

Donor Relations the Disney Way AFP International Conference Tuesday, March 22, 2016

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Wayne Olson is not affiliated with or a representative of the Disney Company.

Introduction

“You can dream, create, design and build the most wonderful place in the world, but it takes people to make the dream a reality.” -- Walt Disney

We can have the most wonderful mission in the world, but it takes the people in this room; it takes you, to make it real.

We are a lot like Disney. People come to us because they want to feel better about themselves and the world around them.

Why is Disney so popular? It is not for the biggest, fastest or scariest of anything. It's because of Disney's attention to detail and focus on customer service.

“Service in this country is so bad; you can offer above-average customer service and still stink.”
– Harry Beckwith

Part One – Sparking Creativity

Walt Disney was a master at:

- Combining known materials into something new.
- Turning challenges into opportunities.

Experts can be wrong. Be careful when listening to experts.

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- Experts told Disney that Disneyland would never work. They owned amusement parks and they knew all about running amusement parks. Disney would go broke with his attention to detail and focus on things like the castle that don't produce revenue.

The haunted mansion and the Pirates of the Caribbean both presented challenges that Disney turned into opportunities. How do you get people to the other side of the berm? You have them go under the railroad tracks creatively.

Tell a story. Everything we do tells a story whether we want it to or not.

- Disney cast members found an abandoned lawnmower and made it into a story.

Watch for what is important to your guests/donors.

- Disney did something special with the flag lowering ceremony at Walt Disney World. What can we do?

Fireworks

- We do things for one reason and our guests do the exact same thing for another reason. That's OK.
- We can sell the guidebook cheaply because we are not selling it for our current guests.

Get out of the office: "For God's sake, don't eat off the lot. Stay there...lunch with the guests...talk with them." -- Walt Disney

Part II – Look at your Job in New Ways

"You don't build it for yourself. You know what people want and you build it for them." – Walt Disney.

For Disney the personal touch and guest VIP service is a way of life. If you do not believe this, you should not work at Disney. How do we apply this to our mission?

Disney Guidelines for Disney Service (from the Disney publication, *Be Our Guest*)

- Make eye contact and smile.
- Greet every guest.
- Use cheerful words such as "good morning," and "welcome."
- Do not hide from guests, seek them out.
- Offer help.

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- Listen.
- Appropriate body language at all times.
- Keep the real world problems out of the Magic Kingdom.
- Focus on the positive rather than rules and regulations.

Disney philosophy – The guest may not always be right, but is always our guest.

When things go wrongly, recover quickly. Do not let small problems grow to be big problems.

Honor your employees

- Your employees are as important as your donors. Keep them happy, and make them feel special, appreciated.
- Where are the tombstones in your organization?
- Do you have anyone deserving a Window on Main Street?
- Seek out positive achievements rather than dwell on negative behaviors.

Part III – Practical Suggestions

Look for free publicity opportunities for you and your donors in all kinds of places.

Do things for your donors that they cannot do for themselves.

Be the concierge for your donor. Take care of needs quickly and even before they are vocalized.

Be personal. Use stamps instead of metered mail. Use photo stamps to be really creative.

Never look at your cell phone when you are with another person (donor or employee). Turn it off or leave it behind.

For appointments, arrive early and quickly and leave slowly.

Work with donors the way trainers work with whales at SeaWorld.

Is your business card designed as a helpful tool for your donor or a mini resume? Why do you have a fax number on your card?

Make sure you receive all your organization's mailings, plus those of your competitors.

Remember for Disney, it all started with a mouse. For us, it begins and ends with our mission.

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