

Under the Bus: Seven Deadly Sins of Big Bus Miami



Seven Purpose Under the Bus details my experience for the last five years with Big Bus Miami as a tour guide, and tour bus driver. I signed on with Big Bus at age 71 a year after I retired as CEO of a large health rural care center in West Virginia. I had an unprecedented opportunity to work at the very bottom of the corporate ladder, and experience what it meant to be a rank and file employee in Miami. When Big Bus arrived it was the only double decker tour bus company in town, but soon after opening three more double decker tour bus companies became very aggressive competitors. The book contains my personal observations of the manner in which Big Bus failed to implement a successful competitive strategy and lost a substantial part of its market position. I will explore what I consider an oppressive, plantation management style wherein senior managers who had never worked one day on a bus were making critical decisions from armchairs in their air-conditioned offices. Under the Bus is a commentary of the tour bus industry as it is set into Miamis very diverse culture where Spanish is the language of choice and there are three applicants for every job. During my time at Big Bus Miami I was the only Anglo that drove as well as did tours. I will detail policies that are abusive and work to the detriment of all hourly employees. I include a bit of my personal history, and credentials of my career in management that allows me to make credible observations from the vantage point of a bottom tier employee. I also include my own photos taken from various locations to give a depth of understanding to the narrative. Under the Bus is not sanctioned by or connected to Big Bus Miami in any way. All of the observations are strictly my own. Since management is not linear, neither is this story so I apologize in advance for some slight redundancy. My reason for writing this

book is to set the stage for a future organization to protect the unsuspecting Miami tourist from being sold tickets for tours on busses that are dirty, that leak when it rains, that have no air conditioning in the brutal Florida heat, and inferior sound systems with tour guides who are unskilled. Most of all it is written to protect Miami tourists from busses that are mechanically unsafe. Tour operators know that a tourist is only in town for a day or two at most and that it is unlikely that a tourist will take any legal action to recover the price of a tour ticket. Under the Bus is a first step toward the creation of an agency with the authority to order a bus out of service for deficiencies that would render it unfit for tourism. Unfortunately consumer protection agencies are structured like small claims courts to redress complaints by local residents when they should be structured more like the office of an Ombudsman. Tourism is the life-blood for thousands of local businesses and people who depend on tourism for a livelihood. When tour bus operators consistently provide substandard service at present the only recourse for a disgruntled consumer is to write a review on either www.tripadvisor.com or www.trustpilot.com. Requests for refunds are usually rejected except in the most egregious cases. I am pleased to be able to share my observations with you and trust that the next time you travel and take a tour you will be more familiar with the industry and what to look for in a quality tour bus operator. Thank you, Larry Dent

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