



# AIRPORT SERVICE QUALITY

BENCHMARKING THE GLOBAL AIRPORT INDUSTRY

## Best Practice Report

### Staff Courtesy



# Introduction

The Best Practice Reports are part of the ASQ Survey's additional services and aim to identify and to disseminate best practices from top-performing airports around the world. Focusing on a specific topic, the objective is to provide a comprehensive picture of practices as well as to serve as the basis for further discussions between ASQ participants.

The reports are based on information collected from airports participating in the ASQ Programme through an online questionnaire. Only airports which participated in the Best Practice Survey receive the full report along with individual airport profiles.

The topic of this Best Practice Report is staff courtesy. The present document includes the main results of the research focusing on the following aspects:

- ➔ Methods to improve the courtesy of own staff
- ➔ Methods to improve the courtesy of third party staff
- ➔ Regional practices regarding staff courtesy
- ➔ Trends at aiming to improve staff courtesy



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## Survey Participants - 101 in total

### Africa - Middle East - Asia (30)

Bahrain, Bangalore, Bangkok BKK, Beijing, Cairo, Chiang Mai, Dammam, Darwin, Delhi, Doha, Douala, Dubai, Guiyang, Haikou, Hyderabad, Kuala Lumpur, Macau, Mauritius, Muscat, Nairobi, Nanjing, Newcastle NTL, Phnom Penh, Seoul GMP, Seoul ICN, Singapore, Sydney, Tianjin, Tokyo NRT, Wuhan

### Americas (32)

Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore, Boston, Calgary, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Curacao, Dallas DAL, Denver, Detroit, Fort Lauderdale, Guayaquil, Halifax, Indianapolis, Jackson Evers, Jacksonville, Mexico City, Minneapolis, Montreal, Nashville, Nassau, Ottawa, Port Columbus, Sacramento, San Antonio, San Diego, Santo Domingo, Toronto, Victoria, Washington DCA, Washington IAD

### Europe (39)

Aberdeen, Athens, Bristol, Brussels, Bucharest OTP, Budapest, Dublin, East Midlands, Edinburgh, Faro, Frankfurt, Geneva, Glasgow, Gothenborg, Hamburg, Helsinki, Keflavik, Lisbon, London LGW, London STN, Lyon, Madeira, Madrid, Malta, Manchester, Milan LIN, Moscow SVO, Munich, Oslo, Porto, Porto Santo, Rome FCO, Sandefjord, Southampton, Stockholm ARN, Stockholm NYO, Venice, Vienna, Zurich

# Overview

Staff courtesy is becoming more and more important in all service industries, including in air transportation. But even though it has become clear that this is an important aspect for passengers' overall experience, ASQ courtesy scores have not significantly improved during the last years. Even though courtesy items are among the top priorities of the best ten airports, globally their average score growth between 2007 and 2010 shows that they are among the slowest growing ASQ items.

Why is it so difficult to improve courtesy? This is due to two main reasons:

- ➔ Courtesy is about human beings, which means that it is very personal and difficult to have an impact on.
- ➔ Most of the staff working within an airport is not employed by the airport authority (third party staff), which implies that the airport has a limited influence on them.

However, each airport can try to positively influence the staff courtesy level by modifying or implementing the following factors in its management strategy:

- ➔ Staff qualification
- ➔ Number of staff
- ➔ Company goals
- ➔ Training
- ➔ Incentives
- ➔ Recognition programmes

We will first of all briefly review staff qualification, the number of employees and the company goals aspects. The three other factors will be covered more deeply in the following sections of this Best Practice Report.

## Staff qualification

To increase staff courtesy levels, airports should hire people who are service oriented to accomplish the frontline tasks. Such employees will indeed tend to provide a more qualitative service to the passengers, which will undoubtedly have a positive impact on customer satisfaction.

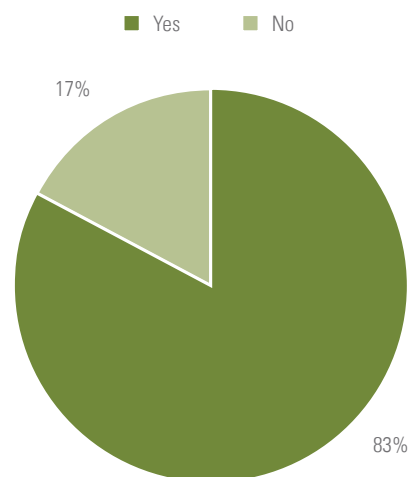
## Number of staff

Hiring the right number of staff is also essential in order to improve staff courtesy levels. But it can be quite complicated to know how many employees should be working frontline. Indeed, there is a fine balance to reach since having not enough staff can have a negative impact on the passengers' experience as it will cause an increase of the waiting times. And having too many staff also has drawbacks as nobody will really feel responsible for assisting passengers.

