



We exist to serve others so they may better serve the world. SM

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Engaging Service Part 1: Not Just for the Chic

For those who believe that engaging service only happens in fancy places like chic hotels and restaurants, allow me to share a recent story with you. A few weeks ago, my wife and I were running some errands, and we decided to stop in at a restaurant for lunch. As soon as we entered, there was a huge welcome awaiting us. The hostess, manager, and at least two of the servers all gave a hearty greeting, and made sure we felt like royalty. This was followed by the hostess asking for our permission to be led to our table. Along the way, she explained the history of the restaurant, along with the type of cuisine they specialized in. She briefly stopped by a glass case that displayed several cuts of meat. The hostess explained that if we were in the mood for exceptional steaks, we could personally select the cut we wished. After a few more steps, she gracefully picked up a fresh basket of steaming rolls for us along the way. At this point, my mouth was wide open by the genuineness, warmth, and attention to detail. To say I was impressed is an

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understatement. Of course, you must be thinking that this was a super five-star, five-diamond restaurant. On the contrary, it was a casual, barbeque restaurant just minutes away from our house!

The excitement doesn't stop there. The server came to our table within 30 seconds, introduced himself, and welcomed us to "his" station. He told us that he looked forward to serving us and that we should expect nothing less than great service and great food. After returning with our drinks, he gave us a full orientation of the restaurant's ribs and other featured items. I could tell that he enjoyed describing the food as much as we enjoyed hearing about it. Needless to say, the rest of the experience was memorable and the food was unforgettable.

It was obvious that all of the employees in that restaurant clearly understood their role in fulfilling the restaurant's mission of "Legendary Food, Legendary Service". I know what you must be thinking, "Clearly, these were seasoned, professional servers that have spent years honing their craft". Wrong again! Most were young college kids working part-time.

From a leadership perspective, let's take a closer look at how companies are able to create a dynamic environment that promotes fun and quality service all at the same time. Employees become more engaged in their work when they have a clear "line of sight" between their personal contribution and their company's strategic objectives. To bring meaning to their work, your staff wants to know how their individual performance impacts the operation's success. They want to know the expected outcomes or "purpose"

of their work. This is completely opposite to force-feeding specific behaviors you want to see performed. There's nothing fulfilling about that.

Delivering exceptional service requires an engaging heart, and such hearts are not motivated by coarse mandates on exactly what to do and say. Instead, of telling the greeters to look up, give eye to eye contact, smile, and say "blah, blah, blah"; explain that their role is to make each guest who enters feel like they are the most important person in the world. Share a story or give an example of the perfect greeting. Ask them to recall a time when one of their favorite family members came to visit. Talk to them about how they greeted that family member. Explain that this is how every guest should feel all the time. This is what a service professional is all about.

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While they may not say it, they also want to be updated on how well they are performing against your expectations. So schedule regular feedback sessions, post a scoreboard, and share success stories. Ensure employees are getting the information they need to help frame and guide their daily decisions. Above all else, ensure that all employees develop a better understanding of how what they specifically do relates to the company's vision, mission, and goals.

Engaging the hearts and minds of your team is not a passive activity. It requires genuine effort, and that effort will naturally flow into the way service is delivered to all of your guests. So where can you find engaging service? You can find it wherever service is genuine, timely, and warm...for both the team and the guests.

--10/29/07

Be sure to order your copy of *EngageMe...the Voice of Customer* (www.engagemenow.com). This short video and poster have been getting rave reviews worldwide, and are being used in settings like customer service training and department meetings.

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