

special projects

The Courtesy of Service

During the past few months, there have been many articles written about Dial-a-Cab including whether or not the company should offer clients alternative transport.

I am pleased to say the majority of comments in reply to articles about diversification, both within Call Sign and in the general trade press, have been in favour. Giving the customer what they want is not only good business, but also courteous. In today's competitive market, this is the philosophy of many companies - both large and small.

For instance, High Street banks now offer an array of different services, mortgages, insurance policies etc as well as addressing your financial requirements. The gas companies sell electricity, the electricity companies sell gas, and even water companies will now offer a maintenance policy for any electrical problems as well as blocked drains etc and so it goes on. It may well be a weird world, but why do they sell other products? It's simple; money and power!

Helicopters Hit The Launch Pads?

With this in mind, I'm pleased to say that the Board has now agreed to allow any enquiries for a helicopter service to be passed on to a reputable charter company. Some of you may remember that I proposed this service when I was previously on the BoM.

I know the idea brought a smile and the odd joke from some individuals, but I make no apology for that idea or any other - some of which may be too forward thinking.

My research has indicated that some of our clients do use the services of helicopter and executive jet charter companies. It is important to know that it most certainly is NOT our intention to buy a helicopter or an aeroplane. We just need an association with a company who can supply this service to customers via Dial-a-Cab.

After investigation, we have decided on Thurston Helicopters based at Redhill in Surrey. I think it is important for you to know a little about the background and history of Thurston Helicopters (engineering) Ltd, especially if you mention this Dial-a-Cab add-



on service to your fares.

The company was founded in 1991 by Managing Director Mark Souster and his wife. They employ one engineer and are based at a private airfield near Brands Hatch. In just one year, the business had grown to such a degree that they relocated to Redhill. Thurston now employ 20 personnel, including pilots, engineers, flying instructors, support staff and a Chief Pilot (see page 30).

How Does It Work?

The services now provided are maintenance to helicopters and fixed wing aircraft, self-fly charter, flight training, sales and of course helicopter and fixed wing charter. So how will it work and what benefit will Dial-a-Cab derive?

Quite simply, if someone at Goldman Sachs for example needs to get to Paris or Aberdeen in a hurry and they need a helicopter, they would phone the Dial-a-Cab control room with the relevant information. We then contact Thurston Helicopters with all information required. When cost etc have been agreed by the customer, the booking is made. The Dial-a-Cab driver would pick up the customer and take the passenger to Battersea Heliport, Redhill, Biggin Hill or wherever. The account client will, in due course, receive the invoice for taxi usage and the helicopter service, plus of course our normal service charges. Dial-a-Cab would also receive a commission from Thurston Helicopters.

Our customers may or may not be regular users of this add-on service, but having the means to offer such a service can only be a plus factor for the membership and our customers.

Dress Code

Yes it's that old chestnut again. I know that Allen Togwell has written many articles in the past about the way drivers are dressed when representing DaC, but I am now receiving phone calls at the office and comments from drivers who see me when I am working

in my cab, complaining about the standard of dress of some of their colleagues, albeit a small number.

I must say, it does grieve me that anyone should have to make this type of comment. The fact that we have to ask or even tell drivers that they are dirty and sometimes smelly because they have been working for many hours together with the cab being filthy, is unbelievable. More care should be given to the mode of dress and the hygiene of drivers. I can say that what is totally unacceptable, are loose fitting jogging shorts, track suit bottoms with buttock cleavage showing, string vests and open toe shoes (which could be dangerous when driving) or in fact anything that makes a person look like a tramp. What is acceptable is casual but smart attire, trousers, smart jeans, long/short sleeve, polo shirt, trainers, classic or casual shoes.

It is imperative that we do something about the lack of self-esteem and complacency that exists within our organisation.

Dial-a-Cab Internet Project

I am pleased to say that Morgan Stanley, Brunswick PR and Rothchilds are among the clients now using the Dial-a-Cab Internet facility for booking cabs. Although we are still testing the software, everything seems to be going very satisfactorily. I am also pleased to say that the first stage of the Dial-a-Cab web site is now on line. Allen Togwell, who is responsible for compiling, editing and increasing the content, is doing a great job. You can also link onto Call Sign via this site. Have look at www.dialacab.co.uk

Fixed Prices - Update

As you are aware, I am investigating and consolidating our Fixed Price journeys. During this investigation, it is apparent that many of the existing fixed prices within our data dispatch system have not been used for some time, in some cases since 1997. These are being deleted. There are also many fixed prices that are below the meter fare. It is my intention to update these prices where and when necessary. There are, of course, fixed priced journeys that form part of an account agreement awarded to Dial-a-Cab, therefore it may not be possible to action those until the contract is at an end. On any action taken, customers will be notified.

Mike Son