## Company goals

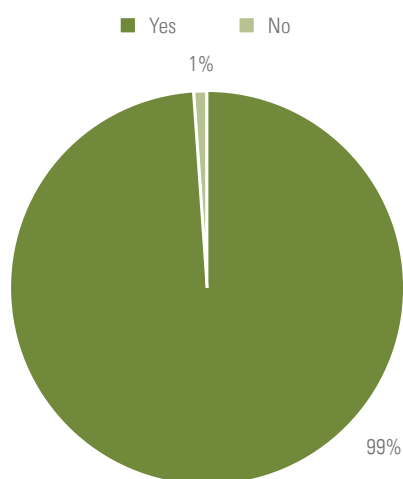
The quality of customer service should be part of the main goals of the company if the airport wants to see its staff courtesy levels increase. It is indeed an effective way to prove to the employees that this is not just a wish of the company but a real strategic pillar to focus on.

## Has your airport established and published a vision, mission and values statement?

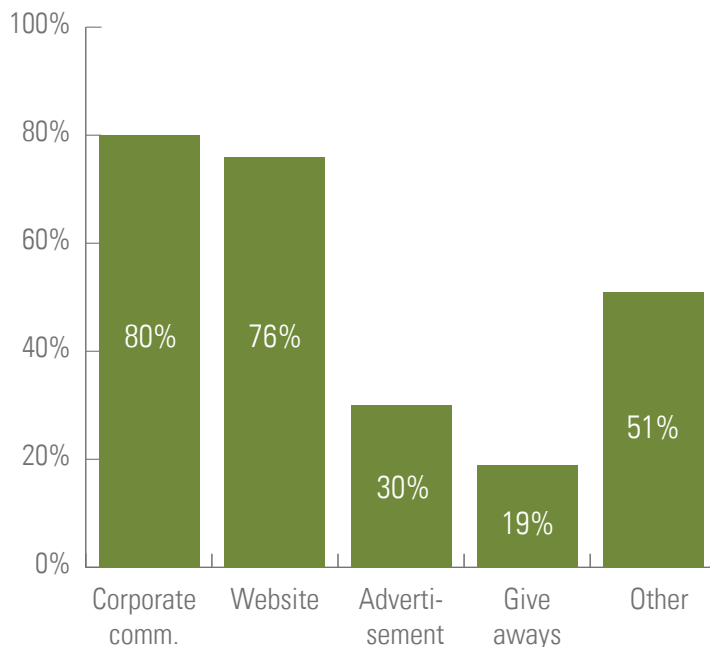


Most of the participating airports apply this concept as among the 83% which published a vision, mission and values statement, almost all (99%) refer to the importance of providing good customer service in it.

### Does the vision, mission and values statement refer to the importance of providing good customer service?



### How is the commitment to providing good customer service advertised?



Other:  
 Intranet, training, posters/frames, workshops, business cards, airport ID, strategy booklets, official presentations.

In most cases airports use several different methods at the same time. The most common means are through corporate communication and/or the airport website. Some other means such as intranet, training, posters/frames and workshops are quite successful too. Some airports even included a laminated copy of the values with the airport ID badge so that each staff working within the airport complex can refer to them at any time.

On the other hand, advertisement and give aways are less often used to promote the commitment to customer service quality.

# Own staff courtesy

Training, incentives and recognition programmes can also be used to improve customer service quality.

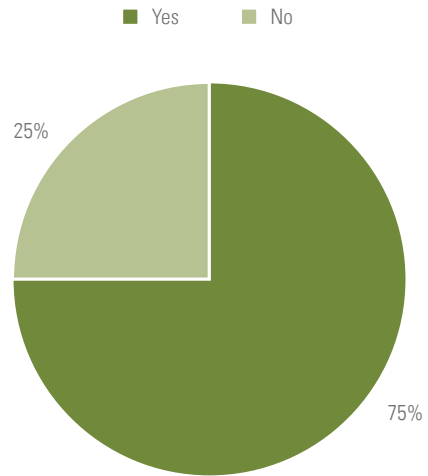
## Training

Three quarters of survey respondents provide an initial mandatory customer service training to their own frontline staff. For 87%, this is classroom training and the average duration is thirteen hours. For 10%, this is on the job training and the average duration is twenty-eight hours. 3% use self study or online methods.

