



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

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The Double-Platinum Rule SM

Whenever I deliver a keynote, training workshop, or explain my company's service philosophy, I begin with an in-depth discussion on the three service rules. They are the Golden Rule, Platinum Rule, and Double Platinum Rule. Surely, you've heard of the Golden Rule, which basically states that you should treat others the way YOU want to be treated. Not everyone has heard of the Platinum Rule, which focuses on treating people the way THEY want to be treated. If you haven't met me, then chances are that you have not heard of the Double Platinum Rule...that's because I conceived it a few months ago. Knowing the way my mind works, there will probably be a Triple-Platinum Rule coming soon also. So before I get into the Double-Platinum Rule and its implications for creating and delivering an exceptional service experience, let's discuss the first two rules.

The Golden Rule

In one of my sessions recently, I asked for the meaning of the Golden Rule, and someone blurted out, "He who has the gold makes the rules!" Not quite the definition that most of us are familiar with. In short, this rule is about treating others the way you want to be treated. If I want to be treated nicely, then I should treat others nicely...if I want to have doors opened for me, then I should open doors for others...and if I want to be greeted with a big hug and high-five wherever I go, then I should give a big hug and high fives to others right?...Not so fast. While the Golden Rule is a good baseline to have when developing the empathy muscle, it only works when other people want to be treated the way you want to be treated. To put it another way...treating people the way you want to be treated only works when other people want to be treated that way. Otherwise, you may end up turning people off. This can be a difficult pill to swallow for those who pride themselves on knowing exactly what others want...even without asking them. Why wouldn't all guests want to have a personal escort and tour to their room? Why wouldn't everyone want to hear the evening news in a taxicab? Why wouldn't everyone want to be told "Good Morning" and engaged in conversation? The point here is that if you are committed to creating an exceptional service experience for each customer, then each customer's wants, needs, and desires have to be acknowledged, celebrated, and acted upon. Each guest must feel as though they are the only ones in existence when being served. You owe it to them. After all, chances are they had a choice whether to patronize your business or not. Each time a customer, guest, or patient chooses to be served by you, they

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are basically saying “I’ve chosen you...now show me why I made the right decision”. This now brings us to the next rule...

The Platinum Rule

If the Golden Rule is all about what you want, then the Platinum Rule is about what your customers want. So the Platinum Rule states, “Treat others the way THEY want to be treated”. Although it sounds like common sense, it’s not as common as you might think. This rule means that you recognize that service is not about what you want to give; it’s about what others want to receive. If you give me what I don’t want, then you haven’t increased your value in my eyes. There must be a deliberate effort to uncover your customer’s wants, needs, and desires in order to take the guess work out of the equation. It doesn’t matter if you “know what you’re talking about”. If you haven’t captured information to support your hypotheses, then it’s considered anecdotal. So my advice is to optimize the various ways your customers can give you information. Use telephone surveys, focus groups, questionnaires, feedback cards, etc. Once you confidently know what your customers want (because they’ve told you), then you can proceed with meeting and exceeding those expectations. Of course, I thought this all made perfect sense. After all, when it comes to service, what else can be more important than giving customers what they want? The answer hit me upside the head a few months ago...

If you give me what I don’t want, then you haven’t increased your value in my eyes.

The Double Platinum Rule

I’ll explain this rule by giving you the inspiration behind it. A few months ago, I went out to my car only to find that the front right tire was stolen...completely gone! So after storming around upset for a few minutes, I put on the spare wheel, and drove to the nearby auto store. After explaining to the attendant that my wheel was stolen, I proceeded to order a new wheel. The attendant obliged and I was told that the wheel would arrive by the following day. Great! As I was leaving the store, the manager stopped me to ask if I got everything I wanted. After telling him yes, I briefly explained my wheel mishap from that morning. He then asked in a verifying manner, “So you also ordered the wheel locks, right?” Now don’t laugh, but up to that point, I had never heard of a wheel lock. The manager told me that it prevents tires from being stolen, and I should consider ordering some. So I went back to the attendant that I placed the tire order with, and asked why he didn’t recommend the wheel locks...especially after I told him that my wheel was stolen. He then looked me in the eyes and said, “I was doing my job and giving you what YOU wanted”. Wow, that’s the Platinum Rule! The implications immediately hit me. The attendant had given me what I wanted, but I was still upset. As I was driving back home, I thought about the Platinum rule and how it may not be sufficient in all situations. So the Double Platinum rule is (you guessed it), “treat others the way they don’t even know they want to be treated”. To boil it down...anticipate, anticipate, anticipate. Don’t just meet your customer’s expectations, EXCEED them.



Grounding your service strategy in the three Universal Service Rules works well, because it heightens your empathy (Golden Rule), encourages a keen focus on your customer's expectations (Platinum Rule), and challenges you to consistently think of ways to exceed those expectations (Double Platinum Rule).

So I encourage you to share the rules with your team and no matter which one is being discussed, you'll know that service excellence is top of mind.

(P.S. When the Triple-Platinum Rule hits me, you'll be the first to know!)

To your continued success!

Bryan K. Williams
Chief Service Officer

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