ROCKPOPPY

Northgate Ground Services

RAMP & BAGGAGE OPERATIONS, TWO STATIONS · REVIEW CONDUCTED OVER FIVE DAYS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, OPENING

Northgate's ramp operation is run by capable people who are working significantly harder than the plan assumes. On-time performance at both stations is being held up by individual effort and informal coordination rather than by the systems in place to produce it. That is currently working. It is not durable, and the review found three points at which it would stop working with very little warning.

The most consequential is set out below. It concerns the **Supported** condition, and it was the single most consistent theme across all levels interviewed, from new ramp agents to the Station Manager.

FINDING 4.2 — SUPERVISORS HAVE NO PROTECTED TIME TO LEAD

DIRECT OBSERVATION

Across five days, the reviewer followed four shift supervisors through full shifts at both stations. In every case the supervisor spent the majority of the shift working as an additional ramp agent, loading, marshalling or driving a tug, rather than supervising. On two of the four shifts, the supervisor was the only person who could operate a specific piece of equipment, so the shift could not proceed without them on it.

PARTICIPANT ACCOUNTS

Seven of the nine supervisors interviewed described the same pattern without being prompted toward it. Several said coaching happens only when a shift runs unusually light. Two described doing performance conversations in the parking lot at the end of a shift because there was no other time. Ramp agents at both stations described their supervisors positively and independently raised the same concern about their workload.

"I am a very fast loader and a part-time supervisor. Nobody ever told me to be that. It is just what the shift needs."

ROCKPOPPY ASSESSMENT

This is a structural condition rather than a performance problem in the individuals. Supervisory headcount is budgeted against a staffing model that assumes supervisors are supervising; in practice the model is absorbing a shortfall of roughly one agent per shift at Station A and rather more at Station B. Because the operation still performs, the shortfall is invisible in reporting. It is being paid for instead in development that does not happen, standards that are applied inconsistently between shifts, and a succession pool that is not being built.

Two further findings in this report, 4.5 on inconsistent application of the equipment checklist and 6.1 on the absence of ready successors at Station B, are considered downstream of this one. Addressing them separately is unlikely to hold.

On the evidence. This finding rests on direct observation across four shifts and on accounts from nine of eleven supervisors. It was corroborated at a different level of the organization. It is not based on a single account. Where a claim in this report rests on one source, it is marked as such and treated with caution.

RECOMMENDATION R3 — ESTABLISH PROTECTED SUPERVISORY TIME

Finding and implication

Supervisors at both stations are absorbing an agent-level workload, which removes the time in which leading, coaching and standard-setting would happen. The operation currently performs despite this. The exposure is that performance depends on a small number of people continuing to work beyond the role as designed, and that no one is being developed to replace them.

Specific actions

- Establish and roster a defined block of each shift during which the supervisor is not counted in the working complement. Two hours is sufficient to begin with and is easier to defend than a larger figure.
- Reconcile the staffing model against the four shifts observed, so the gap is visible as a number rather than absorbed. The reviewer's estimate is roughly one agent per shift at Station A and one to two at Station B, to be confirmed from Northgate's own records.
- Identify the equipment qualifications held only by supervisors and schedule cross-training, so no shift depends on the supervisor operating a machine.
- Make one coaching conversation per supervisor per week an expectation with a named owner, and review it monthly. The absence of a mechanism, rather than unwillingness, is what is currently preventing it.

PRIORITY SUMMARY, EXTRACT

REF	RECOMMENDATION	PRIORITY	TIMING	PROPOSED OWNER
R1	Establish interim cover for the Station B equipment qualifications held by one person	RED	Immediate	Station Manager, B
R3	Establish protected supervisory time at both stations	AMBER	30 days	Director of Ground Ops
R4	Reconcile the staffing model against observed shift composition	AMBER	60 days	Director of Ground Ops
R7	Build a tested successor pool for supervisory roles at Station B	AMBER	90 days	HR Business Partner

Red means interim cover should be established immediately. Amber means a planned improvement or a piece of analysis. These are priorities for action. They are not ratings of individuals, and they are not a judgment on station safety.

WHAT IS WORKING

Reported with the same weight as the findings. Informal coordination between the ramp and the bag room at Station A is unusually good, and is why several near-misses on connection times did not become misses during the review. Three supervisors are coaching deliberately and well, in time they are effectively donating.

MATTERS TO CONFIRM BEFORE ACTING

- The staffing gap is a reviewer's estimate from four observed shifts. Confirm it against Northgate's rostering and payroll records before committing to any hiring decision.
- No peak-season period was observed. Whether the pattern worsens at peak should be established before the 60-day action is scoped.

About this extract. Northgate Ground Services does not exist. The organization, the people and the findings are invented to show how a Rockpoppy assessment is structured, evidenced and written. The method and the standard of evidence are those used in real engagements. Real reports are confidential to the client who commissions them and are never shared.