



SECRET SERVICE

Hidden Systems That Deliver Unforgettable Customer Service

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ACTION ITEMS

- Books
 - *The Disney Way* by Bill Capodagli
 - *The Loyal Customer* by Shep Hyken

KEY CONCEPTS

FOREWARD

- If you're in business today, you really have two choices: either you can decide to compete on price alone and hope you can maintain a cost structure to generate a profit, or you can provide magical moments that create value for your guests. Your customers can either view your product or service as a commodity that any one of your competitors can provide, or they can view it as a unique experience that only you can provide.

PREFACE: IMPOSSIBLE DREAM VERSUS REALITY

- Every business needs to create behind-the-scenes systems that guide its employees to ensure they deliver unforgettable customer service and delight clients with pleasant surprises.

1: SECRET SERVICE SYSTEMS: CREATING BEHIND-THE-SCENES SYSTEMS

- "In the new world of fanatical customer service, even small companies never sleep and no request is too ridiculous. That intensity is evident among cutting-edge companies." —*Inc. Magazine*, April 2001.
- The most important of these is that consumers are willing to pay a premium to have their needs met and that there is no limit to what they will spend if their expectations are consistently exceeded.
- Secret Service
 - Secret Service is the implementation of hidden systems that enable our staff to consistently exceed the client's expectations and to make the client feel welcome, comfortable, important, and understood.



- Establish “Non-Negotiable Systems”
 - Secret Service systems are non-negotiable in two ways. First, if created and managed in the right way, customer service becomes non-negotiable for employees, who must deliver it. Second, if we implement Secret Service consistently, then we become a non-negotiable entity in our customers' lives.
- The Customer Experience Cycle
 - “Clients want either the best or the least expensive; there is no in-between.” –David Wagner
 - A major portion of our Secret Service systems is what we call the Customer Experience Cycle. This is the total experience, starting when the client first contacts us, continuing through the visit, and ending with our follow-up phone call a few days later.
- Stages
 - Initial Contact
 - Act in a professional and courteous manner.
 - Reduce any anxiety and uncertainty the caller may feel.
 - Educate and inform the caller.
 - Book the appointment (or close the sale).
 - Provide an opportunity to schedule additional services.
 - Delivery of first product or service
 - Act in a professional and courteous manner.
 - Reduce any anxiety and uncertainty the client may feel.
 - Create a truly friendly atmosphere.
 - Provide a great experience.
 - Exceed the client's expectations.
 - Provide an opportunity to schedule another service.
 - Give an impressive send off. Follow-up:
 - Phone call
 - Postcard
 - Birthday card
 - Newsletter
 - If a client does not return (unretained client):
 - After 4 months: Send “We Miss You” card reminding that it's time for next appointment.
 - After 8 months: Send an incentive to return, such as a 25-percent discount.
 - After 12 months: Call to survey why the client never returned.
 - If a client does return (retained client):
 - Recognize that client as a repeat customer.
 - Repeat all steps of the initial contact stage.



- So after you develop your outline for each stage of the customer encounter, break each stage down into smaller parts and identify specific objectives.
- **Differentiate between first time customers and return customers**
- A slogan without action is a lie. If not executed consistently, Secret Service can do more damage than good.
 - Someone highly recommends the firm, the person who received the recommendation has a bad experience, you now have two people angry. The one who had the experience, and the one who feels foolish for recommending the firm.
- Treat every customer like a million dollars.
- It's harder to make your poor performers better than it is to make your good ones great.
- **Guidelines for beginning your Secret Service System**
 - #1: Create Secret Service systems based on your Customer Experience Cycle.
 - #2: Involve your entire staff in the process; let it be their innovation.
 - #3: Never have a new employee interact with customers until he or she knows every stage of that cycle inside out.
- Borrow from the best when you see great customer service.
 - #1: What Secret Service system is at work here?
 - #2: Can this system somehow be tweaked and implemented in my business?
 - #3: How can I make it a system that is executed 100-percent of the time?
- Creating Secret Service
 - Recognize all your existing Secret Service systems you already have in place.
 - Analyze every point of a customer's encounter and determine the ideal experience that customer would have. Include and enroll your staff's involvement so they have buy-in.
 - Create a wish list of new Secret Service systems that you would ideally love to execute on a consistent basis.
 - From these three lists, create the customer service cycle.
 - Start adding to this Customer Experience Cycle from brainstorming groups, new input, and your experiences with other companies and industries that you now recognize as a Secret Service system.
 - Have distinct systems for new and returning customers, from start to finish.
 - Create follow-up and customer recovery systems as well.
 - Most importantly, you need to create the awareness campaign that sells Secret Service to your entire organization so they understand the significance: How it impacts the bottom line, the points of difference, and its benefits.



