

JANUARY 2001: GOOD BEDS OR EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT STAFF?



MONTHLY FEATURE COLUMN: GOOD BEDS OR EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT STAFF?

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Quick. If you had to choose between good beds or emotionally competent staff to define your hotel, which would you take? Fortunately neither hotels, nor any travel industry business, have to choose between concrete product and personal attention. In fact, to choose one over the other would create dissatisfied customers.

But many travel industry businesses concentrate more of their service efforts on concrete products for one simple reason. It's easier to provide a comfortable bed with upscale linens than it is to guarantee that staff will always treat guests with emotionally intelligent customer service.

What's the difference between what used to simply be called good service and emotionally intelligent service? Are they the same? In some cases they might appear similar. But the fundamental approaches to what used to be called good service versus emotionally competent service are as different as when a receptionist greets you with a smile compared to when an astute friend, knowing you've had a tough week by one look at your face, comes up with the exact right thing to say to you.

Most organizations have mapped out the "how to's" of good service in manuals. For example, service might precisely be defined to mean fast service with a smile, accurate service to create no complaints, reliable service and the person uses your name as well! Rarely do service manuals state the outcomes that are expected, such as "Make our guests feel as if they are in their own homes," or "Make our guests feel so welcome that they will always think of us first when booking their next holiday or business trip."

One of our TMI colleagues traveled to Japan. She was very impressed with the service she received at the hotel in which she stayed. All the providers were dignified, quick, quiet, and sophisticated. Our colleague was treated to an elegant bow which she never gets in her home country. A week later she returned to the same hotel in Tokyo, and got the exact same service. Unfortunately, no one remembered her name; in fact, no one remembered her face, and she is a strikingly tall European blonde.

She got what she likes to refer to as manual service. She was a long way from home on an extended business trip and was looking for a personal connection, an emotional connection, that typically is delivered only by the emotionally competent.

Manual service, while better than rude, late, and unresponsive service, unfortunately, doesn't make strong connections. And it is strong connections and a staff who wants to be where they are that customers remember and incline them to return to businesses time and time again. Furthermore, manual service doesn't use the full emotional capacity of staff. That's the equivalent of investing in expensive linens and then not putting them on the hotel's beds.

WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING:

Welcome to the "real" new millennium where we don't have worries about computer meltdowns, or hopefully any other type of meltdown!

December typically is a lighter month, but it hasn't been that way for us in our TMI business.

Peta Peter traveled to the UK to introduce her "From Rage to Reason" seminar to an enthusiastic British audience. She then returned to the Bahamas where she has successfully trained over 1,100 staff in delivering Our Lucaya branded service. This venture has been a strong growth experience for us at TMI. We still think there is a role for "general" improved service, but we are amazed with the changes an organization can make when they are willing to explore what it means to train for "branded service."

Peta spent the last part of the month of December completing our series of training tapes for the Isle of Capri. They are exciting as Peta has brought her years of television experience in editing and news broadcasting to create a beautiful product for our client, the Isle of Capri.

Paul Holden spent most of the month working for the Isle of Capri in Davenport, Iowa, bringing the latest Isle of Capri casino into the fold of Putting People First. Thank you, Paul, for the fine work you have done! Bill Oden has now brought two Isle of Capri trainers on line who will work with new hires into the new millennium. And Allan Milham visited the Lady Luck Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, working with the managers and setting up their introduction to Putting People First which will begin casino wide for all staff in January.

Janelle Barlow began the month of December in Hong Kong working with Morgan Stanley and ABN AMRO. She then traveled across Asia and Europe to work with TMI, Poland. The Polish TMI team is hard working, competent, and their efforts and skill are reflected in what they have achieved. They were able to attract 180 people for a full day program on complaint handling. A Complaint Is a Gift was published and introduced in Polish. The entire first print run has been sold out, and did so in the initial two days of its offering. While there, Janelle also worked with Siemens and with Okochim, one of Poland's breweries.

While flying across Asia, Janelle experienced this trip for the first time in daylight. Always in the past she has flown at night, so she had the special experience of being

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able to see the Gobi desert from one end to another. That is one big desert! It is an awe-inspiring experience to fly from Hong Kong to Frankfurt over land that is occupied by people who live in villages without electricity in traditional patterns that are thousands of years old.

Emotional Value, Creating Strong Bonds with Customers continues to receive a lot of publicity. While in Asia, Janelle was interviewed by two United States news agencies. Those articles will be appearing in the next couple of months about Emotional Value and A Complaint Is a Gift. Both of these books are finishing the year 2000 on Amazon.com's best selling customer service list.

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