

## from the editor's desk

I would like to make it clear that the contents of this Editorial are written under duress. I don't believe that it is my job to lecture you in Dial-a-Cab procedure, however, I have been asked to do so by a member of the Board in the hope that you may believe what you are about to read if it comes from a full-time driver. Let me also add that my not wishing to take this line, is not because the subject isn't true - it most certainly is and I have to say that I have been appalled by the subject matter. It is just that there are a few drivers out there who believe that I set myself up as an unelected board member. No denials will ever convince them otherwise, so I try not to give them ammunition. Perhaps here, I have no choice...

The subject follows on from last month's Call Sign when Allen Togwell wrote an article on the small increase in complaints by passengers against drivers. He made it clear that the numbers were small but growing and that the complaints mainly involved drivers' attitudes towards some passengers including the use of bad language. Several instances since that article have provoked this further response.

### Letters from Passengers

I have been shown a small, but reasonably thick, pile of letters from clients that complain about our drivers use of threatening or



abusive language. The names of the clients and drivers were deleted. I could go on about these being a small percentage, but this tiny minority are going to cost us accounts and even more importantly, the goodwill that we have built up over the last 47 years.

There was the driver who told the Managing Director of a DaC account what he could do with his business. I'm afraid that if the driver used as an excuse that he didn't realise it was the MD, it doesn't wash at all. The MD did in fact close the account. It wasn't the largest that we have, but the company involved spent around £10,000 a year on taxis with us. Another 99 of those over the year and that's £1 million off the top line.

Or how about the driver who, when asked by the PA from a very large account, why he was going a certain way, instead of asking which way she would like to go and then just accepting that the customer is right even if they are wrong, went onto voice and, knowing that the passenger could hear every word, made a stupid remark about the woman's integrity. That comment could have caused serious repercussions at the account address and Brian Rice had to personally become involved to soothe the concerns of the passenger and the client in general.

Another one that takes some believing involved a driver swearing continuously at the carer of a child in front of the child. So distressed was the carer that she cancelled the return taxi trip preferring to use public transport instead.

One that I was also told about but that I cannot discuss at this time, involves an allegation against a Dial-a-Cab driver in which he allegedly struck a child who was behaving in a naughty way.

### In Our Own Reception...

Most of you will be thinking the same as I did before seeing the letters. It is exaggerated and perhaps some passengers are not telling the truth. Even if that were the case with 50%, that still leaves too many which

will be true.

Most of you know Tammy in the Client's Reception. One of our drivers phoned her up some considerable time ago and obviously in a foul mood about something, asked to speak to a specific Board member.

"I'm sorry" said Tammy, "but he is on the phone speaking to a client".

"Cut him off" said the driver, "I want to talk to him."

Needless to say, Tammy refused offering to call him back when the BM was free. Did the driver say thank you and hang up? No, he showed the type of person he was by telling Tammy that he knew who she was and was going to come to the office "...to smash her face in."

She asked for his call sign and naturally, this gentleman just put the phone down. For several weeks, Tammy told me that she was petrified of all strangers coming in to the reception.

### In Our Client's Reception

I have even seen the problem myself at first hand. Waiting in a client's reception for my turn to give the receptionist my passengers name, the driver in front was just waiting for confirmation that his passenger wanted him. Rather unusually, the receptionist handed the driver the phone and said that his passenger wanted to speak to him.

All I and the driver behind me heard was the first driver shout through the handset:

"Well get another f\*\*\*ng cab then," before slamming the receiver down.

We found out later that the passenger (who happened to be a director of the company) had said to the driver that the cab was not booked for another 12 minutes and would he (the driver) please make sure that there was no more than the correct run-in on the meter at booked time.

I can see how that could irritate if said in a certain way, but was his the correct response or should the driver just have swallowed the comment - however irritated he felt. After all, that wasn't his account - the account belongs to all of us. 199 out of 200 of us are polite and offer an excellent service. One idiot can't hold his temper and we all suffer.

I have no doubt that we are no better or worse than our rivals when it comes to this problem. We however, don't sweep it under the carpet and I'd like to see some responses from drivers...

Alan Fisher