- Once you have a strong Customer Experience Cycle established, you must now create and revise all your training to include this as an integral part from orientation on.
- No employee should be allowed to interact with any customer until he or she passes certification tests, role playing, and so forth that assures you he or she understands every step of your Secret Service system(s) and knows the importance of executing it 100-percent of the time.
- Create checks and balances to ensure it's being done consistently. For example, use secret shoppers or survey customers.
- Celebrate successes, letters from satisfied customers, and track their impact. Among things you can celebrate are an increase in referrals, retention rates, average number of tickets sold, and examples when employees go above and beyond.

2: SECRET SERVICE AT WORK: IMPLEMENTING SECRET SERVICE SYSTEMS.

- The Norm Factor (Cheers)
 - "Where everyone knows your name, and they're always glad you came." Whenever Norm, a popular regular, walked into Cheers, everyone yelled, "Nooooorm!" He had his own stool at the end of the bar and a permanent bar tab.
 - Make people feel this way when they come to your place.
 - Great places make clients feel that way even if they are coming in twice a year.

Exercise: Where do you get great client service?

1. In your world, where have you seen or do you see great client service?
2. What do they do to make you feel special?

- Use notes on clients.
 - Review them before meeting/talking to clients.
- Hyde Park Grille
 - New customer
 - Regular
 - Likes meal and service, doesn't like attention.
 - Tuxedo
 - Enjoys the attention and fuss.
 - Spotlight
 - Having a VIP dinner.
 - Entertaining someone.
 - Special event.



- “Concentrate not on making a lot of money, but on becoming the type of person people want to do business with.” —Patricia Fripp
- Application
 - Develop a system that distinguishes your "Norms" (VIPs), as well as makes your staff aware of them on every encounter.
 - Create a system that helps personalize each customer encounter. Keeping up-to-date personal information on clients in your database base that each employee can access.
 - Train your staff on how to input and access this information and the benefits of making customers feel like "Norm."
 - Brainstorm with your staff on what soft amenities you can provide that would result in an unforgettable experience. For example, soda in a cab ride, free oil refills for Jiffy Lube in-between oil changes, or free bang trims at a salon.
 - On a daily basis, create some type of communication that would enable shifts to know who the customers are for the day, such as pre-shift meetings, a display board in the employee lounge, and so on. Then train your team to use this information to provide personalized service to all your customers, even the ones they are dealing with directly.
 - Create a system that distinguishes between new and returning clients that the entire staff can identify and incorporate in their encounters.

3: YOUR FRONT LINE IS YOUR BOTTOM LINE: THE VALUE OF YOUR FRONTLINE PEOPLE.

- Every business begins and ends at the front desk. When people talk about terrible customer service, nine times out of ten it's based on a misstep at the front desk.
- Few companies put more emphasis on training their frontline people than American Express. Before their telephone service representatives put on a headset, they spend five weeks in a classroom, two weeks in on-the-job training, and another three weeks in a training unit. They learn everything from the company's basic operating policies to the best ways to calm an angry customer, or help a distressed person needing immediate assistance. Their training is a step-by-step process that includes lectures, practice, listening, and role playing.
- How a customer service representative answers a question is critical. It's a good idea to arm your guest care department with scripts so they can give better responses to frequently asked questions. This procedure eliminated a problem at John Robert's: A guest care person would answer our phones, listen for a moment, say, "Between \$40 and \$100," then say, "Thank you," and hang up. The caller was asking: "How much are your haircuts?" At John Robert's, haircuts are about more than just the price. The correct answer is, "Our haircut prices vary depending on the level of our designers. Our designer levels are based on their experience and amount of advanced education. Each level is a different price,



ranging from \$40 to \$100, and all of them include a stress-relieving treatment, shampoo, hand and arm massage, haircut and style, and makeup application.

- Greet people personally!!!!
- How do you celebrate the frontline team?

