



We exist to serve others so they may better serve the world. SM

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I Am a Service Professional™

The term “service professional” is universal. It is just as applicable to the hotel industry as it is to the healthcare industry and to the taxi industry. Businesses are set up to satisfy a want or a need for current and prospective customers, which means that all organizations are in the service business...whether they care to admit it or not. It is quite easy for me to tell if a company is truly service oriented. I simply listen and observe how the employees interact with each other. Companies often pull out their mission statements, vision statements, and policies to prove that they are, in fact, service-centric. Those things are important to integrate service into the daily culture, but the true evidence of a service culture comes from what your employees do everyday. Are they acknowledging all customers all the time? Are they annoyed when customers ask them questions? Do they smile and look for opportunities to anticipate customers’ needs?

This article is about service professionals. If you already consider yourself a service professional, then the rest of this article will reinforce what you already do. If you’re not sure if you are a service professional, then use this as a self-assessment. Lastly, if you would like to become a service-professional, then read on. Being a service-professional is not about what you do, it is about who you are. The specific job is almost irrelevant because true service professionals will find ways to serve their customers under any circumstance.

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Service professionals...

- Are proud of what they have to offer and it shows
- Make each of their customers feel valued and appreciated
- Ensure that every customer they serve will remember them because of exceptional service
- Personalize their service by giving eye contact (when appropriate) and using the customer’s preferred name
- Take personal ownership of customer complaints and follow through with the resolution until the customer is completely satisfied
- Take time to research who they will be serving and learn about their preferences
- Always are thinking of ways to not only meet, but exceed their customer’s expectations
- Always offer additional assistance

Being a service professional is more about a mindset than it is about the specific job. Years ago, I used to shop for music in one particular store. One of the attendants would always let me know about new music being released in the upcoming weeks. Specifically, one store attendant was a true service professional. He embodied the steps I laid out above. In addition to providing excellent service while I was in the store, he would send an email to me with upcoming releases. This went above and beyond his job requirements and certainly was more than I expected. Did I ask for the emails? No. Did he allow the parameters of his job to prevent him from engaging the customer? No.

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I was on the phone with an insurance agent not too long ago. In addition to being thorough and very pleasant, she told me that her goal was to earn my loyalty by providing exemplary service. In case you are wondering, this apparently is not a company standard, because no one else says it when I call. At one point, the phone attendant needed to transfer me to another department to better take care of my specific request. She not only told me she would need to transfer me, but she asked for my permission to be placed on hold, and then waited for an answer. After I replied “yes”, she put me on hold, and when she returned less than a minute later, she had the other department on the line, and had already explained to them what I needed. Then, she cordially introduced me to the person whom I would be dealing with. The whole transfer transaction took less than two minutes, and it won my loyalty. Did she allow the parameters of her job prevent her from engaging the customer? No.

A colleague recently told me about a phenomenal service professional she met on a business trip last month. This service professional happened to be a taxi driver, and clearly made a memorable impression. My colleague just finished a meeting and caught a taxi to take her back to the airport. On the way to the airport, she realized that her cell phone needed to charge, and she had forgotten her battery charger at home. For any business traveler, this is a major issue, and when the driver noticed her frustration, he inquired if he may be of assistance. When she asked him to stop at the nearest electronics store so she can purchase a charger, he happily pulled out a neat box that contained a universal battery charger that could be plugged into the car’s cigarette adapter. The driver said that his personal mission was to ensure that every customer received a stress-free drive so he proactively thinks of what his customers may want...even if they don’t know it yet. That was a perfect example of the Double-Platinum Rule. Did the driver let the typical expectations of a taxi ride prevent him from engaging the customer? No.

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The common theme amongst all three examples is they all contained service professionals. They all understood that their ultimate role was to provide memorable service, and the greatest tool was their passion for serving others.

As a manager, the best thing you can do to develop a team full of service professionals is to be very clear on exactly what you expect. Everyone has a different understanding of

what it means to provide engaging service...just like everyone has a different understanding of what “clean” is. Be clear. Observe the current service professionals on your team and take note of how they engage their customers. Share those examples with the rest of the team. Be sure that the standard is set very high, reward excellence when you see it, and address mediocrity promptly. Service professionals cringe when they see their manager tolerate mediocrity from co-workers.

True service professionals are a company’s biggest asset, and many customers will become loyal because of them. They will spend more money because of them, and they will refer their family and friends because of them. Commit to becoming a company that a service professional would want to work for in the first place. Let 2008 be the year that you focus on attracting, hiring, orienting, training, appraising, and recognizing a legion of service professionals to deliver engaging service.

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Be sure to order the “*I Am a Service Professional*™” T-Shirt, and also order “*EngageMe...the Voice of Customer*” from www.engagemenow.com . This short video & poster have been getting rave reviews worldwide, and are being used in settings like customer service training and department meetings.

Find more articles relating to service excellence at www.bwenterprise.net. Also on the website, you can subscribe to the official B.Williams Enterprise emailing list. You will receive announcements, newsletters and other excellent resources.

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