

## Disney's Approach to Quality Service Summary

On February 13, I attended a full-day training through the Disney Institute called "Disney's Approach to Quality Service." It was held at Disney's Grand Californian Hotel in Anaheim, California. There were about 50 people in attendance, and I met people in the professions of education, dentistry, wine making, entertainment, luxury pet hotels and more. The two trainers for the day, Christopher and Ernesto, used to work at Disney Parks. Both were excellent!

The training consisted of lectures, watching videos, discussion, reflection, and a "field trip" inside Disneyland, where we could observe the practices we were learning. The following are big ideas and themes that had an impact on me:



### Service Standards

It's important to have service standards for your organization. At one point during the training, Ernesto asked participants to stand up - and, if we were comfortable, to close our eyes. Then he asked us to point which way was north, and, of course, all of us chuckled. We had no idea but took our best guess. When we opened our eyes, we saw that everyone was pointing in different directions. The intent of this exercise was that if we don't know what direction we're going as an organization when it comes to service, how will we know how to treat our customers? One thing I'd like to do is develop service standards for WVLS. I think it's important for all staff to be on the same page when helping and assisting our member libraries.

### Cleanliness

One of Walt Disney's pet peeves about amusement parks in the 1940s and 50s was that they were dirty and unsafe. He also observed that parents at amusement parks appeared bored and disengaged. It is for that

reason that Walt Disney developed a park that was clean, landscaped and welcoming. He was so adamant about cleanliness that he didn't want guests to see garbage in trash cans. Disney set the standard and designed trash receptacles where the garbage is not seen.

On average, there is a trash can every 27 steps at Disney theme parks, because most people who are holding trash are going to just drop it or accidentally leave it somewhere. Also, it is every employee's responsibility at Disney theme parks, no matter what their role, to pick up trash. When we did our field study in the afternoon, Ernesto (pictured above) was constantly picking up trash when he saw it. All of

this reiterated to me that cleanliness is a big part of customer service, as it says a lot about an organization and the image they want to project.

### **Language**

As part of its initiative to deliver great service, Disney spends a lot of time training employees on language. Staff/cast members should greet, welcome and thank all “guests.” Conversations should be positive and use appropriate language. Other examples:

Staff = Cast Members

Visitors = Guests

Ticket Takers= Greeters

Expensive = Higher Cost or “Costs a little more”

Cheap = Lower cost or “Costs a little less”

Crowded = Popular

(Customer on the phone: *“I would like to bring my family to Disneyland on New Year’s Eve, but I’ve heard it gets extremely busy.”*)

Disney employee: *“Yes, that is a ‘popular’ time for people to visit the park.”*)

### **Staff Empowerment**

Disney theme parks encourage its employees to prioritize “purpose over task,” because employee service actions need to be genuine. Delivering great service is not just about the way people do it, but how. Employees are encouraged to create surprises and magical moments. It is the job of all employees to pick up trash and assist guests. It’s not uncommon to see security guards assist with directions, and to also ask for the autograph of young guests dressed as “princesses.”

There is an attraction at Disneyland called *Tower of Terror*. It’s a thrill ride that features a 13-story drop. To ride this attraction, a child must meet the height requirement of 40 inches. Because Disney also prioritizes safety, this is non-negotiable. Children who approach this ride and are not tall enough often walk away feeling disappointed. The cast members, or bellhops, who greet the children came up with a solution. They created cards that allow children to skip the line on the attraction when they are tall enough. If a cast member sees a child



drop an ice cream cone immediately after purchase, they are empowered to give that child a certificate for a free treat in the future.

### Opportunities

The trainers reiterated that good service is no longer a nice-to-have but a “must have.” Customer service has been on the decline, and public libraries and systems are in a great position to amp up our service efforts. Those who work in service industries can look at improving service as an exciting opportunity. How do we bring humanity back to service? When did it become ok to “just be ok?” Our customers define “great service” for us by sharing positive word of mouth with others and coming back.

While I wanted to gather ideas in customer service, I also took away some ideas from a professional development standpoint. The following aspects of the training were done well:

- Reflective activities: Typically, I am not a fan of these, but for an all-day training, this worked well. The trainers emphasized that while they can give us some tools on how to deliver great service at our organization, this will look different for each of us. They gave us time to reflect on customizing our ideas.
- Timeliness: All of the agenda items were on a schedule, and we stuck to the agenda.
- Participant Guide: The guide we received was detailed and thorough. It covered all of the powerpoint slides, and provided additional information.
- Tag-Team Approach: Having two people lead using a tag-team approach kept the day interesting and prevented it from getting too stale.
- Environment: The room was spacious, well-lit, and tables were laid out well with plenty of room. There were also high-top tables located in the back of the room where attendees could stand if they needed to move around.
- Survey: The training built in time for us to take a survey. We scanned a QR code provided in the presentation and completed the survey on our phones while ideas were still fresh in our minds.

The following are actions that I plan to implement because of this training:



- Develop Service Standards for WVLS staff. (I did a similar project when I worked at the Nicolet Federated Library System.)
- Incorporate ideas in “Giving Great Service” presentation at Hoot Con on March 11.
- Incorporate ideas for a webinar presentation for the Southwest Wisconsin Library System’s member library staff in June.

Overall, I thought this experience was excellent. I’m grateful to have new ideas and material to incorporate into current customer service presentations and webinars. Thank you, WVLS!