Most airports cover several aspects at the same time during the customer service training, such as:

- ➔ How to speak to passengers?
- ➔ What are the basic principles of courtesy?
- ➔ Which different services are proposed at the airport?
- ➔ How should staff behave in front of passengers?
- ➔ Are there any airport uniforms or name tags?
- ➔ How to react to angry passengers?

## Does your own frontline staff undergo an initial mandatory customer service training?

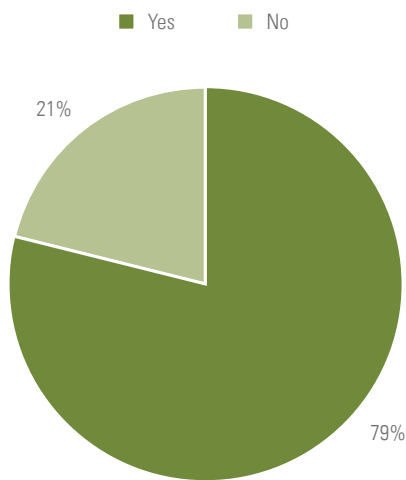


## What topics are usually covered in the initial training?



Other:  
ASQ Survey, vision/mission/values, teambuilding, conflicts & stress management, security, disabled passengers, customer service quality, etc.

## Does your airport provide any refresher training to its own frontline staff?

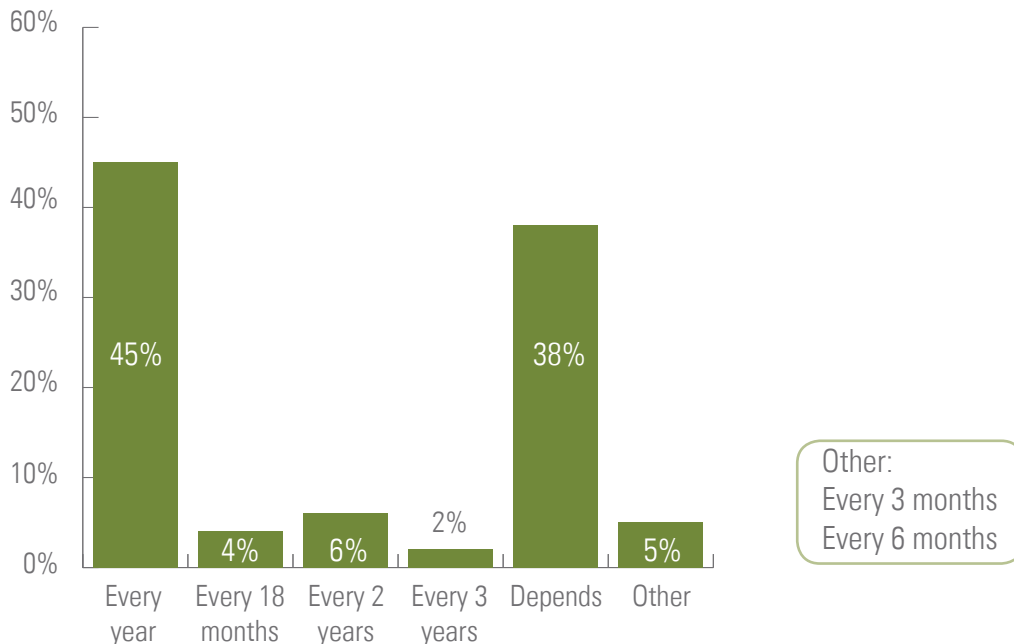


Among the airports that provide an initial customer service training, almost 80% also provide refresher training to their own frontline staff. As we will see later in this report, this systematic approach is mainly typical of the Asian airports.

Most of the time the refresher training is done annually (45%) although quite a few airports provide it on a less regular basis depending on individual needs (38%). The three other solutions - every 18 months, every 2 years and every 3 years - are less common.

The average duration of the refresher training is eight hours, which is slightly less than the initial training's duration.

