

The Wonderful World of Disney - Customer Service on the Front Line

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Disney has been in the news recently. Some would say for the wrong reasons. One thing that has been true for decades is they deliver outstanding customer service. Disney provides millions of people every year with an experience of a lifetime that keeps customers coming back generation after generation. You can't fake that level of excellence and customer service.

A good friend of mine just returned from taking his family to Disneyland for the fourth time. Of course, I love to hear his stories about their family experience, but it also piqued my interest in "how are they doing"; with their customer service.



Customer retention is more important than ever in all businesses as we find ourselves in an increasingly competitive world fighting for a piece of market share and the customers' wallets.

Disney is an excellent model to consider because of the high loyalty level among its guests. They serve as a guideline for anyone who wants to improve customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The Red Zone

Walt Disney said, "Just when everyone is saying how great you are is when you're the most vulnerable." At Disney, it's known as the Red Zone. Every business that gets positive feedback from customers regularly can quickly become complacent. Something changes when you get all the right people in the right positions and things go smoothly. Many businesses feel like they are unstoppable. That's the reality of running any business.

The problem is that in any short two-month period, you can have a lot of things go wrong that probably set you back six months or even a year of growth. It could be just a few little things, but it still causes plans to slow down or stall completely. This shows that being prepared all the time for the unexpected is the only way to stay ahead of the competition. Arrogance and complacency can cause a lack of attention to detail. Keeping your front-line people focused isn't always easy, even in the best of times.



Who is Your Competition?

According to Disney's philosophy, anyone that raises your customers' expectations is a competitor. That is really true and something many think little about. If someone likes how they get treated buying a car or new home or getting their dry cleaning done, how can your team help the customer feel even better when dealing with your business?

The customer compares you with all other businesses they deal with. We are all competitors when it comes to customer satisfaction. Every front-line person must realize that every interaction they have with a customer forms an impression at that point of contact, or touch point as I call it. Not every other one, but everyone. The customer leaves that interaction with being, in the simplest terms, mad, glad, sad, or scared.

The customer doesn't just look at the product when making a purchase. They rate the way they are treated on the phone, the invoice accuracy, the follow-up when they inquire with a question, the warranty claims procedures, and the list goes on and on.

Some internal customers look for and expect the same attention and focus as external customers. This is an important point to remember in any business. How often do we take a customer for granted and just think he will buy from us again? How often are you surprised that one of your front-line people suddenly quits?

Conduct the "How Are You Doing?" Test With Internal Customers

Disney isn't unlike many other retail businesses; they make every effort to implement common sense practices. It's always easy to say any business could adopt these practices, but that's not true. As I've often said, common sense isn't always common practice.

Leadership and cultural components impact the ability to implement these practices, and consistent communications are needed to sustain them. When it comes together, it's like

magic and full of possibilities. A major essential item is to take the time and effort to look at things from your customer's perspective. Creating purposeful internal communications and setting the correct behavioral expectations doesn't just happen by chance.

When in your weekly department meetings, ask the question, "How are we doing?" I know that is a pretty broad question but start the conversation about what people are hearing about your organization during their business transactions with customers. Also, ask what they overhear in a conversation between two customers or a group of customers. Begin asking for feedback from each team member; what in their opinion can we improve or what are we doing right? Create the entire list of items, then pick the top two or three that you could improve on, and discuss how you can improve as a team. Give yourselves some timelines to see these issues resolved. Gather the successes and discuss the achievements at the same time. Never let the number of flaws outweigh your accomplishments.

Personal Development is the Key to Organizational Development



I contend that when you hire good people in a growing organization, you can generally find a role for them. Hiring front line people who want to learn is easily identifiable. Remember, personal development is the key to organizational development. If they don't want to learn, how valuable is that person on the team?

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