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Service Ambassadors: The Key to Providing World-Class Service

It's amazing who some business owners and managers allow to represent their company. On a recent trip, I stopped at a sandwich shop to order some lunch. After the employee told me they were out of the sandwich that I ordered, I asked for her menu recommendation; to which she promptly replied "None of the sandwiches here"! Wow. Perhaps it did not occur to her that by suggesting one of her company's sandwiches, I may actually enjoy it, return, and potentially refer others...all of which translate into additional revenue (plus more job security).

To customers, the person serving them *IS* the company. That employee's actions, words, and everything in between are a direct reflection of the company. In general terms, an ambassador is someone who represents something or someone. For example, the U.S. ambassador to Brazil is the chief representative of the U.S. in Brazil. This means that everything the ambassador does and says is a reflection of the U.S. When Brazilians see the ambassador, they are actually seeing the U.S. The ambassador *IS* the U.S. Whether you like it or not, you are the company you work for. Your customer does not care what department you work in or how long you have been working there. All your customers know is that you are an employee, therefore, you should be an advocate of the business.

I cringe when employees refer to their place of employment as "they" or "them". You are the company, so who exactly is "they" or "them"? On a recent trip, I stopped at a well-known airline's ticket kiosk to print my boarding pass. As I approached the kiosk, three of the ticket agents were embroiled in a heated discussion about an extremely important and critical topic...their work schedules for next week. For the entire 3-5 minutes that I was at the kiosk, not one ticket agent stopped their debate to offer assistance (let alone acknowledge that I existed). Towards the end of my time at the kiosk, one employee finally removed herself from the employee discussion, and asked if I was checking in luggage. I thought for a moment, and decided to keep the bag with me. She then said, "Good, because I wouldn't give 'them' any more money that I had to. Have a nice day". Again...wow.

A culture of world-class service flourishes when your entire team has a sense of ownership. As a leader, be sure to instill that feeling of personal ownership in every employee from the recruitment phase and on through the remainder of the onboarding process. Tell employees that their presence and contributions matter. They should know that their team is (and will be) better because of the talents they bring.

Of course, all this talk of having ambassadors also means that your company must be worthy of being represented. Is your business a place where people are proud to work and represent? Why or why not? Being an ambassador is an esteemed position that should not be taken lightly. Each action at every touchpoint has specific consequences (both positive and negative). So if you are a manager, ensure that everyone on your team is a great representative. From sandwich shops to spas to hospitals to hotels, world-class service begins with ambassadors. Ambassadors who are proud of their company and eager to provide exceptional serve with consistency and conviction.

Supplemental section for leaders

The best way for leaders to build a team of ambassadors is to be a shining example of how ambassadors are supposed to act. Beyond being a role-model, here are four practical tips for leaders to implement:

- Set high performance and service standards - Be clear about what those standards are. Give vivid examples if you need to.
- Communicate those standards – Use multiple resources like pre-shift meetings, newsletters, email signature blocks, screen savers, bulletin boards, daily voice mail, etc.
- Give performance feedback – This is one of the biggest opportunities for improvement amongst leaders. Your team needs to know how they are performing in both good and bad times.
- Reward excellence – Be careful how you reward performance. I've seen many managers celebrate and not to celebrate when performance expectations are met. It is fine to acknowledge when expectations are met, but reserve your praise and celebration for when expectations are surpassed (or at least consistently met).

I would love to hear from you! Please send in examples of when you have heard employees use the words “they” or “them” when describing their place of employment. Also, if you would like specific information on how to create the “ambassador” mindset, I have attached a few additional articles that may be of assistance. Of course, you can always send a question or comment to info@bwenterprise.net .

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