

First Class Airline Lounges and What Your Employer or Potential Employer Wants

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

Several years ago, I was getting a massage on an airplane and I started to feel extremely lightheaded. A few moments later, I was lying on my back on the floor of the airplane, and the woman who had been giving me a massage had grabbed my feet and was holding them over me looking down at me telling me to wake up. There was a small crowd of people gathered around me. I had passed out during my massage while traveling over the Middle East somewhere.

From what I understand, I had been too rough on my system. I had spent about 45 minutes in the sauna inside the terminal prior to getting on the airplane. Apparently, I was dehydrated and this, combined with the altitude, made me pass out. You should never take a sauna in the terminal of an airport if you plan on getting a massage on the airplane after you board.

The idea of taking a sauna in the airport and then getting a massage on the airplane is something that is exactly the sort of thing that interests me. If you would ask me what I would want if I was forced to spend 24 hours traveling and what someone could do to make the trip more fun and exciting for me, this is along the lines of what I would say. While I wouldn't choose to pass out on the airplane during the massage, I surely would be interested otherwise.

I have never purchased a first class ticket in my life; however, we use a credit card for business that gives us a lot of miles and I am always able to fly first class when I go overseas. I travel a lot for business and find myself taking long international flights at least four times a year. One of my favorite things about flying internationally is stopping over in London on the way.

In the first class terminal for Virgin Atlantic airlines in London Heathrow you can have an absolutely amazing time.

- There are restaurants and buffets with great food.
- There are places to take a nap.
- You can get a haircut.
- You can get your shoes shined.
- You can take a jacuzzi.
- You can take a private steam.
- You can get a massage.
- You can listen to music in private cubicles.
- You can watch planes taking off.
- You can take a shower and have a sauna.
- You can sit on the roof and chill out.
- You can work on any number of computers.
- You can read newspapers from all over the world.

When you finally get on your flight, you can also get a massage on board the plane. If you want to walk around the plane, there is a bar in the first class cabin where you can sit and eat nuts and chat with people. There are also video games you can play at your seat, and all of the movies you could ever want to watch. Going places is a lot of fun with Richard Branson's Virgin Atlantic Airlines. I actually often find myself going out of my way to travel with his airline because it is so fun and the experience is so enjoyable.

What Branson does on his airline and what he tried to do in all of his businesses is "give people what they want." In fact, the ability to take the pulse of the people you are working for and deliver exactly what they want is something that can make a major, major difference in your ultimate success or failure.

When Branson was designing his airline, he looked around and saw the things he didn't like about traveling, and decided to make changes so he could have an airline and travel experience that matched the way he would want to travel. The idea was that his belief as to how travel should be enjoyable would be something that other people would also enjoy. He was right, of course. The ability to give people what they want is something that characterizes the greatest entrepreneurs from those who are only average.

If you ever have the experience, you also need to visit the Air India first class lounge in London Heathrow. Air India is a government owned airline, and it is the worst first class lounge in the world. Everything about it is horrifying.

- The ventilation system didn't work the last time I was there and it was hot.
- There were all sorts of bugs I didn't even know existed in Europe.
- Everything is dirty.
- It's uncomfortable.
- The people working there are unpleasant.
- There is no shower.
- There are no windows.
- The bathrooms are rancid and dirty.
- There are no updated periodicals.
- The furniture is stained and ripped.
- The food is awful.
- Beverages that are supposed to be cold are warm.

I could go on and on about how bad this lounge is. It's actually worth going out of your way to see it's so bad. What I got from examining this lounge and comparing it to the Virgin Lounge is that one lounge cares about its customers and gives them what they want, and the other doesn't appear to care and doesn't give its customers what they want. This is an incredibly important distinction and something that is important to both your career and life: You need to give people what they want. You need to give your employer what he or she wants. It is your ability to deliver exactly what the market and people around you want that really makes all the difference.

When you are in the market looking for a job and, more importantly, when you are working, one of the most important things you can do is give the people you are working for exactly what they want. An airline, just like any of us, is working for someone. Here, the airline is working for travelers and competing for business. Every single time someone buys one of its tickets someone is "hiring" them to do the job of moving them from one place to another. You need to understand everyone works for someone. If international travelers want to take a sauna in the airport then get a massage on the airplane, let them have it. If they want to get their nails done while flying, let them have that too. The difference between Air India and Virgin Atlantic to me is huge:

I will go out of my way to fly on Virgin Atlantic.

