

**British Airways Open Letter –  
First published on [www.squiss.co.uk](http://www.squiss.co.uk)**

Sir Martin Broughton, Chairman & Keith Williams, CEO  
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Dear Sir Martin & Mr Williams

Last night I won first prize in British Airways' baggage competition! I am delighted to report I won a tiny stick of deodorant, some shower gel, a flimsy toothbrush, one portion of toothpaste (for those who don't like to clean their teeth at night *and* in the morning) and an XL white t-shirt, which my wife and I should be able to wear simultaneously.



I think I did rather well considering the entry price was just three taxi rides, a suitcase, clothes, a wash bag, car keys...

On the bright side, my luggage is enjoying a mystery trip while I am still in possession of the socks I worked and travelled in yesterday. Hurrah!

For some reason, which was never fully explained, our 21:45 flight (BA0401) from Brussels to Heathrow was delayed by about an hour. Then, a little over an hour later, BA ramped up the excitement substantially when not one but two of the extending walkways failed to extend to allow my fellow passengers and I to alight. I can

assure you the banter on board was both jocular and very complimentary. Whilst the enjoyment ended there for most of the passengers, I was fortunate to be one of six specially selected winners who were awarded quality time together around the luggage carousel watching the empty spaces grow as cases were removed and ours failed to take their places. Mystifyingly, five cases and a rucksack remained upon the carousel long after all the other passengers had trundled home and one wonders what you did with the owners. Even I am in awe at your ability to lose humans as successfully as inanimate objects.



I have to admit, the British Airways staff member who handed out our prizes and issued claim forms was entirely sympathetic declaring, "*Six* of you? Wow! Usually it's only one or two..."

The way she made the statement reminded me of a certain rail company that, a few years ago, issued a self-congratulatory statement that "*fewer* of our trains now drive through red lights" and expected us to celebrate heartily with them.

Assuming your representative meant 'one or two cases *per flight*' and that each of your 256 aircraft (according to Wikipedia) fly just once per day, 365 days per year, that's still somewhere between 93,440 and 186,800 pieces of baggage that take impromptu holidays without their owners every year. Would you like me to congratulate you audibly or will my written best wishes suffice?



But I digress and I'd hate you to think this letter is all about *you*.

With my special British Airways prize bag in hand, I departed Terminal 5 at approximately 00:20 (about 90 minutes later than anticipated) to catch my transfer to the hotel only to discover I had missed the last bus by 45 minutes. Filled with prize-winning joy, I returned to the concourse in the hope of finding a member of BA staff to share my joyfulness with and enquire about a bolt-on reward in the form of transport to my bed. Alas, despite its reported revenue of approximately €13.6 billion, BA has decided it is more fun to leave its prize-winners stranded with nary a helpdesk operative in evidence after office hours. I'm not going to question the wisdom of abandoning your passengers at a time when the airport also closes its helpdesks, as it's obviously more amusing to leave them to stew for several hours.



I'm sure you're anxious to know that my six hours at the Travelodge passed without any excitement, other than my pleasant shower followed by the replacement of my socks that were ripe enough to be making their own bid for freedom.



Upon arrival in Bristol, however, I discovered how challenging it is to drive one's car home when the keys are at a mystery location somewhere distinctly *not* Bristol. Thank goodness for taxis that make twenty-mile round trips to the village in which I live (and keep the spare key) for a mere £44 (making that a £79 donation to taxi drivers, thanks to BA).

Sidetracking slightly, a few years ago my bank refused to accept my claims that I had moved home and persisted in sending my bank statements to a stranger. When they finally conceded that I was in fact correct and *did* know where I lived, they apologised profusely for the months of ineptitude and sent me a very generous Fortnum and Mason hamper.



Naturally, I don't expect an apology from British Airways as I'm well aware of your reputation for not giving two hoots about your passengers and your reluctance to take responsibility when service goes awry, although if you do feel so inclined, hampers are rather passé and I'd prefer tickets to the royal box for this year's Wimbledon men's final (for myself and my fellow prize-winners) and

a directorship at Watford FC (that one's just mine!). However, I do think a gift of £79 to cover my expenses is the absolute least you should offer.

At this juncture I still don't have my suitcase but I'm hopeful my luggage will tire of its own trip soon and return to me swiftly. Naturally, if life sans owner is preferable to it, I shall contact you again for a further donation to cover the cost of my suits, shoes, keys, toiletries, fresh socks...



On a final note, I would like to defend British Airways and declare that I find it unfathomable, with service and prizes such as this, why so many of us prefer to fly Virgin Atlantic. That said, next week when you fly me to Copenhagen for another job, would you mind awarding the prize to someone else?

Yours sincerely

Edward Field.