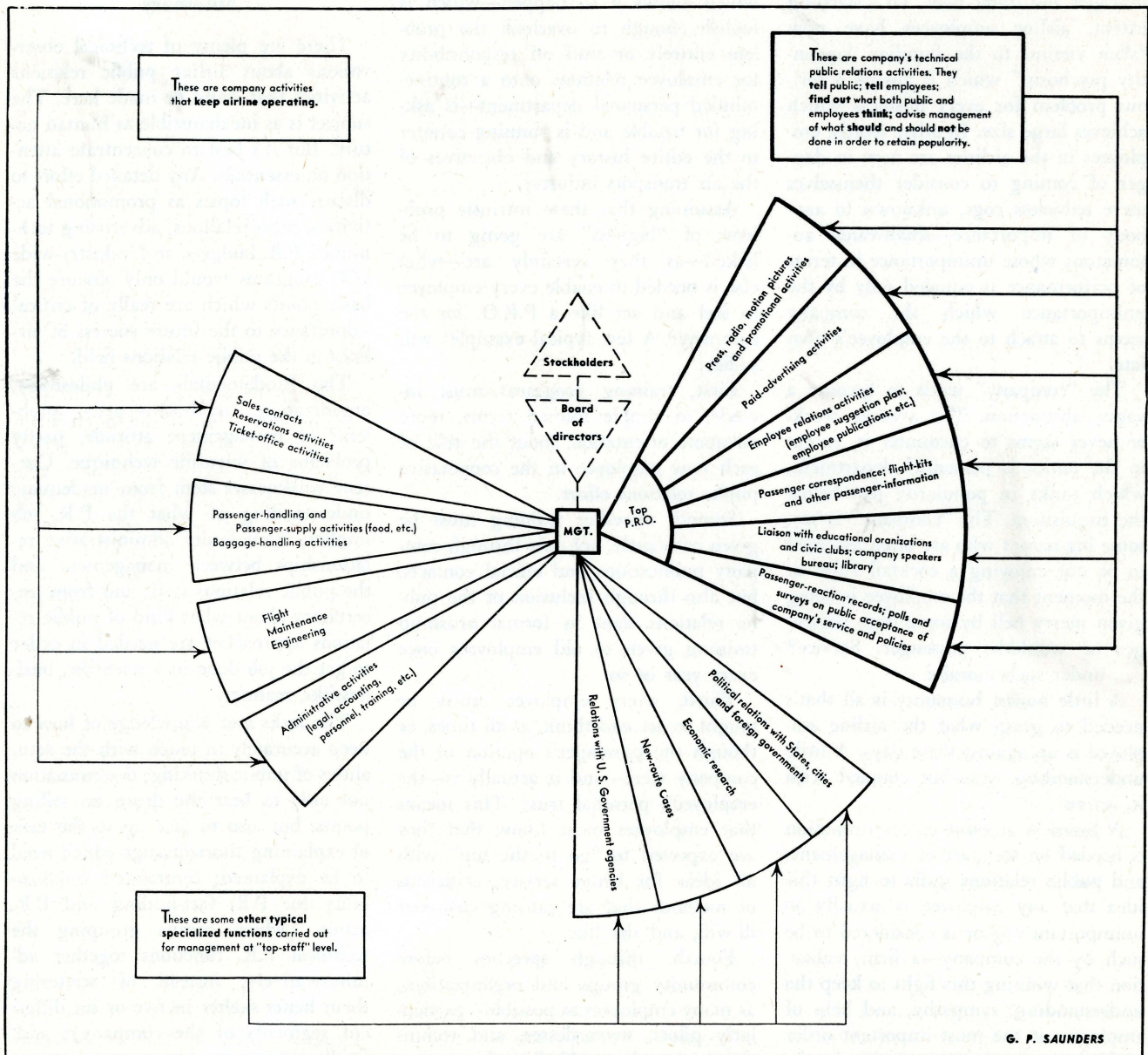
None of us like to admit it, but much of that spirit is now vanishing. Every airline is fighting to hold on to it—but companies are much bigger now, thousands of new employees have come in, officials can't get to know everybody the way they once did, personal understanding of the tough financial sledding that airlines are up against is lacking in many newcomers who "just wanted an interesting job." The old order passeth—but the importance of employees in passenger relations remains just as important now as in the past, when each airline was just a little hardworking team "in there pitching together."

Something's got to be done.

Where a personal pat on the back used to turn the trick, now a highly organized employee-relations program is the only feasible method of reaching all the people in the company, keeping them all informed, and bridging the ever-widening gap between officials and rank and file. Where a personal chat about low salaries used to provide the employee with a clear picture of the company's precarious profit and loss picture, now only honestly written company publications can get the message across to hundreds who are brooding about recompense. Where ideas used to be exchanged regularly between vice-presidents and ticket agents, now only a modern "suggestion plan," with both praise and money as rewards, can keep alive the employees' recognition that management wants and needs thoughts from the firing-line on what's wrong and what needs to be done to improve the service and employee welfare.

In some airlines, relations between employees and the company have fallen into such a state that the ratio of employee "quits" is around 100% each year. A whole new airline is hired every twelve months, with disastrous results from the standpoint of service and efficiency, not to mention company investment (since it costs hard dollars to hire and train every employee who subsequently leaves). In many cases, money actually is not the only reason—





FLOW-DIAGRAM FOR AN EFFECTIVE AIRLINE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM

As airlines expand and streamline their public relations activities to meet postwar problems, typical scope and organization of P.R. setups may shape up somewhat as shown above. Note that P.R. program operates as a direct adjunct to management,

with all company's technical P.R. activities centralized and coordinated under one ranking specialist. For comparative purposes, chart also shows relationship to top-management of some of other standard functions of airline.

other grievances and discouragements, unknown to management, are causing young guys and gals to conclude wrongly that the company is a "bad bet" and that the best thing to do is throw in the sponge.