4: WHAT ARE WE REALLY SELLING?

- The experience will be remembered long after price is forgotten.
- What is your point of difference? Why are you different than everyone else?
- “Never save your best pitcher for tomorrow, for tomorrow it may rain.” —Leo Durocher
- “Service is given; hospitality is felt.” —Jim Sullivan
- “We are here to say yes to people, and we just happen to sell groceries as well.” —John Dey
- The best companies act as a resource center for their clientele, both in offering additional services and products themselves and in referring their customers to companies that can provide related services and products that they do not but that still benefit their customers.

5: DRILLING FOR OIL IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD

- Marketing and advertising are expensive. It's been said that half of it works, but nobody knows which half. To see great returns, focus more on keeping your current customers than on attracting new ones.
- Discounting lowers the perceived value of products and services. Instead, we camouflage our discounting through vehicles that make people think they either won our services or received them as a gift. I would rather give away a service than discount it.
- My message is this: Stop wasting your time on cold calls and start going deeper with your existing clients. As Henry Ford said, "Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you are probably right."
- In addition to sending us quarterly newsletters, he sent us a postcard at every change of season with a list of seasonal activities to enjoy. In the summer, the card listed all the water and amusement parks, museums, and festivals, including dates, hours of operation, phone numbers, and addresses. In the winter, the card listed where we could see holiday lights, shop, and cut our own tree.

6: CREATING PASSIONATE TEAM MEMBERS

- “Take my building, equipment, all my money, my land, but leave me my people, and in one year I will be on top again.” —Andrew Carnegie
- Ten guidelines when managing a team:
 - 1. You cannot expect 100-percent of your staff to become ideal employees.



- 2. You can expect that 5-percent of your staff will be naturals at living the mission.
- 3. The secret to succeeding is not to dismiss the employees who don't fit your ideal model, but to mold them, to find out which buttons to push, what hat to wear to motivate them. You may fail with some, but you will succeed with many others, and your success will be well worth it.
- 4. Development of your staff is your responsibility. Leadership is motivating people to reach their highest potential. People like to generalize that nobody wants to work anymore, and the younger generation has poor work ethics and is useless. If you believe that and your business is dependent on employees, you might as well close your doors.
- 5. Nobody rises to low expectations.
- 6. There is a winner in everyone.
- 7. Many successful people were bad employees at one time. At some point in their careers, someone knew what to do to motivate them.
- 8. Keeping up morale is dependent on the boss.
- 9. No successful business owner has continuous bad luck with employees.
- 10. For the most part, the people we hire do not possess any more winning qualities than the people who work elsewhere. We just do a very good job at bringing out their winning qualities.
- “You may own the business, but you just rent the people.” –Jack Welch
- Just like a Customer Experience Cycle, there is an Employee Experience Cycle.
 - Orientation
 - On the first day the new hire learns the history of John Robert's, accomplishments, awards won, legacy, core values, and company policies.
 - On the second day the new hire attends an interactive hands-on class that introduces all the Secret Service systems that the new hire will be expected to learn and follow.
 - The new hire meets several key members of the management team.
 - The new hire is given a John Robert's History Portfolio to take home and review.
 - The new hire takes a legacy test to see how much she retained about the John Robert's history.
 - The First 90 Days
 - A large banner is displayed in the employee lounge with the new team member's picture, name, and position.
 - A company-wide voicemail is sent introducing our newest team member.



- All new employee pictures, names, and positions are announced in the monthly team newsletter.
- All new employees are introduced at monthly company meetings.
- At 15, 30, 60, and 90 days the new employee and his/her manager meet to ensure that mutual expectations are being met. The new employee also receives different services to understand what a guest experiences.
- The new hire sets goals to be achieved in his/her first year.
- The Ongoing Experience
 - All employees have to meet the minimum yearly requirement for advanced education hours.
 - Multiple managers send Caught You Doing Something Right cards to employee.
 - The employee has an opportunity to win the Employee of the Month award at a monthly meeting.
 - Any and all accomplishments are celebrated via monthly meetings, team newsletters, company voice mails, and so forth.
 - The employee has the opportunity to be promoted, which is celebrated at the restaurant of his/her choice.
 - Employee achievements are recognized at the annual 'Johnni' Awards Celebration.
 - All team members attend an annual summit at which top presenters are featured.
 - Team members have the opportunity to apply for the John Robert's Leadership Development Program.
 - Service providers have the opportunity to join the John Robert's Design Team, which conducts fashion shows and performs makeovers on television.
 - At their 5-year anniversary employees get a room named after them, marked with a plaque. They also receive an amethyst necklace.
- Take the time to write out the Employee Experience Cycle for your company. Don't forget to ask your employees what their personal experiences were. Their input is essential to discovering difficult periods at which an employee might need extra support.
- It has become so routine that we now have a spreadsheet with every employee's name down one side and each manager's name across the top. The manager fills in the date he or she last sent that employee a "Caught You Doing Something Right" card. This way we can spot when someone hasn't been recognized in a while and immediately catch them.
- At the end of orientation, we give a Legacy Test to see how much knowledge about John Robert's has been retained. We don't grade this



