

Injustice – Delta Style

The Story of Rodney Carpenter

Until June 29 of this year Rodney Carpenter was a ticket agent for Delta Air Lines. He did a 6 year bid in PBI and 1 year in HNL. During that time, he was elected by his coworkers to be their representative on the Delta Forum, Delta's powerless version of an employee association. He received numerous commendations for customer service and was seen by his fellow employees as someone who would go to bat for them and for the passenger.

In 2006 he transferred to MSP. Shortly after that his troubles began. He began to come into regular conflict with Laura Peihl, a Performance Lead (PL). Because of this conflict, he contacted Delta Human Resources to make a complaint about her. Soon she demanded that he meet with her in her office. Carpenter sought a witness to go with him believing Delta policy allowed this. When he came back without one, Peihl and another PL demanded that he withdraw his complaint against her. When he refused, she asked for his badges and sent him home for 4 days without pay.

When he returned he was given a Final Warning Letter for allegedly threatening the other PL. He requested that the security tapes showing this incident be made available. Another PL refused, saying that if he pursued this he would be fired. Needless to say, Rodney kept an extremely low profile for awhile. He was, however, recommended by his station manager for the Delta Chairman's Award. Rodney was absolutely committed to customer service despite his problems at work.

Trouble began again when Peihl became the acting station manager. She called Rodney in for a disciplinary letter for attendance. During this time he had been working large amounts of overtime and extra shifts to help cover gaps in the schedule. On three different occasions Rodney met with Peihl to ask that he be allowed to work just his own shift. She made it clear this would not be acceptable.

Peihl also became aware during this time that Rodney was a supporter of the union. His own experience over the last 2 years had convinced him that workers needed a voice. In fact, he helped set up a meeting after work to discuss the union issue with coworkers. The meeting was to occur on June 29 at 9PM. Rodney was suspended that day without pay for missing 2 hours of a shift he had picked up. He has since been terminated, although he has still not been informed in writing of his status.

While we cannot guarantee that Rodney would be employed if he had a union backing him up, the bullying he experienced would not have been allowed. We know he would have had a union steward with him every time he met with Peihl. We know that he would have received pay while on suspension. We know he would have had 3 different steps or hearings, with representation, to ascertain the facts. We know he could have had his case arbitrated before a neutral third party. We know heavy pressure would have been brought on management to rein in Peihl. We know this story illustrates what Delta means when they talk about a "direct relationship".