

Selection and Training of Cabin Crew in Airlines

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Introduction :

PASSENGER comfort and safety are the two most important factors in modern air transportation. Air Pax may be prone to adverse effects of flying in rough weather, claustrophobia, hypoxia or plain and simple fear. Some may be cardiac patients or may be first riders. When an Air Hostess is seen smiling at the entrance of an aircraft, little does it strike any of us that she is there not only as a coffee or tea symbol, but is a guardian of safety and comfort of passengers. Her responsibilities are manifold and her efficiency helps to strengthen the reputation of her Air line.

Selection: This is most difficult as "beauty and intelligence" have to be combined with other qualities needed in an Air Hostess. She should be unmarried and between 19 to 25 years, height of 152 to 170 cms. Vision should be normal with out glasses, teeth should be even and white. She should not be overweight. Posture, gait, clearness and radiance of skin, self composure, manners, presence of mind, ability to express, pleasing personality, voice and speech quality are some of the other factors considered during selection. Knowledge of languages, qualification in Home Science, Nursing and Catering also receive due weightage. Basic educational qualifications required are SSLC or equivalent. Those selected for training have to pass strict medical examination.

Training: Air Hostesses for Indian Airlines are trained at Cabin Crew Training School, located at Safdarjung Airport, Delhi. About 100 new entrants are trained at this school annually. The syllabus is designed on recommendations of International Civil Aviation Organisation in its Training

Manual for Cabin Personnel and approved by D.G.C.A. of India.

At least two Observation Flights are undertaken on non-jet aircraft to assess initial reaction of Trainees to airsickness. Ground training lasts for 8 weeks and subjects covered are first aid, technical information and emergency procedures, company information, Hindi and English voice practice, passenger Psychology, relational skill, Behavioural Science, Standing Orders, Cabin Service, Traffic Information, Personality Development and Transactional Analysis. Audio-visual aids and models are used for training. Practical training is imparted for use of Oxygen Equipment, Fire Fighting, use of First Aid Kits. Actual aircraft are provided for training in evacuation drills. Trainees learn to operate emergency exits, rigging chutes, donning life jackets and launching dinghies. Transactional analysis sessions are based on feed-back received from passengers through Customer Service Department and other sources, inspiring the trainee to find right answers for herself and gaining in self confidence and consciousness about the finer aspects of her functions. Workshop sessions on skin care, art of make-up and yoga are part of the daily routine. There are 4 full time Instructresses in the training centre, teaching cabin service, relational skill, voice training and personality development. Others include the Medical Officer, Training Manager, Manager Customer Services, Commercial Manager and other officials of the Airline.

On completion of ground training the Trainees are posted to different regions to work on actual flights under guidance of trained Instructresses.

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Later, they are rostered with senior cabin crew to enable them to gain more confidence.

Responsibilities and Challenges: Fear of flying is natural and every person, no matter how much he has flown, suffers from this fear to some extent. Passengers who are flying for the first time or those with cardiac or other ailments are likely to be tense. Busy or disappointed executives and husbands with nagging wives may feel relieved by ordering the Air Hostess around the plane. Un-accompanied children and shy adolescents may feel neglected. Elderly and sick passengers need more attention. In fact every passenger has a desire to be looked after personally till he lands safely at his destination. This is indeed a challenge. However, an even

greater challenge presents itself when an emergency has to be faced, as safety is of utmost importance.

Human Factors: About 18% Air Hostesses resign per year — mostly to get married and settle down. Generally Air Hostesses retire between the age of 30 years to 40 years, according to the condition of their health and performance.

Air Hostesses have been known to suffer from kidney problems, psychological disturbances, altered physiological cycles and change in metabolism. These areas need further detailed study by the Medical profession and the Civil Aviation Medicine Department.