

Kiss My Aster

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Wishes: Customer Service Inspiration

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Adults love Walt Disney World, often as much or sometimes even more than children do. I think most of this can be chalked up to the excellent customer service they provide. What falls under customer service, in this instance? Everything from the Cast Member who waves goodbye to you at the end of the evening to the extensive research/constant listening to feedback on how to provide the best possible experience. Can you relate?

WDW Customer Service victories:

1. You will stand in line and you will like it—By adding interactive elements, cooling stations, bits of entertainment and having cast members manage lines, an experience that could be a mood killer becomes part of the experience. I especially like it when the Cast Members use the wait time to carefully educate those in line about what to be ready for next, creating a more confident consumer.

2. Know as much about your customer as possible—In garden centers, we don't have our guest wear Magic Bands around their wrists that provide us all their pertinent info on our smart devices so that we can greet them by name, see how often they visit, view their past purchases and strike up conversations about them. But we can ask them their names and what they bought last time and just pick it up from there!

3. Train like a Princess—The Disney Princesses are Olympians of Customer Service. Imagine meeting children and having your photo taken with them, all day, for eight hours. Add the heavy restrictive costumes, stage makeup and the princess shoes/nowhere to sit down and my opinion of them only escalates. They stay in character no matter what, they're skilled at improv, they keep the pace rolling so the maximum amount of guests get their visits with the least amount of waiting. Snow White speaks in her 1930s shrill, nasal lilt and relates all comments back to living in the woods with dwarves. Merida finds a pen to sign autographs in her massive copper hair and blames midday fireworks on her naughty younger brothers. Anna is bubbly and wants to talk about shopping at Oaken's Trading Post and Elsa is regal, but a little cold and stiff.

4. Inspired employees—While we were trapped on an ice cream social riverboat cruise with Tiana and Naveen, we struck up a conversation with a Cast Member who was hanging out on the boat with us. This Cast Member had been working with Disney World for more than 25 years and wore a long-sleeved shirt and long pants in brutally hot weather. Why? He had to cover his Disney World tattoos, mostly Pirates of the Caribbean and Haunted Mansion. I

love this. He's so committed to his place of work that he got the attractions tattooed on his body AND he isn't allowed to share them at work ... the place that inspired the ink.

5. Don't sweat the small stuff: Empower everyone—On our way into the park one day, we had a very teary, whiny Hazel. She really didn't eat her breakfast, so we popped into Starbucks on Main Street to grab her a banana. The line was long so Hazel and I waited outside. A Gibson Girl-costumed Cast Member walked up, said she heard we needed a banana and that it was on Walt Disney World and she hoped our day got better. Are your people empowered to make customer service decisions at the drop of a mouse-eared hat?

6. End the day with fireworks (or some other tradition)—Even closing time is fun and interesting if you do it right. Stop the customer complaints about closing time and start a closing tradition. "See Ya Real Soon!" is already taken, though. **GP**

Amanda Thomsen is a regular columnist in Green Profit magazine. You can find her funky, punky blog planted at KissMyAster.co and you can follow her on Facebook, Twitter AND Instagram @KissMyAster.