

# 2025 CARRY-ON BAGGAGE COMPLIANCE METHODS REPORT

Carry-on bags are a huge ancillary revenue challenge facing airlines. This report analyzes 6 policies for revenue effectiveness.

*by IdeaWorksCompany*



# Carry-On Baggage Compliance Methods Report

## Table of Contents

ABOUT THIS REPORT .....	4
1. AUTOMATIC CHARGE AT GATE.....	6
2. SPEEDY BOARDING GROUP .....	8
3. ROVING FEE COLLECTION TEAMS .....	10
4. DEDICATED STAFF AT GATE WITH WAIVERS .....	11
5. GATE AGENT INCENTIVES.....	13
6. CONTROLLED BOARDING.....	15
MORE EXAMPLES OF CARRY-ON POLICY DESCRIPTIONS .....	18

**Disclosure to Readers of this Report:** IdeaWorksCompany.com LLC makes every effort to ensure the quality of the information in this report. Before relying on the information, you should obtain any appropriate professional advice relevant to your particular circumstances. IdeaWorksCompany cannot guarantee, and assumes no legal liability or responsibility for, the accuracy, currency or completeness of the information.

**Terms of Use for this Report:** You may not disseminate any portion of the report to the public through digital means, including mail lists or digital bulletin boards, without the prior consent of IdeaWorksCompany. You have been provided a single code to download this copy from the IdeaWorksCompany online store. This copy is registered to an individual purchaser. Noted at the bottom of each page are the following details: 1) buyer's name, 2) email address, and 3) transaction ID. You may store the document as a file on your servers.

Except as expressly permitted in this Terms of Use, the report may not be reproduced, transmitted, or distributed to anyone outside the purchasing company without permission from IdeaWorksCompany. You may not commingle any portion of the report with any other information and shall not edit, modify, or alter any portion.

IdeaWorksCompany provides the report and services “as is” and without any warranty, or condition, express, implied or statutory. IdeaWorksCompany specifically disclaims any implied warranty of title, merchantability, fitness for a particular purpose, and non-infringement. In no event shall IdeaWorksCompany be liable for lost profits or any special, incidental, or consequential damages arising out of or in connection with the report (however arising, including negligence).

Distribution of this report is protected by the Economic Espionage Act of 1996 of the United States and the data protection laws of Europe.

Issued 08 April 2025 by IdeaWorksCompany.com LLC  
Shorewood, Wisconsin, USA  
[www.IdeaWorksCompany.com](http://www.IdeaWorksCompany.com)



## About Jay Sorensen, Writer of the Report

Jay Sorensen's research and reports have made him a leading authority on frequent flyer programs and the ancillary revenue movement. He is a regular keynote speaker at ancillary revenue and airline retail conferences and has testified to the US Congress on ancillary revenue issues. His published works are relied upon by airline



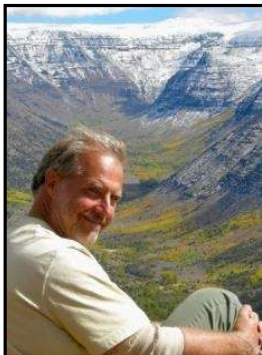
Jay with sons Anton and Aleksei at Artist Point in Yellowstone National Park.

executives throughout the world and include first-ever guides on the topics of ancillary revenue and loyalty marketing.

Mr. Sorensen has 41 years experience in product, partnership, and marketing development in the airline business and travel industry. As president of the IdeaWorksCompany consulting firm, he has helped boost airline revenue, started loyalty

programs and co-branded credit cards, developed products in the service sector, and helped start an airline and other travel companies. His career includes 13 years at Midwest Airlines where he was responsible for marketing, sales, customer service, product development, operations, planning, financial analysis and budgeting. His favorite activities are hiking, exploring and camping in US national parks with his family.

## About Eric Lucas, Editor of the Report



Eric Lucas is an international journalist whose work has appeared in Michelin travel guides, Alaska Airlines *Beyond Magazine*, *American Essence*, *Epoch Times*, *Westways* and many other publications. Founding editor of *Midwest Airlines Magazine*, he is the author of eight books. Eric has followed and written about the travel industry for more than 35 years. He lives on San Juan Island, Washington, where he grows organic garlic, apples, beans and hay.

Eric, at his favorite summer retreat, Steens Mountain, Oregon.