Clearly, the airlines have reached a point where scientific surveys of employee grievances, on a regular basis, are economically indispensable if turnover is to be cut, morale is to be kept at a high level, and removable causes of discouragement are to be corrected.

All these adverse developments are a new kind of dynamite to the airlines,

from the standpoint of public relations. Sullen, discouraged, resentful, and "green" employees are not going to be courteous, friendly, and helpful to passengers. Yet these traits are musts—because, to the passenger, the individual employee *is* the company. If, through such techniques as modern employee-relations programs, plus periodic correctives by management based on surveys of employee opinion, airline staffs can be started back on the old "glory road," then 50% of the present passenger-relations problems will be licked. "Sold" employees will, as in the

past, automatically win friends and influence people in their daily dealings with the public.

Finding effective solutions for these critical problems of employee relations is going to take some earnest cooperation from managements that are already hard-pressed with plenty of other worries. But the thing can be done, if managements and their public relations staffs are up to it.

A large part of the trouble is purely psychological; it traces back to the sudden expansion of the airlines in personnel numbers as well as in route-

G. P. SAUNDERS



mileages and traffic flow. To a startling extent, airline employees have now fallen victims to the familiar "nonentity psychosis," which is always a serious problem for every business which achieves large size. In other words, employees in the airlines are now in danger of coming to consider themselves mere nameless cogs, unknown to anybody of importance—small-value automatons whose unimportance in terms of performance is equaled only by the unimportance which the company seems to attach to the employee's own fate.

The "company" tends to become a vague abstraction. The average worker never seems to encounter it, except in the ominous personnel department, which ranks in popularity just below the Inquisition. The "company" is just some big-names who are often assumed to be out enjoying a cocktail right at the moment that the employee is being given merry hell by some irate passenger or would-be passenger. Service? . . . under such morale?

A little honest humanity is all that's needed to grasp what the airline employee is up against these days. A little understanding, yes—but coupled with it, *action!*

A limitless amount of determination is needed on the part of managements and public relations staffs to fight this idea that any employee is actually an unimportant cog or is considered to be such by the company—a firm realization that winning this fight to keep the understanding, sympathy, and help of employees is the most important order of business for every executive in the company, from the president on down.

There's no room in any large public-service industry for top executives with big-shot complexes; the airlines have never bred them that way in the past, and no company can afford to start spawning them now, even inadvertently, even on an "it seems so" basis. The very *impression* must be avoided at all costs—the implication that there is a "company" on the one side and, on the other, some employees. Any airline

which allows it to happen—which is foolish enough to overlook the problem entirely or sluff off responsibility for employee relations onto a routine-minded personnel department—is asking for trouble and is running counter to the entire history and objectives of the air transport industry.

Assuming that these intrinsic problems of "bigness" are going to be licked—as they certainly are—what else is needed to enable every employee to feel and act like a P.R.O. for the company? A few typical examples will suffice:

First, training programs must include, in simple human terms, more adequate orientation about the role of each new employee in the cooperative public relations effort.

Second, refresher training must be given constantly, not only through company publications and official contacts, but also through inclusion of the public relations slant in formal brush-up training given to old employees once every year or so.

Third, every employee must be taught to act *and* think, at all times, as though the passenger's opinion of the company were—and it actually is—the employee's personal trust. This means that employees must know that they are expected to "go to the top" with all ideas for better service, criticisms of methods that are causing customer ill-will, and the like.

Fourth, through speeches before community groups and organizations, as many employees as possible—particularly pilots, stewardesses, and technicians—must be enabled to share, on a personal basis, the responsibility for acting as spokesmen for the company on the outside. (Incidentally as a parallel to this activity, airline executives will need to give far more talks before business groups and participate more actively in community affairs, instead of saving themselves for appearances mostly at aviation conclaves where a grand time is had by all but little public benefit accrues to the company or the industry.)

## Summary

There are plenty of technical observations about airline public relations activities that could be made here. The subject is as inexhaustible as human nature. But it's best to concentrate attention on essentials. Any detailed effort to discuss such topics as promotional activities, press-relations, advertising techniques, P.R. budgets, and industry-wide P.R. programs would only obscure the basic points which are really of critical importance to the future success of airlines in the public relations field.

The fundamentals are philosophy, organization, methods—partly problems of management attitude, partly problems of scientific technique. Current weaknesses stem from inadequate understanding of what the P.R. job implies; from faulty administrative relationships between management and the public relations staff; and from uncertainty about what kind of public relations approaches are needed in order to get the job done in a scientific, businesslike manner.

The lacks are: Knowledge of how to keep accurately in touch with the actualities of public thinking; determination not only to beat the drum on selling points, but also to face up to the task of explaining shortcomings which need to be explained; centralized responsibility for P.R. fact-finding and P.R. action (which means grouping the technical P.R. functions together administratively, instead of scattering them helter-skelter in five or six different segments of the company); and, finally, acceptance by management, on a day-to-day basis, of the responsibility to integrate the public relations program into all internal and external activities of the company, as well as into all actions and policies of management *per se*.

These points represent the *sine qua non* of future advances in airline public relations as the industry moves ahead to take its place permanently among the mature, large-volume enterprises of the nation.