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Make 'em say Wow: Tips for building a strong service team—Part Two



In Part One, I explained how you can make it easier for your employees to provide great service to your customers or clients. But delivering great service is only half the battle. You'll also need to find ways to help your employees sustain their enthusiasm for doing so.

Anytime you undertake a new initiative, you'll be met with excitement at the beginning, and then slowly but surely as day-to-day obstacles pop up and old habits refuse to relinquish their grip, your team will begin to waver.

Your organization is going to get some sand in the gears, and when that happens, it's your job to keep your people focused and enthusiastic. How do you do that? You find opportunities to educate. You recognize individual successes. You role model what needs to happen and then recognize when other people act as role models. You acknowledge service achievements.

Read on for six tips on how you can strengthen your team by keeping them motivated to provide uplifting service.

Give them the leeway to make in-the-moment decisions. Don't overcomplicate service. Work with your employees to switch

their focus from "What should I do?" to "Who am I serving and what do they value?" And then let them know you trust them to make the right decision so they feel empowered to act. If an employee feels a customer should get a discount, either because a mistake was made or because they're a great and loyal customer, then let them. You can monitor this system by reviewing situations with your team to ensure that in-the-moment decisions lead to the result everyone wants: happy and loyal customers, confident staff, and a successful organization.

Have "mistake meet-ups". Another big part of empowerment is demystifying the fear that comes along with making a mistake.

Have a meeting and say, "We want learning from mistakes to be part of our culture." Have your leaders kick off the meeting by saying, "I'll go first. Here's the biggest mistake I made last week. Here's what I learned from it. What can I learn from you?" When everyone shares in this manner, it makes everyone feel safer about trying new ideas and taking new actions.

Acknowledge achievements. Compliments are highly motivating and inspire employees to keep coming up with newer

and better service ideas. That's why you should a) actively solicit feedback from customers, and b) regularly share positive comments with employees. Don't overthink it. A simple "thank you!" goes a long way.

LUX* Resorts & Hotels excels at acknowledging employee achievements. Through its STAR Program, each month one team member from each resort wins an award. Then, at a companywide gathering at the end of the year, the STARS are honoured, and each hotel awards a STAR Team Member of the Year. It is all part of CEO Paul Jones's firm belief in cultivating an attitude of gratitude.

In addition to this great program, LUX* Maldives implemented an Instant Recognition Program. When a team member goes above and beyond the call of duty, they have the opportunity to receive a STAR CARD, which can be redeemed at one of the resort's team tuck shops or cafes. Both programs have been very well received by LUX* employees and have played a role in the hotel group's ability to rocket to service success in recent years.

Educate and inspire them to serve each other. When most companies set out to fix their service issues, they start with customer-facing employees. That's a common instinct, but also a big

mistake. The fact is, frontline service people cannot give better service when they aren't being well served internally by colleagues from other departments.

When I worked with Air Mauritius to kick off its service revolution, they started by addressing the communication problems in its dysfunctional culture, which manifested as bickering, finger-pointing, withholding information, etc.

First they had to realize that everyone on staff either directly serves the customer or serves those who serve the customer. Everyone had to embrace the service improvement mind-set—engineering, ground staff, the technical crew, registration and sales, people at the counters, people at the gate area, people on the aircraft. That meant they had to serve each other as well as the customer.

Encourage them to develop their own signature service touch. Sometimes small service touches can have a big impact. Here's a fundamental truth of service: Small changes can lead to big leaps in customer perception—and they don't have to be costly at all.

For example, Air Mauritius had captains to start greeting passengers as they board the plane. This small gesture creates a huge impression of welcome and respect for passengers. It also asked captains to provide memorable information as they fly over certain areas—like descriptions of cities, landmarks, volcanoes, and so forth. This turned routine flights into uniquely guided tours. Passengers loved these changes.

Provide a weekly service thought. This is something that LUX* Maldives has done very successfully. At the resort, every Monday morning the Training and QA Teams share a "weekly service thought," which highlights the importance of service or an idea around how to improve service. Not only does the weekly thought inspire employees, it also gets everyone on the same page

and discussing the same service ideas.

The resort also sends out a daily quote. And they've become so popular that if the resort manager misses a day, he gets calls from his staff members asking when the daily quote is coming out. They value getting this daily motivation on how to be better and serve others better.

Sustaining focus and enthusiasm is just as important as any customer-facing service education you'll dole out to your employees. The good news is that providing great service is addicting. Once your employees get a taste of what it feels like to improve the lives of others, they'll want to keep doing it. Soon uplifting service to customers and colleagues will have taken hold in every level of your organization.

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