WESSCO EVP ANITA GITTELSON ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

News / Personalities

After 29 years of cabin comfort magic, **WESSCO's Executive VP** and "Godmother" of the modern amenity kit passes the torch

Oftentimes, an era comes and goes without fanfare to mark its passing. In other cases, something happens, or a person comes along and enables us to see – with great clarity – where we have come from, what we have learned, and how we must continue forward.

Anita Gittelson joined WESSCO International in 1983, bringing with her a strong, sparkling personality and a successful track-record of creating amenity programs in hotels and on cruise ships.

"I started WESSCO in 1979 to service the airline industry with an emphasis on food and beverage items," recalls Bob Bregman, WESSCO President and Founder. "We were successful almost immediately, but I knew we were not servicing the entire inflight opportunity. When Anita started with us, she was one of 10 employees. She started to focus on the premium class passenger with a variety of new ideas and amenity concepts. She also was instrumental in putting us in the hotel

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and cruise line supply business.

Throughout her tenure with WESSCO International, Anita was a driving force behind hundreds of successful brand partnerships and award-winning amenity and comfort programs. She was a founding member of the Marine Hotel Association (MHA), and airlines such as American Airlines, United Airways, and Delta have trusted Anita and the WESSCO team to align their travel brand with chic designers and top cosmetic lines, creating an indulgent and perfectly branded inflight experience.

In 2013, at the TravelPlus Airline Amenity Kit Awards in Hamburg, Germany, Anita was honored by her peers for a lifetime of contribution and leadership in passenger experience development. Her reputation as “Godmother” of the modern-day amenity kit (an epithet that caught on after first appearing in the New York Times) is well-deserved.

Razor-sharp business acumen and professional accolades aside, anyone who’s had the pleasure of meeting Anita Gittelson can attest to her warm heart, generous spirit and genuine desire to see everyone around her flourish.

“What I learned from Anita is not only businesswise, but also how to treat people. Anita is kind and generous,” says Teresa Ng owner of a major China-based supplier of airline products Gittelson worked closely with over the years. “When my children went to Los Angeles to study 15 years ago, they stayed at Anita’s home until they could find a suitable apartment. She bought them good food and treated them so well that I didn’t have to worry if they were lonely. I pay my highest respect to her and I will follow her path to help others.”

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Jennifer Clay, author of Windows to the Jetliner Cabins and Amenity at J. Clay Consulting had this to say about her dear friend: “Over the years Anita’s inspired leadership in the field provided momentum and impetus for many corporations to move towards the creation of specialized, customer-care products. Well ahead of the heated climate-change debates, Anita always emphasized the need to focus on environmentally responsible methods of production.”

For the next generation of professionals looking to make a name in the passenger comfort sector, Gittelson offers this useful advice: “Keep it personal! Customers are partners and friends. We are a family of professionals. When you care about the people your work may be more stressful, but ultimately more fulfilling. And always be a futurist. If you’re not creating something new, you’re falling behind.

"I've never felt I was doing business with anyone,” she adds. “It's always felt personal, like a partnership with people I like. That, I will dearly miss.”

Indeed, the dynamic and inspiring character that is Anita Gittelson will be missed by many, but none more so than her work family at WESSCO.

“I’m still trying to get comfortable with her retirement,” admits Bob Bregman. “Not having Anita to laugh with, yell at, console or just talk to will be very difficult. I’ll miss her tremendously. I truly wish her a comfortable and fun retirement.”

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