

The Best Service in the World

Those wishing to learn the secrets of top-notch service need look no further than the Ritz-Carlton Cancun. After spending four days there on a recent site inspection for our meeting in January, I am convinced that the staff at this Ritz provides the best service in the world. They go above and beyond the mere language of service ("it's my pleasure...") and actually live the Ritz's credo to fulfill "even the unexpressed wishes and needs" of guests. And they do it all with a level of sincerity that simply cannot be faked.

Example: While dining at the Ritz's Club Grille I mentioned to a companion that my post-meal cappuccino was perhaps a little strong. No waiter was hovering, and I wasn't speaking loudly or making a big deal about it. Within minutes a new cappuccino arrived. I was actually a little embarrassed that the waiter had gone to the trouble. While he watched anxiously, I took a sip and told him it was much improved. He then left to serve other tables.

A few more sips of the coffee and my cellphone rang. I got up to leave the dining room so I could take the call, and the next thing I know the waiter is hurrying after me with the cappuccino, in case I might want to continue drinking it while talking on my cellphone in the lobby.

I was blown away by this. I have never seen anything like it in my entire life of travel, including lengthy stays at many other Ritz-Carltons. Not only was this waiter anticipating my "latent desire" to have the cappuccino with me while in the lobby, he also performed the service with pride shining in his eyes. It wasn't just that he was trying to impress me (or the higher-ups that might have been watching); he wasn't checking off a box called "outrageous service item #1"; instead, his actions were spontaneous, self-initiated and sincere.

It's that sincerity and pride in service that's missing in so many other businesses - even those that are providing service at an extremely high level. From the CEO down to the smallest cog in the wheel, too many people are just doing their jobs, mentally "checking off" the list of service items, and in the process delivering a by-the-book, standardized experience - a very good experience, to be sure, but not the kind of service that makes you smile when you think about it afterwards.

And the funny thing is, it doesn't really take that much. If a waiter bringing a half-consumed cup of cappuccino to someone in a lobby creates a mind-blowing service experience, can you imagine what can be done for patients in a dental office? Think unexpected, think small, think delightful.

Best,
Michael

P.S. I'm not suggesting you should buy a cappuccino maker for the office.
posted -- 05/07/2008