



Pavlova T.A.

## Estimation of willingness and ability of conductors for ethical interaction with passengers

*A comparative analysis of key documents describing and regulating activity of conductors of passenger wagons in PLC "RZhD" and responsibilities, qualifications, and training programs of conductors of foreign railways (UK, France, Canada, Australia, USA) has showed that interaction with passengers as one of main duties of a conductor and his area of responsibility is not fixed nowhere clearly in OAO "RZD" in contradistinction to foreign railways. So nothing says that an interaction with passengers is a duty and responsibility of a conductor.*

*Conductors of passenger wagons are not considered as attendants in world practice. They are a face of the company; they interact with passengers in all matters arising in execution of obligations for provision of transport services by the company [1].*

**Key words:** professional psychological assessment and selection of conductors of passenger wagons, professionally important qualities, service, ethical interaction, "officially polite service," "comfortably polite service."

There is a strange contradiction in our national practice. On the one hand, conductors is not assigned representative and communicative functions nowhere – to be a face of the company, politely and correctly answer passengers' questions, provide all necessary and useful information on all points connected with a trip on a train. On the other hand, service function – to be support staff (obscure a bed, serve tea, etc.) was assigned to all conductors of passenger wagons gradually, but this function is not written clearly in the regulatory documents of PLC "RZhD".

This inaccuracy, incompleteness and ambiguity of determination of a status, functions and responsibilities of conductors of passenger wagons leads to difficulties in organization of activity of both conductors and managers of passenger complex.

Correct interaction of personnel with clients is an important condition of work of any company providing services. This principle is already used in practice in many Russian companies. These companies have developed standards and rules of interaction with clients.

In addition, mechanisms of monitoring compliance with these rules and forms of rewards and punishments for their degree of compliance are developed and implemented, as well as incentive schemes for staff, orienting to correct work with clients.

A modern company providing services to clients should aim staff at correct work with customers, should standardize a form of interaction of personnel with the clients and should introduce modern standards of service in daily work through a system of training and by motivation. Also an effective mechanism of monitoring this aspect (a quality of customer service) of production and service activities is needed.



Unfortunately, this problem (establishment of a system, which ensures a correct staff interaction with clients strictly) has not yet been solved by one of the largest Russian companies – PLC “RZhD”. This problem, obviously, will be solved in the short term.

At the same time we have to consider that this problem is only one of the tasks in a large goal – to create a modern system of a service delivery in PLC “RZhD” and in affiliates [2].

Behavior of staff, direct communication and interaction with customers is just one component of quality service. When we are building a system of service (provision of quality services) we have to take into account a minimum of ten components of quality service.

1. Impression: a state and design of premises and equipment, an appearance of staff.
2. Security: a provision of all necessary to protect life and health of a client, his property and finances [3].
3. Reliability and accuracy: services are provided in full accordance with the contract and just in time.
4. Competence of personnel.
5. Quick response to customer request.
6. Politeness and courtesy of staff.
7. Trust: honest of the company and its staff.
8. Availability to interact with next level managers in events of misunderstandings with service personnel.
9. Communication and information support of a client: the company interacts with potential customers actively, a customer receives all necessary information to obtain a service and during service use.
10. Accounting of needs of customers: a presence of systems of an accounting and analysis of customer requests in the company, a willingness of staff to understand and take into account specific client requests.

These components can be taken into account in a planning and designing a special program to create a system of quality service in PLC «RZhD».

In our work, we determined singular integral professionally important quality of conductors at specially organized diagnostic procedures of long-distance conductors – a willingness to correct interaction with customers. We assessed:

- 1) professionally necessary communication and behavioral skills and abilities of existing conductors in interaction with passengers (as they do now);
- 2) a potential of assessed conductors in learning of ways of correct interacting with passengers.
- 3) Thus, we assess a current readiness for correct communication and interaction with passengers and a possibility of training these skills and abilities.

Special control exercises on technology of assessment of personnel «Assessment Center» (AC) were developed to assess this important professional quality – correct



interaction with passengers. This technology makes it possible to do a comprehensive assessment of staff to determine a professional and intellectual potential of staff. AC method is the most reliable technology assessment and selection of staff. Foreign experts define the reliability of the method AC – 70–75 % [4].

Group of conductors is observed and assessed by specially trained experts on a basis of numerous exercises, according to the rules exactly, using situations close to real in AC method. Advantages of the method include individual interview with every participant of AC on results of the assessment, which makes it possible to build a program of an individual development and a professional career [5, 6].

Two exercises have been selected to assess a readiness of conductors for high-quality service. Execution of these exercises by every conductor was recorded on video. Then the executions of exercises were analyzed by experts of service and psychology of a communication. The experts responded to two questions: 1) does assessed participant show skills and abilities of correct service of passengers or not, 2) does he have a potential to learn these skills and abilities. Each participant was assessed by criteria of a readiness-unreadiness and an ability-inability for correct interaction with customers.

1st exercise – a conductor is offered to demonstrate how he can greet passengers as a representative and a face of the company by next scheme: a polite greeting – introducing himself to a passenger (including say his name and surname) – telling minimum information about the train, and extra services.

2nd exercise – a conductor is offered to demonstrate how he will interact with a passenger in certain situation in two styles (officially polite, comfortably polite). For example, a passenger is smoking in a wrong place, actions of a conductor.

Each conductor was assessed by experts on criteria:

- 1) the assessed participant demonstrates minimum skills and an ability of correct greeting of passengers – 1 point, does not demonstrates – 0 points;
- 2) the assessed participant demonstrates minimum skills and an ability of correct interaction with passengers as an official representative of the company (a style of «officially polite service») – 1 point, does not demonstrates – 0 points;
- 3) the assessed participant demonstrates minimal skills and an ability of correct interaction with passengers in a service of high comfort (a style of «comfortably polite service») – 1 point, does not demonstrates – 0 points;
- 4) the assessed participant demonstrates minimal skills and an ability to distinguish and switch from one style of interaction with passengers to another – 1 point, does not demonstrates – 0 points.

Preliminary conclusions.

1. Rather high percentage of conductors demonstrate a willingness and an ability for training of interaction with passengers in terms of proper service despite an overall production and technical orientation of collectives of wagon plots.
2. “Inherent” correctness and politeness of certain conductors is a valuable resource for a formation of collectives in a style of «officially polite service».



3. "Inherent" glibness and abruptness of some conductors is a potential source of small conflicts, it requires a special adjustment of behavior. There are uncontrolled elements of aggressive, dominant and defiant behavior in intonations and in a conduct of these conductors, it often leads to conflicts of «psychological» nature. Conductors need to be trained to restrain their emotions and behave correctly.
4. It needs to develop and implement standards of interaction of conductors with passengers, as well as to prepare a training program of behavior under these standards.
5. An ability of an educability of overwhelming majority of conductors is sufficient for learning of appropriate forms of interaction with passengers.

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