I will also go out of my way not to fly in Air India.

When you are employed by anyone and doing any sort of job, you need to go out of your way to give them what they want. You should never assume you know what people want. Instead, you should do everything within your power to insure you give people what they really want. There are very few people who give people what they really, really want. When you can give people what they really want, you are much better off and will go much further than when you don't.

When I was younger, I worked in law firms. Since I was a younger attorney, I worked for numerous other attorneys. I realized very early on that different attorneys have different needs, and that if I wanted to get ahead inside a law firm, I needed to give each attorney I was working for exactly what they wanted. One of the biggest things I realized was that many attorneys needed and wanted to feel important. Attorneys are talked down to by clients, judges, and more all day. They also have to work very, very hard in school. There were certain attorneys I worked for that if I "kissed their ass" and made them feel important, they would practically kill to defend me. I knew they would do whatever they could to help me in my career. This is an example of giving someone what they want. You need to be on the ball and give the people you work for exactly what they want. In many cases, what people want has nothing to do with the actual work you are doing for them. For example, I know of one attorney who hired people to work for her based on whether she was confident they would be her friend and be able to take personal calls from her at 10:00 pm every night of the week. This is just how it is in the world. People often hire people for reasons that have nothing to do with the work itself.

Giving an employer what they want, means figuring out what it is they want and doing it. If you don't feel comfortable giving the employer what they are looking for, then you shouldn't be doing the job. It is incredibly important that you know exactly what is required of you, and what the employer wants of you. In the Simpson's cartoon, for example, the tycoon Charles Montgomery Burns ("Burns") has his assistant Smithers do practically everything for him. For example, Smithers may wash his back, or carry Burns around on his back. This is the way it is in the world. Certain employers expect certain things. You need to give your employer what they want. You need not prostitute yourself for sex, and never should, but you should respond with whatever the need of the employer is, and give them exactly what they want.

When I was practicing law, some attorneys wanted me to write them short memos of less than two pages that made a short, crisp recommendation. Other attorneys wanted memos of thirty pages or more. The attorneys who wanted two page memos would be unhappy with a thirty page memo, and the attorneys who wanted long memos would have been extremely unhappy with two page memos. It's just the way it is. Certain employers want different things.

You need to give people what they want. Give your employers what they want.

Steve Wynn in Las Vegas is a guy who knows how to give people what they want. He has a giant golf course in the middle of Las Vegas connected to one of his casinos. It is a beautiful golf course that hardly anyone uses. The land that it's on is apparently worth over a billion dollars. He has the golf course there, however, because he knows that the biggest gamblers, "whales," may want to golf while they are in Las Vegas and staying at his casino. He leaves the golf course there for them so they can golf. This also keeps the largest gamblers in his casino, and when the gamblers stay there and don't leave, they are much more likely to spend more money gambling and earn more money for Wynn.

It's what they want.

He just opened a new casino called Encore. Lately, Las Vegas has been undergoing its most severe recession in decades. This recession is so severe that there was a special on *60 Minutes* this week about how the public hospitals can no longer do outpatient care for cancer patients, and consequently, many people are dying. While other casinos in Las Vegas are empty compared to a few years ago, Encore is packed with people. The casino is widely regarded as the nicest casino on the strip at the moment.

It's not the ornateness of the casino that's the largest issue that concerns me, however. It is the fact that Wynn was able to make a casino that was made specifically to attract the sorts of gamblers that are the most profitable and give the biggest gamblers what they want. Wynn, in studying the casino market, found out that 80% of the money inside of casinos is made with the game of Baccarat. Baccarat also tends to attract the largest gamblers, who are the people who expect the most amenities. The longer the gamblers who play Baccarat stay at his casino, the more money Wynn makes. His objective, therefore, is to keep people in his casino as long as he possibly can. One of Wynn's objectives with Encore was to build the most glamorous casino possible in order to attract Baccarat players to his casino and keep them there.

According to a recent article in the *Las Vegas Sun*:

Wynn hasn't changed his top-shelf style to address analysts' concerns in years past, nor is he sweating this economy too much.

"Is it surprising that business moves in cycles?" he said.