## What is the frequency of the refresher training?



## Incentives

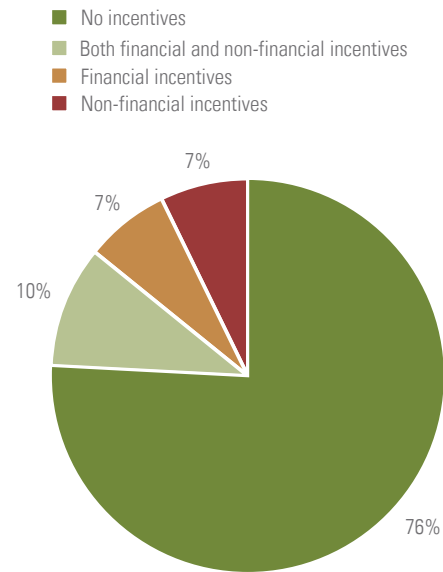
Incentives, financial and/or non-financial, can also be implemented to increase staff courtesy levels.

Only one quarter of the respondents provide incentives to their own frontline staff and in most cases they provide both financial and non-financial incentives at the same time.

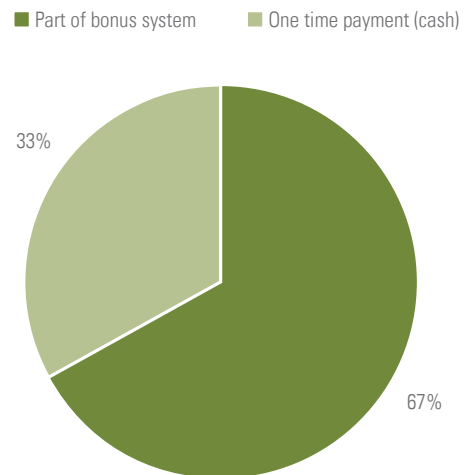
In two thirds of the cases, financial incentives are part of the employees' bonus system while the remaining third consists of a one time payment. At some airports for instance, ASQ courtesy scores are part of the employees' bonus: the higher the ASQ courtesy scores, the higher the bonus at the end of the year.

The most popular non-financial incentives are corporate gifts followed by gala dinners or other kinds of entertainments such as movie / music / sport tickets. 25% of the airports provide parking rebates, which is mainly popular in North America. Finally shop vouchers, extra holidays, food & beverage vouchers and shop rebates are less often used as incentives for the own frontline staff.

## Does your airport provide any incentives to its own frontline staff?



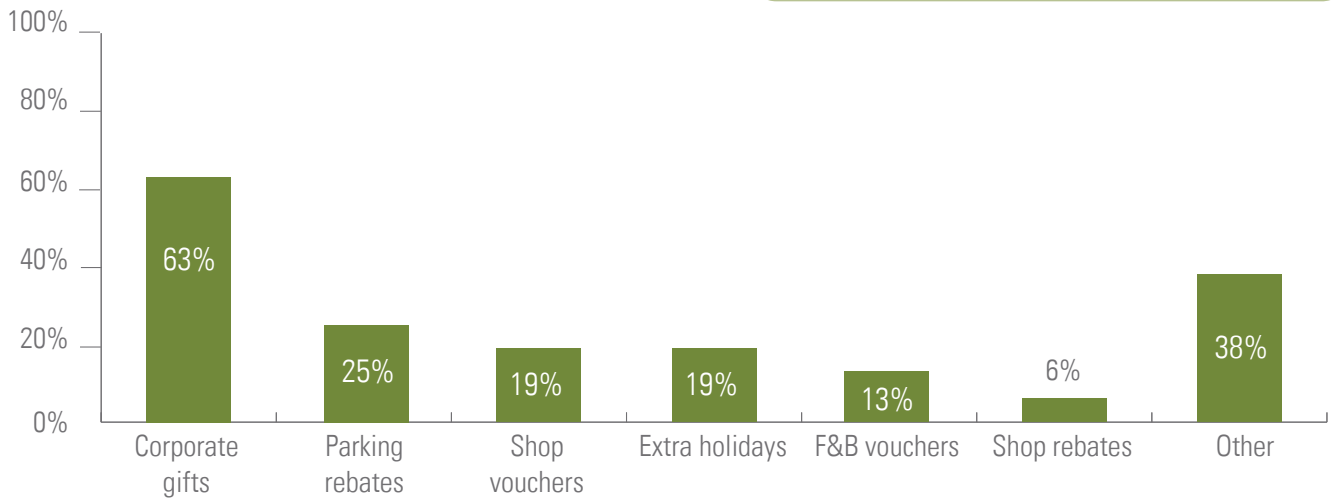
## What kind of financial incentives do you provide?



