



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

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Service Excellence: A Destination or a Journey?

Appreciate where you are, but imagine where you could be. That is the mantra of continuous improvement. World-class hotels, restaurants, and spas are never content with the status-quo. Good is not good enough. They believe that running an exceptional operation is like studying for a 100% on a test; they will prepare for 100% accuracy, but if they get a few wrong, they may still get an A...which is far better than a C.

Dissatisfaction fuels their action. Don't get me wrong; these organizations are not clinically depressed. It's just that their vision of the future is much grander than the reality of the present...even if the present is not so bad. Some of the most successful companies and CEO's I know are the most aggressive when it comes to improving on what they have already perfected. Dissatisfaction fuels their action. Make dissatisfaction

*Make dissatisfaction your friend,
your coach, your advisor.*

your friend, your coach, your advisor. Most of us have made sustainable changes in our lives ONCE we've gotten dissatisfied or fed-up enough. Dissatisfaction with the present can

provide the necessary fuel to propel us from "should" to "must". There's a big difference between we "should" be a world-class restaurant and we must be a world-class restaurant. In fact, dissatisfaction with a dining experience inspired me to articulate the customer's expectation. The end result is the product line: [EngageMe...the voice of your customer](#).

Regardless of what industry you are in, as long as you have customers, you are in the service business. It doesn't matter if they're called customers, guests, patients, students, tenants, or clients. Service is service, and to become known for providing exceptional service, you must commit to continuous improvement. Even if you're good, you can be great, and if you are great you can be world-class. Truly world-class service companies have become best friends with "continuous improvement". Excellence really isn't a destination; it's more of a journey...a mindset...an attitude towards how the business is run. Like everything else in life, continuous improvement must be conditioned into being. It won't happen automatically.

A big part of transformation is to keep the momentum going. Share your vision with the entire workforce. Make use of every opportunity to bring service excellence to the forefront of everyone's minds. [Show videos, display posters](#), and use [worksheets](#) to stimulate team dialogue around service excellence. Talk, talk, and talk some more...be committed. Once service excellence becomes an organizational norm, all you have to do is support, encourage, and recognize excellent performance. Don't make the mistake of spending the majority of your time focusing on weaknesses. While your opportunities for improvement may hinder your success, the fastest and most sustainable way to reproduce

excellence is to focus on excellence. Excellence breeds excellence. Success breeds success. Discover what everyone on your team is exceptionally good at, and encourage them to focus on and apply those strengths throughout the day. Try it. You'll see that they will be happier, more productive, and more engaged in their work. For example, if your company has been making positive strides in your customer satisfaction scores, take the time to analyze and study what your team did right. Then standardize and deploy those best practices throughout the workforce. Remember, study success to understand success, and once you understand success, then you can replicate success.

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If you have already begun the process of transforming your culture, congratulations to you! There is a big difference between wanting to do something and actually doing it. I heard a riddle once that really made this point clear for me. If there are two frogs on a lily pad, and one decides to jump off, how many are left on the pad? The obvious answer is one frog...right? Actually, there would still be two frogs left on the pad. You see, one just "decided" to jump off; it wasn't mentioned whether the frog actually jumped or not. When it comes to commitment, how many times have we "decided" to do something, but never actually followed through with doing it? In the context, of the hospitality industry, many companies want to elevate their level of service which usually entails transforming the organizational culture to become service-oriented. Needless to say, that type of cultural transformation does not happen overnight. It requires intense commitment, discipline, and follow-through. A compelling vision combined with decisive action is a potent prescription for sustained success.

So what breakthrough will you have? What is your compelling vision? What are you currently proud of? What can't you tolerate any more? What do you refuse to accept as you move forward?

The clearer you become about why the present is no longer acceptable, then the future becomes irresistible. From the luxury to economy market segments, let continuous improvement become your mantra for sustained service excellence.

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