

Date: September 19th, 2013

Mission: Pick-up package in London and deliver it to Transaero in Tenerife
Angel: Elizabeth Edery

Get ready....set....go

On Wednesday the 18th of September my phone goes around 20.00 o'clock. It's Tal Haimovich. My new boss as we have just agreed that I will start working as an International Sales Consultant for Wings/Control Towers International (Cti). He asks whether I could pick up a package the next day in London and personally deliver it in Tenerife. We all seek a sense of adventure in our lives. Yet when someone offers that possibility out of nowhere and we are asked to act quickly, we start going through our massive agenda's and figure out a ton of reasons why we are "too busy". Not for me. At least not this time. I moved some planned meetings around because I really wanted to learn what it was like to be an angel delivering a package for WINGS...So let's go, I said!

I'm an angel but I feel like James Bond

That same night everything is planned. My tickets, contact with the client, hotel, transportation, it's all set in motion. The next morning I wake up early to go to Schiphol for my flight to London, where I will be collecting a Boeing part which is scheduled to arrive from Atlanta. I am wearing a shirt with the letter W on it. I figured that way the people I meet along the way have a recognizable attribute to find me by. My own Wings shirt.

At this moment I am super excited to be experiencing my very first flight as

an angel. I'm not exactly sure how everything will go, but I am up for the adventure. I feel like James Bond on a very exciting mission to deliver airplane parts in Spain. How very mysterious!

Tal sends me another message to let me know that my flight will land at 11.00 o'clock local time in London which is at the same time as the Boeing package gets in at Heathrow from Atlanta. However, it can take a while before it is checked out and released from the British Airlines (BA) Cargo service. Tal's app reads "Don't get stressed. It's an intercontinental flight so you can get to the airplane 20 minutes beforehand." I think to myself; I've got this down after all I AM James Bond.



Lesson 1, 2, 3.....10

As soon as I land in London I call my contact person who is called Jeff from Glenn Freight. He tells me that the package has just landed in London but he says "there is reason for you to start looking into a later flight as cargo is known to take anywhere between 3 to 8 hours to release packages." He

adds that had there not been a personal onboard courier (OBC) picking it up, the release time would have been much longer. I immediately start to recognize the benefits of Wings and making use of OBCs. I ask Jeff to put some pressure on BA cargo so that I can catch my next flight to Manchester as there are no direct flights to Tenerife from London.

Heathrow is a big airport so I decide to start walking to the next gate. For some reason I get put in the fast lane. At first I don't realize why but I am very happy as this line goes much faster than all the other lanes. Still I decide to look at my ticket once again (trust me, this was far from the first time I've done so) and see that my boarding time is 12.30. I look at my watch and realize that it's 12.45. My first thoughts are OH MY GOD I probably already missed my flight! Can this lane go any faster? I pass some people in the cue, some others allow me to jump ahead of them and finally I am ready to go. Quickly I glance at the clock above the gate and realize...

Lesson 1: ALWAYS check for time zone differences!

The UK is one hour ahead of time and it isn't like I could board that plane anyway without the package. So I walk around, have some lunch, call Jeff a couple of times, start looking into later flight options as one should always have a plan B and keep reminding myself that "I am James Bond. I can do this."

I go to the customer service desk and ask whether there is a later flight to Manchester. The BA attendant

automatically asks why I want a later flight if I am at the airport and able to board the one I am scheduled on. I explain to her that I am waiting for "a package" (at this moment I just knew it was something for an airplane in Tenerife and that it's arriving from Atlanta) which has not been delivered to me yet. Unfortunately I had no papers to show her, I had no tracking number so she can check with cargo, nothing...just my word. But like James Bond, I use my charm and it certainly helps that I am a young woman, blond haired...in other words...I look completely unthreatening. I reserve a seat on the next flight just in case.

Lesson 2: if you do not have any papers to back up your story always be armed with charm! Otherwise sell your story in such a manner that no one will have any reason to doubt it.



Aaarrggghhhh....I have to miss my flight. Where on earth is that package?!

It's 12.30 and I start getting slightly nervous. In an automatic reaction I decide to sit closely to the gate whilst calling Jeff for more information on the whereabouts and status of the package. Time keeps ticking. The first call is made to passengers who are

delaying the flight. The second call. It's 12.40 and I remind myself that I should not get stressed but honestly I am getting a bit of that. FINALLY Jeff calls me to tell me that the package has been released and that a courier is on his way now. BUT I must go back outside as the courier has no way of coming inside the airport. In an instant I see that my gate has now closed. Bye bye plane hello new ticket but mostly hello stress. I start questioning myself: is this my fault? Should I have pressured Jeff or BA Cargo more? And why on earth do I not feel like James Bond anymore?

I go back to the customer service desk where I get a new ticket as well as that I get escorted outside to get "my package". Now for someone doing this type of work for the first time, the words 'Boeing' and 'airplane parts' can sound daunting or at the very least LARGE. So what does the package look like? The courier tells me that he's driving a gray bus. Well great...like I haven't seen hundreds of those around Heathrow already. Luckily he spots my W shirt. I get the box, which is rather small and very light. What could it be?



What else could go wrong?

I go back inside and decide to wait patiently near my gate. I guess the customer service lady noticed that my James Bond attitude shown earlier has faded somewhat by that time. She invites me to go to the business class lounge to enjoy comfortable chairs, snacks and drinks. Obviously one does not drink on the job, but one glass of wine after missing a flight, waiting for more than 4 hours, having to spot a gray van in London, buying a new ticket, is permissible. So I try a wonderful chardonnay...it's all there for the picking anyway...get some soup, bread and a diet cola cause who knows where I might get stuck later.