## What kind of non-financial incentives do you provide?

Other:

Travel, dinners, various entertainments (movie tickets, music jazz festival tickets).



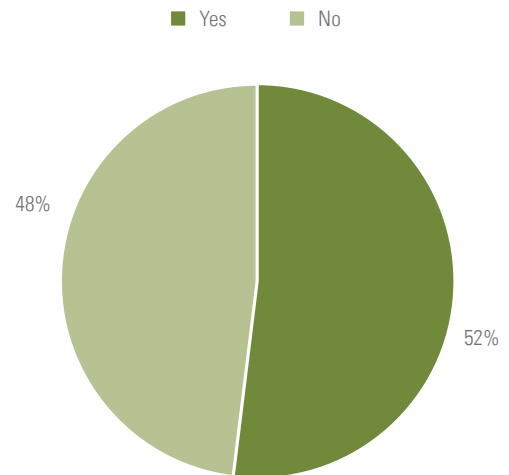
## Recognition programmes

If customer service training and incentives are not sufficient, airports also have the possibility to implement recognition programmes. The main goal of these programmes is to motivate staff by touching their pride.

Slightly more than half of the participating airports have established a formal employee recognition programme rewarding excellent customer service.

Most of the time the main reward for employees who have demonstrated excellent customer service is a trophy, an award, a certificate and/or a recognition letter. Some airports also provide shop or food & beverage vouchers to the selected employee(s). Finally, some participants prefer rewarding the employee(s) with a one time cash payment or some corporate gifts.

## Does your airport have any recognition programme for its own frontline staff?



## Third party staff courtesy

Who is considered to be third party staff? They are employees who are working within the airport complex but who are not employed by the airport authority. For instance, security staff, ground handling staff, retail and F&B staff, airline staff, cleaning staff and immigration staff are typically part of third party staff.

On average, airports provide more training (both initial and refresher), incentives and recognition programmes to their own employees than to the third party staff. We believe this is mainly due to the two following reasons:

- ⇒ Staff availability: it can be quite difficult to convince external companies to give free time to their employees so that the airport can provide customer service training.
- ⇒ Financial aspect: in terms of cost, it may be difficult for an airport to provide training, incentives and recognition programmes to all staff working within the airport.

### Training

Half of the survey respondents provide an initial mandatory customer service training to third party frontline staff. Among them, most offer an initial training to security staff (70%), ground handling staff (66%), retail staff (64%) and food & beverage staff (57%).

Slightly more than half of the cleaning and airline staff (both 55%) also participate in such training. Why are these employees less systematically included in customer service training? We believe this reflects the fact that it is less important for the cleaning staff to follow such classes as they are less often in direct contact with passengers. Regarding the airline staff, as most of them have their own training it is unnecessary to ask them to follow the airport's training as well.

Finally, in only 34% of the cases immigration staff attends such training.

As is the case for airport authority staff, most of the time the initial training is done in a classroom (86%) and only a few airports use self study and online training. The average duration of the initial training is ten hours.

Do the airports which provide an initial training to the third party staff also offer a refresher training? It is the case for 50% of the respondents. As for the own staff, the refresher training is generally done yearly (67%) or on a less regular basis depending on individual needs (19%). The average duration of the refresher training is exactly the same as for the own frontline staff: eight hours.

## Incentives

81% of participating airports do not provide any incentives to third party staff. Among the rest, 10% offer non-financial incentives, 6% financial incentives and only 3% provide both at the same time.

The most popular non-financial incentives are corporate gifts, shop and food & beverage vouchers. Some airports also offer other types of non-financial incentives such as annual parties / dinners, travel and various forms of entertainment. No airports offer any parking or shop rebates as non-financial incentives to the third party staff.

