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How Do You Create A Service Culture?

by John Tschohl

Disney excels at customer service because the company looks at everything through the eyes of the customer. At each step of the customer's experience, ask what you are doing to or for the customer. Then, for each step, ask yourself what mediocre service looks like and what excellent service would look like.

Creating a service culture means several things:

1. Top management must value customers and employees. I am not talking about the baloney in the annual report. It must be driven strategically. You must be willing to invest in developing high-performing employees.

2. Make it easy for customers to do business with you. In the U.S., most firms use IVR (Interactive Voice Response) so they do not need to talk to customers. Many

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outsource their call center to other countries. You need a live person to answer the call in 1 or 2 rings. 24/7. Too many organizations are more focused on cutting costs than keeping customers.

3. All employees must be trained with a new customer service program every 4 months. It must be different and new. Get over the idea that there is a magic program that will change employee behaviors and attitudes for life. For example, Progressive Insurance creates new commercials every month. The most expensive part of training your staff is labor time. Whatever tools you use must be really good. I believe very few organizations do not care about results.

4. Follow service leaders like Amazon and Metro Bank London. Go to their websites and sign up under Investor Relations for the daily and weekly press releases. Jeff Bezos and Vernon Hill are light years ahead of almost all CEOs in the world.

5. Master empowerment. Enable every employee to make fast, empowered decisions in favor of the customer. Too many weird things happen every day. Teach principles and empower your employees.

According to Brad Cleveland, Co-Founder and Senior Adviser of the international Customer Management Institute (ICMI), a recent Gallup poll found that when employees are engaged, companies see a 240% increase in performance-related outcomes, which goes to show that customer service “really matters.”

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