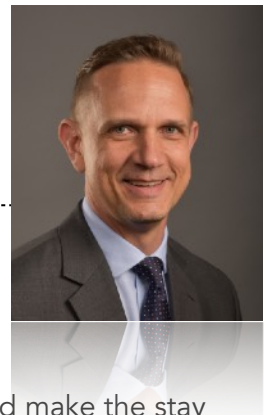


Feature: Why not “Wow”!

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Someone smart (I’m not sure who) once said, “Your brand is how you make people feel.”

More and more, these days, we hear that the objective of a customer service experience should be to make our customers feel like shouting, “Wow!” I am all for first rate service, but I am a bit uncertain about the notion of turning customer service into the pursuit of an exclamation. It appears to me that the pursuit of “Wow!” might easily turn into an uphill climb toward a few, rare moments of success. How many times a day, or a week, or even a month, can we “Wow!” a customer? And if every customer experience is a “Wow!” experience, then what is “Wow!” really worth.

For our sake, and for the sake of our service teams, we need to ease back on the hype and admit that opportunities to “Wow!” a customer are few and far between. “Wow!” is a moment, but destination services is a drawn out series of customer touch points. Because our service evolves over time, and not in a single interaction (like the sale of a television or a fine dining experience) we may do well to focus on leaving our customer

smiling rather than doing cartwheels.

Customer satisfaction in destination services, like winning a football match, saving money, having a successful relationship or any other worthwhile pursuit, is a matter of dedicated attention to the little things. In the case of DS, it is those day-to-day moments of interaction, the sum of which form a lasting impression on our customers.

The routine is where customers are so often let down by service providers. A repairman shows up late. A car mechanic leaves grease on the door handle. A server delivers the wrong meal. A billing specialist neglects to return a call. In this world of service, we have the opportunity to distinguish ourselves by simply taking care of the routine.

Starting every email with a greeting, “Dear Mr. Latrelle, and always closing with a, “Please don’t hesitate to let me know if I can be of further assistance.” won’t cause a customer to spring from his desk chair and burst into song. Bringing an umbrella on a home search in anticipation of rain is not likely to elicit shouts of joy, but these small gestures collect to create the customer feeling that will define our brands.

Imagine a stay at a five star hotel in your favorite destination.

What would make the stay memorable would not be a single moment of over the top service, but the steady stream of positive interactions with service oriented staff? The front desk clerk who smiles and greets you by your last name, the immaculately cleaned room, the bedding turned back in the evening, the doorman who is right there to call you a cab, the attendant who hands you a towel as you step out of the pool, the well placed dollop of cream on your dessert. Not a single “Wow!” action on the list and yet these minor demonstrations of attentiveness and consideration add up to a brand feeling that is bound to be positive.

So rather than looking for an opportunity to “Wow!” someone, what if we take a few extra minutes to listen to our customers today? What if we proof the itinerary before sending it? What if we advise our assignee what we will be wearing for the home finding so she can easily find us in the hotel lobby? Doing the little things properly, day in and day out, is not very glamorous. It can be a bit of a grind on certain days, but that challenge is also what makes it worthwhile for those who have made the commitment to doing work well.

Getting the little things right may not get you a “Wow!” But perhaps lasting success in destination services is a bit more subtle than that.