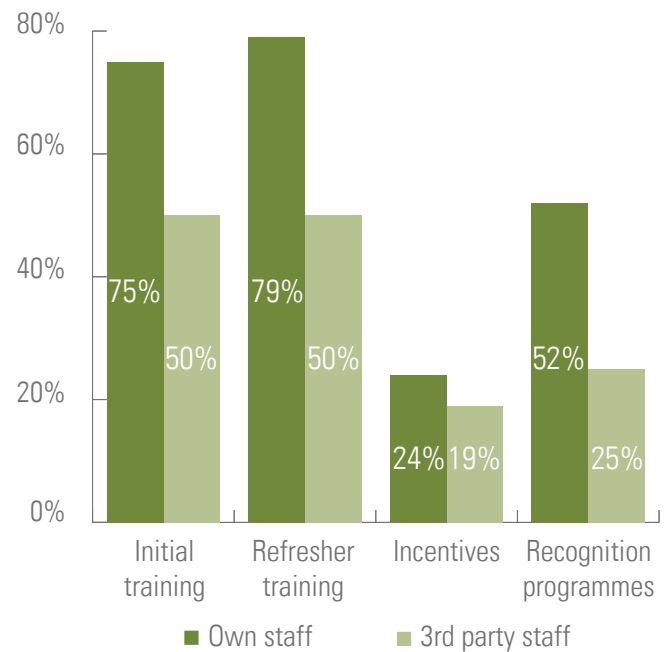
Regarding financial incentives, one time payment is the preferred option: the vast majority of participating airports offer cash as a financial incentive to third party frontline staff.

## Recognition programmes

Most respondents do not provide any recognition programmes to third party staff (only 25%).

As it is the case for the own staff, most of the time the winner(s) receives a trophy, an award, a certificate and/or a recognition letter. Some airports prefer providing some shop or food & beverage vouchers or various corporate gifts to the selected employee(s). Finally, some participants reward the winner(s) with a one time cash payment.

## Comparison of services offered to own frontline staff and to third party frontline staff



## Regional differences

What regional variations can be observed in terms of the types of programmes offered to own and third party employees?

Please note that we have grouped Middle East, Latin America / Caribbean and Africa because too few airports from these regions completed the survey to be able to compute significant percentages. These regions are grouped under the “Rest of the world” category.

### Own frontline staff

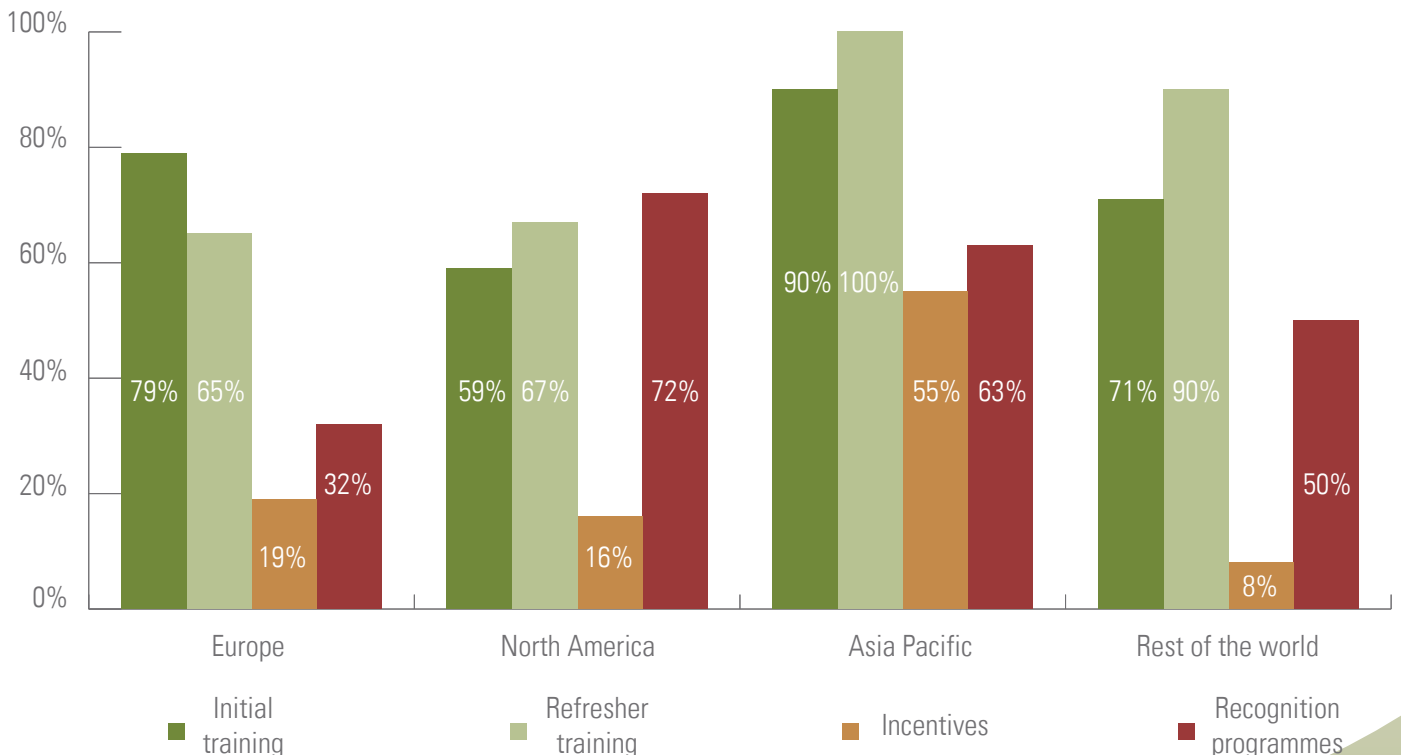
In terms of the types of programmes offered to own frontline staff, Asia Pacific ranks number one for initial customer service training. Airports from this region also have a very systematic approach: if they provide an initial training then they automatically offer a refresher one.

