

Leader Tips: Guest Service

A collection of thought provoking
resources to help you lead guest service
teams



Matt Heller

www.performanceoptimist.com

matt@performanceoptimist.com

407-435-8084

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How to use this book:

This book is a collection of blog posts from Matt Heller's blog, Leadertips.wordpress.com. Since 2009, Matt has been writing about his observations about leadership, customer service and teamwork.

Each post covers a specific service topic, situation or problem. Some include specific action steps and challenges, while others are meant to be more introspective. In either case, the articles are intended to encourage you think differently about how you provide support to your teams and conduct yourself as a leader.

Ultimately though, to lead your service teams differently requires making the right choices and taking the right actions. That part is up to you.

Articles can be used for:

- Personal growth and development
- Daily inspiration/motivation
- Support material in training initiatives
- Meeting discussion starters
- Finding answers to frequently asked questions
- Developing new leaders/service providers

Questions you should ask yourself or your team regarding each article:

- What do I think about this?
- How can apply this to my situation?

About the author:

After 20+ years in hospitality leadership and human resources, Matt Heller founded Performance Optimist Consulting in 2011 with one simple goal: *Help Leaders Lead*. Matt now works with organizations large and small to help them improve leadership competencies, customer service, employee motivation and teamwork. His book, "The Myth of Employee Burnout" addresses how leaders can overcome the all-too common phenomenon of employees burning out, or losing motivation over time.

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Quality service, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder

Originally posted on July 19, 2014

As I am getting ready to leave for my epic-mega-coaster-palooza-extravaganza tour, I started thinking about what sort of service experiences I would be expecting at the various parks we'll be visiting. Since a person's perception of the service they receive is largely subjective, you really could say that like beauty, quality service is in the eye of the beholder. So I might expect something different than my friends, and we might even interpret the exact same situation in very different ways.

Now, you might think that as someone who writes about and teaches customer service tactics, I would have **really high expectations**.

Turns out, I don't.

You might remember a story about Kordell who was a stand out employee on our trip last year. His behaviors were actually over-and-above my expectations, which is probably why he was so memorable.

All I really want the employees to do is reinforce that I made the right decision to visit that particular business.

So how do they do that? ***In my mind, it starts with a smile.*** It's a cliché, and everyone talks about it, but that's probably because it's often the first impression we have of how that service interaction will go. It truly does set the tone.

Second... Engage me in some way. Say hello, how ya doing, tell me you like my hat... Whenever you can do to ***acknowledge me as a person.*** It doesn't have to be a huge gesture or a long conversation, but it does need to be sincere, and it helps (if conditions allow) for this to be accompanied by eye contact – but that's not a prerequisite.

Last month I had the chance to go to Kemah Boardwalk, just south of Houston. There is a wooden roller coaster there called the Boardwalk Bullet. It's a great ride, but what enhanced my experience even more was the operator who was bantering back and forth over the microphone with the guests, myself included. When he noticed I had a little strap to hold my glasses on, he made a comment like, "this guy came prepared!".

When he saw a guest in line with a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles shirt, he jokingly said, "No turtles are allowed to ride." He never spoke directly to me, but he made the experience much more fun and enjoyable. I took a few extra rides just to hear what was he was going to say.

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The final thing that makes a good interaction (in my mind) is some sort of send off. "Thanks for visiting", "Have a great day", yadda, yadda, yadda. Just SOME sort of acknowledgement that I ***chose to spend my time with you.***

For example, the other day I was at the grocery store, and the cashier was as pleasant as could be. The bagger wasn't exceptional, but he wasn't a dullard, either. What stuck with me was that when he was done bagging my groceries, there was no, "thanks", no "enjoy the ice cream"... nothing. He crossed his arms and looked toward the next customer coming down the line. It was like as soon as my food was in the bag, I ceased to exist. I didn't think it bothered me that much until I realized that that was the thing I remembered most about my experience there. It was last, and a lasting impression.

So that's it: ***Smile, engage me, and thank me.***

What are your expectations? Do you expect more or less? How about your guests? What do they expect?

Thanks for reading!

Customer service 101: take the bait

Originally posted on June 5, 2014

In customer service training circles, so much is made about watching for visual cues such as a T-shirt, a hat, or accessory that a guest has to try to start a conversation and build a relationship with them. That could be considered one form of "bait" that the guest puts out there for you to take in order to serve them better.

But there is also verbal bait that guests will throw out to you that you can take and run with to serve their needs even better. In order to take the bait, all you have to do is listen.

On a recent trip outside of Orlando, Linda and I were walking around a small town that was having a festival. We were looking for a place to eat breakfast, and we asked one of the vendors who is setting up for the day if there was a good place in town.

He mentioned that most places were probably closed due to the festival, but he did point out a place or two that might be good to check out. In the course of our quick conversation, Linda did mention that we just arrived in town from Orlando.

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This is an example of some great “bait”, that was actually *not taken* by the person we were talking to.

That would’ve been the perfect opportunity for this person to say “oh, you’re in from Orlando, what brings you here?” This would’ve opened up a longer conversation about us and the town, and potentially what we were looking for. However, this person did not take the bait. It was almost as if he didn’t hear us say it, or he didn’t care. Ironically, he was setting up the booth for the local Chamber of Commerce.

A few days later, there was another opportunity for a service provider to take some bait, and this time she did. And the results were incredibly different.

When we first got to town we stayed in a small, local old-timey motel that looked really, really cool on the Internet. However, the reality was a bit different than what was portrayed online. We really like to try local places so we wanted to give it a whirl. However, after one night we decided jump ship and try our luck with a local chain hotel. A nearby Hampton Inn was going to be our resting place for the remainder of our trip.

When we walked into the Hampton Inn lobby at 11 PM, Anna greeted us with a big smile. She asked if we had a reservation, we said no. She asked what brought us to her hotel, we told her about our bad experience with the other hotel. That was some major bait, right there.

And Anna took it. She asked about what happened in that hotel, she showed genuine concern and empathy for our situation and in fact offered us a discounted rate at her hotel that actually matched the rate we were paying at the less expensive hotel. She also remembered us throughout our stay, and continued to ask how our experience was, making sure that the same things were not happening at her hotel that happened at our first hotel.

It was a great example of someone listening to what their guest said, and responding to it in a way that actually **enhanced their experience**.

And all she had to do, was listen and take the bait. What bait are you listening for?

Thanks for reading!