CAROLYN PADDOCK HAS BEEN IN CORPORATE AND COMMERCIAL AVIATION FOR 25 YEARS. DURING HER TIME IN THE BUSINESS, SHE HAS FLOWN EVERYONE FROM INTERNATIONAL POP STARS AND TOP-TIER ACTORS TO BILLIONAIRES AND MEMBERS OF THE SAUDI ROYAL FAMILY. THE SERVICE SHE DELIVERS IS IN KEEPING WITH THIS EXCEPTIONAL MODE OF TRAVEL; SHE WORKS WITH HER PASSENGERS IN A LUXURY ENVIRONMENT THAT IS RELATIVELY SMALL AND INCREDAINTLY INTIMATE. THIS IS NOT A JOB FOR THE FAINT OF HEART, AS SHE MUST DELIVER A CUSTOMIZED EXPERIENCE WITHIN THE STRICTEST OF STANDARDS OF PASSENGER SAFETY AND BESPOKE CUSTOMER SERVICE.

ON AN OVERNIGHT FLIGHT WHERE THE SOFAS WERE MADE UP INTO BEDS, CAROLYN NOTICED THAT ONE OF HER PASSENGERS FREQUENTLY GOT INTO BED ONLY TO GET UP A BIT LATER TO TAKE A CALL OR GET A DRINK OF WATER. AT THESE TIMES SHE WOULD GO AND STRAIGHTEN THE SHEETS, AS SHE WANTED HIS BED TO LOOK PERFECT WHEN HE RETURNED. EACH TIME HE RETURNED HIS BED WAS REMADE AND LOOKED FRESH AND TIDY; HE CLEARLY LIKED THIS ATTENTION TO DETAIL. CAROLYN, HOWEVER, NOTICED A SMALL, BUT IMPORTANT POINT; WHEN RETURNING TO BED HE FREQUENTLY HAD SOMETHING IN HIS HAND, WHETHER IT WAS A GLASS OF WATER OR HIS PHONE. THIS MADE PULLING BACK THE TUCKED-IN SHEETS A LITTLE MORE DIFFICULT AND NOT AS QUICK AS IF HE HAD RETURNED TO AN UNMADE BED, AND SO CAROLYN MADE A CORRECTION. RATHER THAN TUCKING IN THE SHEETS, SHE STRAIGHTENED THE COVERS AND FOLDED BACK THE TOP SO THERE WAS AN INVITING “OPENING” FOR THE PASSENGER TO USE. RATHER THAN HAVING TO PULL APART A FRESHLY MADE BED, ALL HE HAD TO DO WAS
slip right in. Easy to do, this action and correction showed Carolyn’s consideration for her passenger.

What Carolyn did was notice. And when she acted on what she had noticed, her passenger felt cared for, and care means everything in the customer service relationship. As business owners or managers, your job is to care for those in your businesses, but “caring” for strangers is not as easy as it sounds. Why? Because you can’t make your staff actually feel for your customers. But you can ask your employees to notice what is happening to their customers (a customer entering the business) and empower them to act on what they see (I’ll open the door for this person), and your customer, in turn, will feel cared for, nurtured, and considered (what a thoughtful gesture). With each action you let the guest know that you noticed. Each time you noticed you acted, demonstrating to your guests that you were fully aware of their situation. Noticing their individual situation let them feel cared for. It’s that simple: observe the situation and offer an action.

My principle of “I notice = I care” gives everyone involved in the service equation what they want. It gives guests the “care” they seek while giving staff members concrete things to do to demonstrate care for their guests. This is a surefire way to get positive feedback. With the “I notice = I care” equation, everyone wins.

It is actually easier to understand the principle of “I notice = I care” by looking at things from the opposite direction. Most people perceive inattentive service as the staff “not caring,” and this is a very clear equation as well: I didn’t notice = I didn’t care. Or from the guests’ perspective: “no one notices me/my situation = no one here cares at all.” Ouch. But this is really the way it feels. For example, customers will remember the frustration of waiting on hold on the phone (no one notices I’m patiently waiting = no one cares about my time) or of getting an overstuffed shopping bag that is about to break (the salesperson didn’t notice that this bag is overstuffed = he doesn’t care about getting everything home in one piece) or of struggling to exit the kids’ store while managing a baby, a stroller, a bag, and another child and the staff lingers nearby chatting (those employees didn’t notice my struggle = they don’t give a hoot). As a business owner or manager, this is