This is the case in Middle East, Latin America and Africa also as 90% of the airports who provide an initial training offer a refresher as well. However this trend is less obvious in Europe and in North America.

Asia Pacific is also the region where the use of incentives is most common. Indeed, it is the only region where more than half of the respondents provide incentives.

Finally, the use of recognition programmes is most common in North America. At the opposite, less than a third of European airports have implemented such methods in their management of their own staff.

### Regional differences - Own frontline staff



### Third party frontline staff

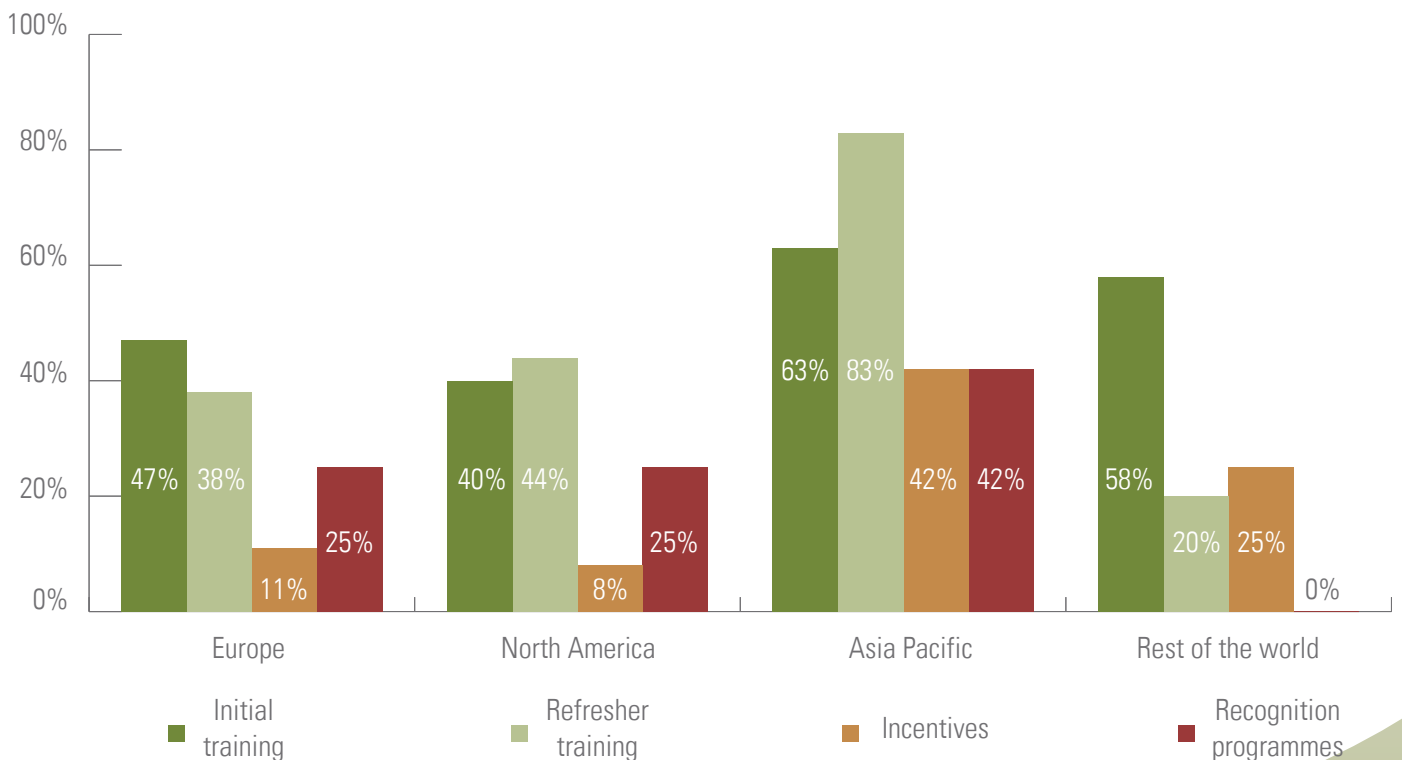
Asian airports provide more training, more incentives and more recognition programmes to third party staff than any other region. Furthermore, we can observe the same systematic approach to training as the vast majority of Asian respondents who provide an initial training also offer a refresher one.