**ABOUT THIS REPORT**

Traditional airlines began charging for checked bags in 2008 to generate new revenue during a global fuel price crisis. The activity began in the US with rapid implementation necessitated by dire economic realities. Little thought was given to somehow enhancing customer service as a result of these new fees. As exceptions, Alaska and Delta Air Lines enhanced their checked baggage service with on-time delivery guarantees. Savvy airlines have since invested their newfound revenue into adding the benefit of digital bag tracking for passengers.

Consumers reacted to the new reality of bag fees by taking more (and larger) carry-ons. Low cost carriers conjured up the novel solution of charging for carry-ons. That’s right, a customer’s own labor of carrying bags would generate revenue for the airline. It’s an awkward strategy unless access to overhead bin space is viewed as an asset to be sold, rather than a free good. Adopting new labels also helps communicate this distinction to customers. That’s why some airlines have stopped calling it a “carry-on” and instead call it an “overhead bag.” Likewise, the clumsy phrase of “personal item” becomes an “under-seat bag.” Taking this practice further would place this signage on bins: “Place your paid overhead bags here.”

This report describes six carry-on baggage compliance methods identified by IdeaWorksCompany through direct observation of airport activities and ongoing research. Each one creates different outcomes that affect customer service, airport operations, and revenue generation. Airlines are encouraged to embrace the method which best aligns with the brand character they want to convey.

<b>Carry-On Baggage Compliance Methods</b>		
<b>Method</b>	<b>Revenue Collection</b>	<b>Method</b>
1	Most Strict	Automatic charge upon boarding.
2	Strict	Speedy Boarding group.
3	Moderate	Roving fee collection team.
4	Moderate	Dedicated staff at gate and waivers.
5	Moderate	Gate agent incentives.
6	Lenient	Controlled boarding.

*2025 Carry-On Baggage Compliance Methods Report*

### 3. ROVING FEE COLLECTION TEAMS

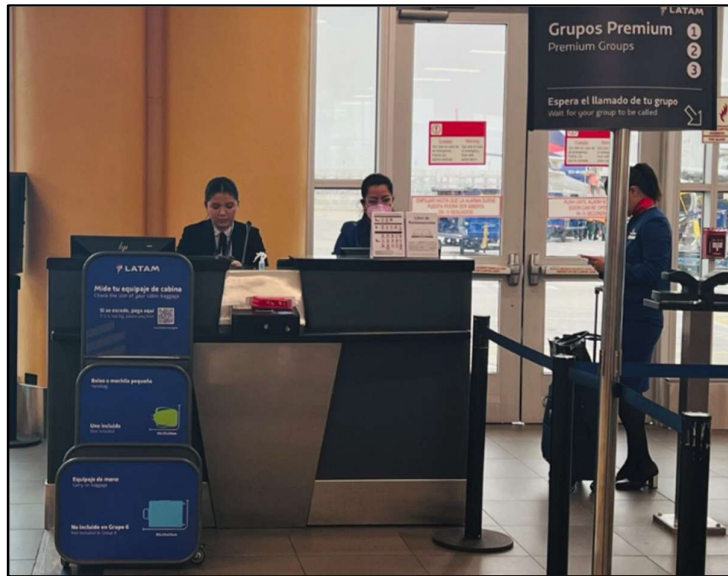
This method could also be called the “baggage police.” This describes contract employees who walk through gate areas on a concourse prior to departure to audit carry-on compliance. This method could be used by traditional carries and LCCs.

The fee collection team visits a gate area and first looks for oversize bags which don't qualify as carry-ons. Basic economy consumers are required to check these bags at the gate with the bag police using a handheld POS to assess the fee. For the carrier observed, charging was not done by the airline, only by the contractor. When boarding begins, those in group 6 are not allowed a carry-on, beyond a small personal item. The agents are not uniformed but have a lanyard ID card.

This carry-on control method is usually associated with LCCs and rarely used by traditional airlines. This is one of the most effective initiatives an airline can deploy to improve carry-on compliance and encourage consumers to pay for checked bags.

Key observations:

- Contract employees should be in uniform to convey a strong impression of legitimacy and authority. Passengers will also have fewer concerns about handing their credit card to a person in uniform.
- Coverage should be consistent and prevalent. Perhaps not every flight is covered, but an insufficient presence will not lead to changed behavior for frequent travelers.
- Agents must be trained with an established script to reduce problem escalation which is prone to occur with this activity.
- Separating this carry-on control activity from regular airline gate agents is a good idea.
- Attention should be paid to employee burn-out which is likely for this position. Continuous negative contact with customers is stressful and tiring. Reduced agent turnover will improve baggage revenue and carry-on compliance.



LATAM gate at Lima with bag sizer.