My next flight is to Manchester. It leaves at 16.00 o'clock and gets in an hour later. The planning is that I take the EasyJet flight of 18.00 o'clock to Tenerife. So I only have one hour to run to my next gate. But with this lovely lounge experience and the package in my hand I am confident that I can do this. I think to myself, I've already

lost one flight, what else could go wrong?

I leave the lovely lounge, go to my gate where we start boarding. I am seated all the way to the back with two lovely English ladies who have been flying from the USA to the UK for more than 24 hours and have missed every connecting flight they had. If only their karma does not rub off on me, I think. The weather starts getting more and more gloomy. Rainstorms, lightning, thunder....hmmm....not sure if this is a good sign. It's 15.45 and the captain announces a slight delay due to the weather. In my mind I still have an hour in Manchester to catch my flight to Tenerife so I count on my running skills to get me off the plane a.s.a.p. and ready to board again.

15.55: we still can't leave

16.00: control towers has given a no-go to all flights at this moment due to extreme weather conditions

16.15 sorry. No change yet.

16.30 The weather has shown signs of improvement. We will be leaving shortly.

Shortly? What does that mean? Will I make my next flight? I've already learned that keeping all options open is important for an OBC. So I start asking the flight attendant what possibilities there are if I miss my next flight as well. She tells me I should discuss this at the airport with BA. But which part of "I-won't-have-any-time-to-discuss-anything-at-the-rate-that-this-is-going" does she not understand? The flight finally leaves at 16.45 and you guessed it.....I miss my next flight

as well! Thank you weather gods...NOT!

Rain instead of sangria

BA insists that their work is done. They got me from location A to location B which means that they have no further commitment to me. In other words: since my next flight is with another airline carrier, I'm on my own. So I proceed to the EasyJet desk where I book yet another new ticket. However the next flight to Tenerife isn't until tomorrow morning. I feel terrible. All these glitches in the plan, new bookings and now my phone battery is running out as well. Tal tells me to book a hotel near the airport, get some dinner and be ready for the last part of the trip on the next day.

By now I can't reach anyone anymore as my phone battery has died and my Dutch plug does not fit in the UK socket. Luckily the lady at the hotel allows me to borrow her iphone charger. It's cold and rainy in Manchester. I was imagining sangria on the Spanish beach now but either way I am happy that at least half the trip is behind me. I've been on my way for about 12 hours and am only in Manchester by now. Am tired and happy to be nearing the point of delivery.

Day 2: delivery date! Vamonos!

The next morning I wake up super early to take my next flight to Tenerife. It's 4.00 A.M. when the taxi picks me up. My flight is on time. I check in and have one duffle bag and the box with Boeing parts. The flight attendant advises me to check in my luggage as EasyJet only allows one luggage piece

per passenger. My immediate answer is "no way". My bag and MY package are staying with me! End of the matter. So she says, no can't do, you must fit that box in your duffle bag. What this lady does not know is that I am a master Tetris player and can make just about anything fit. In this case however I took a small bag as I was only flying for one day. Well, if the box doesn't fit then I guess I'll have to take some clothes out. But what to do with those clothes? It's bloody hot in the airport but I am not giving away my luggage or the package so there's nothing left but to put all those layers of clothes on!

The check-in at Manchester airport will see to anyone missing their flight as it is very meticulously done. I promise you...nothing will get through those customs official and boy are they humorless (a character trait which I have learned is synonymous for people in the customs officials profession). Of course my bag is scanned and the box is taken out for further inspection.

Customs Official (CO): "Miss, what are you carrying?"

Me: "It's a part for an airplane in Tenerife."

CO: "We're going to open the box. Do you have a sharp object with you to help us open the box?"

Me: *Hmmm, did I find myself the only CO with humor?* "Is that a trick question? Please be careful. I'd like to deliver that in an orderly fashion."

CO: *opens the box* "These look like paperclips."

Me: *good heavens. She's right. James Bond is travelling with paperclips. Boy am I mysterious. Not.* "Yes, but they

are indispensable to the on-ground airplane."

CO: *talks to her colleague* "Can she travel with this?"

Me: "Yes I can" *remember: sell your story in such a manner that no one will have any reason to doubt it!* "I am not leaving this airport without that box."

Mind you, when someone dressed in four layers, looking tired and speaks to you with a "poker face", you just buy whatever she's saying.



My plan works. I proceed to the gate, get in the plane and wait to go to Tenerife. I want to freshen up before I call my contact person at Transaero, Felipe. I highly believe in looking the part when meeting clients, at whatever level in the company you are. The impression a well taken care of angel leaves behind must be 100% better than that of a shabby OBC. However, as soon as we get off the plane and into the busses which will take us to the terminal, some airport officials start asking around. I can't hear them so I don't know who or

what they are looking for. They come into the packed with tourists bus which I am in and ask for "Elizabeth from Cti delivering a package for Transaero". At first it doesn't register that they are talking about me then I think...YES...it's me they are looking for...I'm your angel!

Everyone on the bus is looking at me and one lady can't help but ask "What was in that box?". Now James Bond never reveals his secrets. "Paperclips" I say "just paperclips."

It's 13.00 o'clock local time and my flight back to Amsterdam leaves at 20.00 o'clock. That means 7 hours free time but above all it means....MISSION ACCOMPLISHED.....Now where's the beach where I can eat paella and drink sangria under the lovely Spanish sun?