In fact, Wynn betrays none of the nervousness usually involved in casino openings. It might be that Encore, which resembles Wynn Las Vegas in its color scheme and design, isn't as much of a risk as some resorts in the pipeline. After all, the more expensive resorts have been less hard hit in this economy.

The smallest of Encore's 2,034 rooms are 700 square feet, compared with 640-square-foot standard rooms at Wynn Las Vegas. Encore's largest suites are more than 5,800 square feet, far bigger than Wynn's 3,200-square-foot suites. Encore's

rooms will be 20 percent more expensive, on average. There's custom-designed red carpet, marble floors with mosaic designs, silk wall coverings and large flower beds inside and out. (The company isn't allowing the interior of the property to be photographed.)

For a large resort, there are more outdoor views from the casino floor, which is enclosed in glass. Like Wynn Las Vegas, Encore is a flowery, boldly colored fantasy land. Encore's main lobby features giant red flower sculptures that bloom from the walls, and butterflies that appear in floor mosaics and glittering wall hangings.

Like Wynn Las Vegas, Encore's Tower Suites have a separate entrance and color scheme. Encore's resembles an indoor garden, with a striped and flowered carpet in a pattern resembling a grassy meadow. The furniture is colored in whites, browns and greens, and bubbles rise from mirrored side tables like water droplets from long vases resembling green stalks.

Even Wynn acknowledges that Encore, for all of its glamor, isn't a big departure from what he's done.

"There was nothing really left to do — we're talking about the most important part of it — but do the basics better," Wynn said. "At the end of the day, it's not about gimmicks but guest experience ... that's the only thing that matters."

The idea that a casino can thrive when others around them are having extreme financial issues is amazing, but it's all because Wynn figured out how to give his most important customers exactly what they wanted. You need to give your employer exactly what they want, and when you do this, everything changes. You need to give the people you are considering working for exactly what they want. When you give the people you are working for exactly what they want, they then want to do more business with you. You want people to want to do business with you. It's crucial that your employer or potential employer wants to do business with you and wants you working for them.

When you are interviewing for a job, the worst thing you can do is talk about what you want to do. You need to ask questions and figure out, instead, what the employer wants you to do. What do they want? What are their needs? What is it that the employer wants? You need to give the employer you're working for what they want. Give people what they want. All that matters is what other people want. Not what you want. Not what you would like. What other people want.

When you go to a good hotel, they anticipate your needs and what you would want. The Four Seasons turns your bed down in the evening. They put a different book mark on your bed each evening. They ask you what paper you would prefer when you check in. They put slippers by your bed in the evening. They arrange your toiletries in the bathroom. They do this and numerous other small things in an effort to anticipate what it is you want. This is something that keeps them doing well.

My wife knows zero about electronics, but is in charge of keeping our television and stereo in working order. When she looks for electronics, she goes to Best Buy and they have people there who come out to the house and install everything. They also advise her on the things she's interested in purchasing, and give her advice about what to do each step of the way. All of the other electronics stores like Circuit City and others near us have gone out of business. Not Best Buy. They've given their customers what they want.

You need to do everything within your power to give people and your employer what they want. It is not just important, it is about your survival. You will only survive in companies when you give the people you are working for exactly what they want. Not what you want, what they want.

I used to work very long hours in the office. I would come in around 7:00am and stay until at least 7:30 or 8:00 pm most days. When I hired senior executives to work for me at a high salary, I always wanted them working beside me and working long hours as well. If they came in at 10:00am and left at 4:00pm, I did not like it. I remember that many of them claimed they could get more done at home when they worked like this. This may or may not have been true. What I do know is that I did not like it, and it alienated me. It was not what I wanted. This person may have done the best work possible, but this did not matter. I wanted them in the office to bounce ideas off of. I wanted them circulating among other employees, and sharing ideas. I wanted something different than what was being delivered.

You need to give the people you are working for exactly what they want. Go out of your way to fulfill the needs of your employer, and you will see great things happen with your career. Concentrate on what other people want and your employer or potential employer wants, and not what you want.

THE LESSON

Gauging the people around you and giving them exactly what they want can determine the success or failure of any action you undertake. This ability separates the great entrepreneurs from the average. Instead of assuming that you know what people want, work to ascertain peoples' actual desires and fulfill them. When you go out of your way to fulfill the needs of your employer rather than focusing on your own needs, you will find great things happening in your career.

<https://www.harrisonbarnes.com/>