Recognition programmes are much less used for third party staff than for own employees in North America as there is a decrease of about 50% (from 72% to 25%).

Globally we can observe that there are less training (both initial and refresher), less incentives and less recognition programmes for third party staff than for own employees. This is the case in each region except once for the Middle East, Latin America and Africa: indeed, these regions provide more incentives to third party employees than they do to their own staff (25% vs. 8%).

The regional variations observed are undoubtedly largely due to cultural differences. Indeed, there are for instance some countries in which it is well perceived to implement incentives in order to increase the staff efficiency. But in other cultures this can have a negative impact on the employees' motivation as they will feel monitored and in unhealthy competition with their colleagues.

### Regional differences - Third party frontline staff



# Trends

## Customer service training

The majority of survey respondents plan to slightly increase the training offered to their own staff, both in terms of initial and refresher training (37% in both cases).

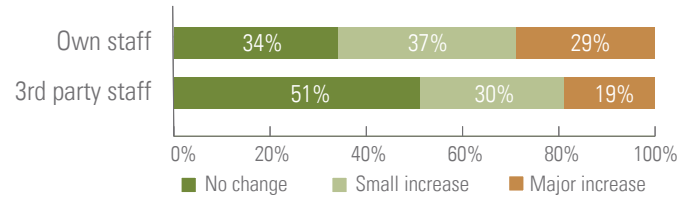
Regarding the third party staff, the majority of the respondents plan to maintain the level of training currently offered. Indeed, most airports do not plan to make any changes, both in terms of initial and refresher training (51% for the initial and 59% for the refresher training).

Very few participants plan to do a major increase of initial and refresher training, for their own staff as well as for third party employees.

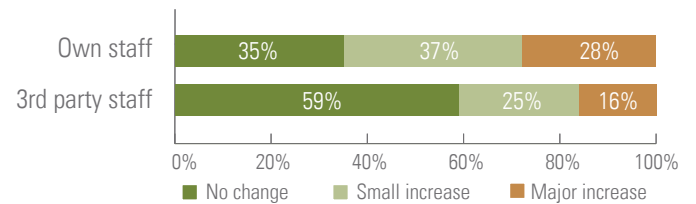
## Incentives

The vast majority of respondents do not plan to make any changes in terms of incentives, both for their own employees and for third party staff (65% and 77% respectively).

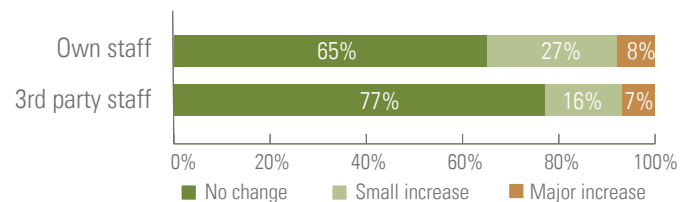
## Does your airport plan to provide less or more initial customer service training?



## Does your airport plan to provide less or more refresher customer service training?



## Does your airport plan to provide less or more incentives?





## Contact Details



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