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June 21, 2007

W. Douglas Parker  
111 West Rio Salado Pkwy.  
Tempe, AZ 85281

Dear Mr. Parker:

During the past week, I have had a truly terrible experience with US Airways. I would like to take a moment of your time to relate this experience to you, as I feel it is worthy of the attention of the company's CEO.

*To Houston*

Last Saturday, June 16, I was scheduled to fly from Pittsburgh to Houston, through Charlotte, on US Airways flights 3639 and 2609, respectively. When I arrived in Charlotte, my flight to Houston had been canceled due to weather in the Houston area, and according to the gate agent, my only remedy would be to stand in line at the very crowded US Airways service desk.

I found out I could get a voucher for a discounted (not *free*) hotel room and be placed on standby for a flight the following morning. Because my flight from Pittsburgh had arrived so close to my Charlotte departure time, I was one of the last in line at the service desk, and I had little hope of actually flying to Houston as early as was stated by the representative.

To further complicate the situation, I was traveling with my cat, who requires a prescription diet and other amenities not normally found at hotels. I began to look for other ways to arrive in Houston that evening. Continental's flights were delayed, not canceled like US Airways's single remaining flight, but Continental had no seats available. Why had US Airways canceled their flight but Continental not, I wondered? After all, my family and friends in Houston told me over the phone that the stormy weather there was isolated and not even particularly severe.

Unable to fly directly to Houston, I expanded my search to cities like Baton Rouge, Dallas, and Austin.

I noticed American Airlines flight 659 would be departing for Dallas soon, so I rushed across the entire length of the Charlotte airport, sweating and with cat in tow, to American Airlines gate A9. I spoke with the gate agent, and she kindly sold me the last available seat on that flight. At that point, I had to decide how to get to Houston after landing in Dallas, and in the absence of available seats on American Airlines or Continental flights that would have connected me to my final destination, I called rental car companies and eventually reserved a car with Dollar Rent A Car. I would later drive that car to Houston, after purchasing pet supplies at a grocery store near the airport in Dallas.

Many stressful and exhausting hours later, I finally arrived at my destination in Houston, with a small amount of morning sun already brightening the sky. I was relieved to be in Houston, but then I had to begin worrying about how to retrieve the luggage I had checked with US Airways.

Later in the day, I called the US Airways baggage center, which informed me I would simply have to go to the Houston airport and talk with somebody there. Why were they unable to track my bag and give me an estimate of when it would arrive in Houston?

That afternoon, I visited the Houston airport, far out of my way and on the other side of the city, only to find out my luggage had not arrived, and still, nobody had any way to track it. The baggage center agent gave me a phone number to call, which I used occasionally over the following 24 hours to leave messages that went unreturned. Finally, after purchasing several hundred dollars in clothing to attend the events for which I was in Houston and after attending those events, I visited the airport again. My luggage had just been unloaded from the carousel, almost 48 hours after I was running through the Charlotte airport trying to get my cat and myself to Houston.

### *To Pittsburgh*

To have canceled flights completely break one leg of a trip is something frequent travelers know all too well, and we take it in stride, grumble a bit, and have a drink at the hotel. To also have a canceled flight on the return journey is more than just stressful: it made me angry with US Airways and seriously question my interest in returning to your ticket counters as a frequent flyer in the future.

My return journey to Pittsburgh, through Philadelphia, was scheduled for July 20 on US Airways flights 3262 and 3275. That afternoon, I tried to check into my flights on the web, only to find I was unable to do so.

It seems, without notifying me by telephone, email, or otherwise, my flight was re-booked to Continental flight 1417, non-stop to Pittsburgh. The non-stop aspect of that flight was a nice advantage over flying US Airways, but I would have expected somebody to notify me of the change, especially since the new departure time was two hours later than my US Airways departure time.

I called a US Airways agent to verify my new itinerary, and he told me it was correct and that I should check into the flight at the Continental ticket counter.

After arriving at Continental's terminal E in Houston, I went to the ticket counter and attempted to retrieve my boarding pass. I was unable to do so, and after 20 minutes of dealing with an unhappy Continental ticket agent, I was told I had to present a *paper ticket* in order to get a boarding pass. Now, why, after my entire jumbled reservation had been handled electronically, should I require a paper ticket?

With about 55 minutes remaining until the departure time of the Continental flight, I had to get to terminal A, which is *over a mile* away from terminal E, obtain a paper ticket from a US

Airways representative, return to Continental, check into my flight, join the endless masses of people in the security line waiting to board Continental's many evening international flights out of terminal E, and then run to my gate to eventually board my flight.

Which I did, mostly out of breath and completely stressed out for the entire hectic experience, and then, after sitting for 50 minutes in a hot, humid 737 waiting for take-off, I finally was on my way to Pittsburgh. I boarded that flight with only a few minutes to spare because of this paper ticket business and the misleading US Airways representative on the phone earlier in the day.

### *Resolution*

I have flown over 22 flights this year with US Airways and its partners, and before the travel experience I outlined in this letter occurred, I had been looking forward to many more. US Airways employs generally friendly staff, both in the air and on the ground, and as the state of air travel in this country slowly declines, US Airways has, in many ways, managed to stay above that downward curve.

That said, the maddening and expensive changes to my travel plans over this past week are inexcusable. As a traveler at the mercy of airlines, national security, and inclement weather, my rights are few, and when something goes awry, the convenience of air travel goes from pleasant to nonexistent very quickly.

I would like a complete reimbursement for my travel expenses with US Airways (\$469.60), American Airlines (\$656.90), and Dollar Rent A Car (\$182.73). The total of those expenses is \$1,309.23.

Further, I would appreciate any additional recompense US Airways could provide. Some suggestions are permanent preferred status in the Dividend Miles program, a significant number of free round-trip flights and/or free first class upgrades, or large discounts on future flight reservations.

Because I travel frequently, both domestically and internationally, I often advise friends and family on travel plans. These travel arrangements, along with business travel decisions in the organizations with which I am affiliated, may certainly exclude US Airways in the future. The decision is yours: poor treatment of valued customers is never a good way to run a business.

Sincerely,

Colin W. Wetherbee