LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS: SERVING VALUES TO YOUR CUSTOMERS

Last month I spoke about how a senior leader can ensure that their organization's values are more than words on the page and actually drive behavior from the most senior executive to the most junior front line employee. We also cited some companies that have had egregious breakdowns between their values and their actions.

Subsequently, I had an experience as a customer at the Dallas Omni Hotel that was 180 degrees from the kind of bad behavior I was thinking about last month. The experience exemplified excellent, above-and-beyond customer service. I am referring to my fantastic experience at the Texas Spice Restaurant & Bar at the Dallas Omni on May 1, 2017.

I had just flown in from San Diego. It had been a long day and I was hungry and tired. I needed something on the healthier side. The hostess, "Tiffany" (not her real name) took me to my seat. She noticed that the waitress was detained, so she asked for my drink order. Tiffany was a totally customer-driven person. I had my sparkling water in less than two minutes, served with a nice wine glass and lime. She offered to take my order and I mentioned that I didn't see what I wanted on the menu. Tiffany asked, "Well, what do you want?" and I asked, "May I have the crab cake but on a Caesar Salad with dressing on the side?" She was totally gracious, smiled and said, "No problem." She noticed I didn't eat red meat and since the Chef's Appetizer had meat in it, she brought me a really great vegetarian appetizer instead. Rather than just letting it go by, she thought of a creative solution to make me feel special. She checked on me many times. The crab cake was delicious. Everything was yummy!

I asked her if I could purchase a green apple to take to my room. I mentioned how hard it is to eat properly night after night on the road. I told her the apple would help for a snack if I needed one. She said, "Of course, I will meet you at the front with your apple." I was delighted to see she made me a small, gorgeous snack bag with the apple wrapped in nice paper with a red pear as well... some goodies to keep me happy. Maybe the bag cost 50 cents and the apple 25 cents. What it got was a lifetime of goodwill from me. It also got me to rave about the hotel and inspire me to be loyal when I have a choice in hotels.

Tiffany didn't know me from Adam. I was just a woman on her own after a very long day. She did not know that I am an organizational psychologist and coach to CEOs. I spend my life working with companies and CEOs helping them create value. I have traveled over seven million miles and stayed in hotel after hotel after hotel. I have also been a Food and Beverage Manager. I understand all the little things Tiffany did because she was inspired to be better—to make a difference—to create a great customer experience—to create value.

I wanted to share my story about this inspired young lady. I hope Omni Hotels & Resorts finds ways to grow her and help her become everything she imagines. She has awesome potential. She is a keeper. I am proud to have been served by her. She is what makes it worth it. The inspired, caring, out-of-the-box thinker who ensures a great customer experience even when all the customer wants is an apple and some sparkling water. Tiffany created a story-worthy experience from a simple request. Just a little extra "elbow grease" made a world of difference.

Thank you, Tiffany, and the DALLAS OMNI HOTEL for a great customer experience.

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It is worth noting the Omni Hotels & Resorts values, what they call their "Six Pillars of our Culture," and to think about how Tiffany's behavior lined up with each of these (see added italics below). These are not just words on a page at the Dallas Omni – they are words to live by. From the Omni Hotels website.

THE POWER OF ONE®

The Power of One® is the essence of our service philosophy. It reflects our belief that every single guest interaction is an opportunity, or a moment, for an Associate to delight a guest and deliver a memorable experience. Our recognition and communications programs have evolved from these four simple, yet powerful, words. *(Tiffany, all on her own, made decisions that delighted me and inspired me to write this piece. She did not ask permission, call a meeting, or send an email. She took individual initiative.)*

MIRROR IMAGE

Creating a dynamic relationship between our Associates and guests begins with the relationship between our Associates and their managers. We believe that the degree that management exhibits care and concern for Associates will directly influence, or mirror, how our Associates interact with and take care of our hotel guests. *(This goes back to the Service-Profit Chain which I have long been a believer in.)*

TRILOGY

To be successful in business, you must satisfy the needs of Associates, Guests and Ownership. Maintaining that balance allows us to create the unique experience for which Omni is known. *(Tiffany ended the day knowing she had made at least one happy grateful customer and someone who will generate repeat business.)*

OMNI SERVICE TRADITION

Associates on the front line are in the best position to influence customer service. Through daily open communication and regular department meetings, Associates are encouraged to share their opinions and ideas in an effort to continually improve the service we provide to our guests. *(Tiffany has a lot of good ideas and I was the happy recipient of some of them.)*

OMNI SERVICE CHAMPION

Because Associates are our most valuable asset, it is important that we consistently recognize their efforts. Associates who exceed the expectations of our internal customers and external guests are recognized and rewarded through the Omni Service Champion program. *(She deserves it.)*

MOMENTS OF SERVICE

Our guests expect the best. For this reason, Moments of Service, our service excellence program, exists to provide constant skill reinforcement through service auditing. *(It seems to be working.)*

How does your organization exemplify its values? Do those on the front line "live the values" of your organization? How can you better align behavior and values in your organization.