test; it's just a review. We ask questions such as, "Of the fifteen awards listed below, which has John Robert's won?" To employees' amazement, the correct answer is fourteen out of fifteen. Another question is, "Of the twenty-four community projects listed below, what has John Robert's been involved in?" Again, the answer is twenty-three out of twenty-four.

- New hires are given a "Learning Journal Guide," and take classes at the Starbucks center on Simply Service, Communicating Coffee, and the Starbucks Experience before they begin to work in the store. The classes include learning their mission, history, and Starbucks skills (such as enhancing, listening and acknowledging, building self-esteem, and asking for help).
- Expectations of employees include acknowledging new service, recognizing each other, treating each other with respect, contributing to the experience, and expressing enthusiasm. Employees are reviewed every 6 months, and individual development plans are discussed. Employees are evaluated on the first impressions they project and their skills. If an employee is late or performs below standard, he or she is written up, and after three write-ups is put on probation.
- So make sure you have Secret Service systems in place for former employees. Send them cards when they leave, saying how much you appreciate the time they worked for you and how you wish them much luck in the future. If the person worked for you for several years, send flowers to the home. When possible, recognize the individual at the last company meeting he or she attends or in a newsletter. Continue to send birthday cards and holiday cards.
- Once a month we hold a 3-hour meeting for our entire company. As part of the agenda, two or three successful employees share their stories about where they began and what it took to get where they are today. These stories are inspirational to newer staff members who may be struggling and lacking confidence.

7: AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE A HERO

- A business theory states that if you please a customer, he will think well of you, but if you please a formerly disappointed customer, he will be your best source of advertising. A customer complaint is a chance for a company to be a hero.
- If the client makes a mistake and you can fix it behind the scenes, it is not necessary to make the client aware.
- Role playing is the best training to prepare for worst case scenarios. It also corrects the impression of most people that they have great customer service skills and are able to handle almost any situation. Put new employees in the role of dealing with a difficult situation.
 - Get cards with descriptions of tough clients that you have run into before.



- Give them to trainees and see how they deal with it.
- I love the philosophy of Patrick Lally, owner of Tim Lally Chevrolet of Bedford, Ohio. He says, "If a problem with a customer gets to me, it's free." This philosophy forces his managers to handle the situation because, as Patrick puts it, "If I end up eating \$2,000 or \$3,000, it directly lowers that department's profit, which ultimately reduces the manager's bonus."

8: ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF LIVES AROUND US

- Giving back to the community is not just the right thing to do, it builds your team and makes them closer.

9: ENOUGH

- When contemplating implementing technology advances ask yourself the following:
 - 1. How important are one-on-one relationships to my customers and is the success of my business dependent on them?
 - 2. What will the short-term personal perception be to my customers?
 - 3. While it may eliminate jobs, will it eliminate customers?
 - 4. Has this worked successfully in other businesses?
 - 5. Are we giving the perception to our customers and employees that we are more corporate and bureaucratic now than before?
- John Robert's has implemented the Wal-Mart principle that any time an employee is within 10 feet of a customer, he greets the customer. Equally important, we also do this with each other, our team members. After all, we may walk past one another half a dozen times each day. Why not say hi with a smile? Nothing is more deflating than to be in a good mood and to have a co-worker bring you down. When we make our team more aware of providing great customer service skills to each other, we don't have to worry about how our team takes care of the guests. It snowballs. Morale improves, customer service improves, and client retention improves.