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REVISED AND UPDATED EDITION

# BE OUR GUEST

Perfecting the Art  
of Customer Service

  
with Theodore Kinni

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## Be Our Guest | *Disney Institute*

Be Our Guest: Perfecting the Art of Customer Service  
Disney Enterprises: New York, NY, 2011. 195 pages.

The opening sequence of *The Wonderful World of Disney* television show featured the iconic image of a fantasy castle with Tinker Bell waving her wand and sprinkling “pixie dust” over the castle, followed by colorful fireworks. The show was a magical journey into the worlds that Walt Disney brought to life through cartoons, movies, television shows, and theme parks.

***Be Our Guest: Perfecting the Art of Customer Service, accomplishes the same thing – an amazing look “behind the curtain” of the magic that Disney delivers in the area of customer service.***

The magic of Disney’s customer service has a quality that leads to superior organizational performance, building Guest satisfaction and increasing brand loyalty. Just like an audience in a magic performance, Disney’s Guests have no idea how the attractions and rides they experience work. This illusion is part of the show, and adds to the excitement.

To the Disney Cast Members who deliver the show, it’s really a practical process made up of a series of meticulously planned, well-rehearsed steps designed to delight the audience.

*Be Our Guest* explores how Disney has been able to set a world-class benchmark for magical service, the main ingredients of its magic reality, and most importantly, how you can create your own brand of magic in your organization.

*Be Our Guest* wins over even skeptical leaders who don’t see how Disney’s magic can have a place in their organization by showing how all organizations need customer-friendly employees.

In order to understand the magic of Disney, you need to know a little about Walt Disney, and why he cared so much about customer service. When he threw his energies into the creation of Disneyland in the early 1950s, he was totally concentrated on the Guest Experience. The very idea for Disneyland was born in Saturday trips to amusement parks that Walt Disney made with his two daughters. In those days, amusement parks were disreputable, dirty, and often in poor condition. While watching and waiting on his daughters to finish their rides, he began to watch the other customers and how they reacted to the parks.

***A single question drove Disney: How could this experience be improved for the entire family?***

Walt’s answer was to create a new kind of amusement park, a “theme” park with an intense focus on the Guest Experience. With his successful background in animation and movies, and with a studio of brilliant, creative minds to work with, Disney created a “living show.”

***With a little bit of the same magic, your organization can do the same.***

## Be Our Guest | *Disney Institute (cont'd)*

Before beginning this magical journey, a Disney lexicon would be helpful:	
Disney word	We know it as
Guest	Customer
Cast Member	Employee
Costume	Work attire or uniform
Role	An employee's job
Backstage	Behind the scenes, out of view of customers
On Stage	In full view of customers

Quality Service is Disney's behind-the-scenes name for its customer service processes, and is simply defined as follows:

***Quality Service means exceeding your Guests' expectations by paying attention to every detail of the delivery of your products and services.***

That's it. The magic of Disney's customer service is paying attention to details. But as you might expect, the simplicity of those few words is lived out daily by tens of thousands of Cast Members performing and interacting with hundreds of thousands of Guests, all delivered with a magical smile.

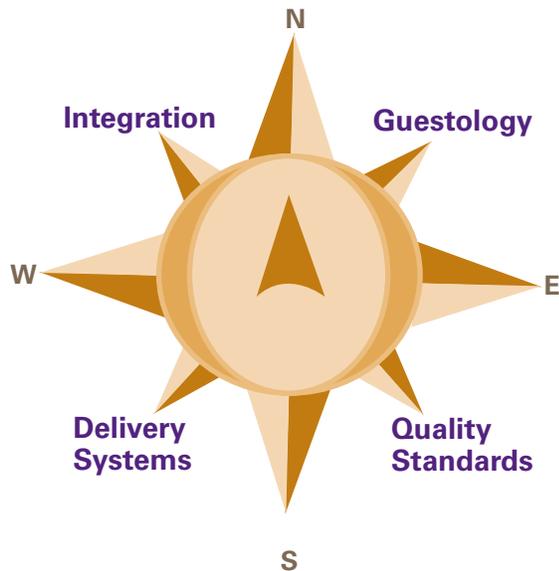
### ***The WOW! Factor of Exceeding Guest Expectations:***

- Superlative face-to-face service
- Paying close attention to every aspect of the Guest Experience
- Analyzing that experience from the Guest's perspective
- Understanding the needs and wants of the Guest
- Committing every element of the organization – from the design of the infrastructure to the interaction between Guest and Cast – to the creation of an exceptional experience

***Exceeding Guests' expectations is Disney's service strategy, and paying attention to every detail is the tactic by which it is accomplished.***

The model of Disney's Quality Service takes shape as the Quality Service Compass. The Compass is a shared vision of service that aligns the major elements that every organization shares – its people, infrastructure, and processes – in a cohesive, comprehensive effort to deliver that vision.

## Be Our Guest | *Disney Institute (cont'd)*



*The Quality Service Compass has four main points: Guestology, quality standards, delivery systems, and integration. The service objective – to exceed Guest expectations – resides at the center of the compass.*

### Compass Point 1: Guestology

Guestology is what Disney calls the art and science of knowing and understanding their Guests. It is the first point of the compass because the needs, wants, perceptions, and emotions of Guests are the basis for the action that takes place in the other three points.

### Compass Point 2: Quality Standards

Quality standards establish the criteria for actions that are necessary to accomplish the service strategy, and they serve as measures for quality service.

### Compass Point 3: Delivery Systems

Disney – and all other service delivery organizations – shares three types of delivery systems: their employees, their setting, and their processes.

### Compass Point 4: Integration

Integration simply means that the three delivery systems are combined and aligned to create a complete operating system.

Disney’s approach to these compass points is best viewed through a “magic” lens as follows.

The Magic of Service	
•	<b>Become an expert Guestologist</b> —Guestology is the work of learning who your customers are and understanding what they expect when they come to you. Guestology techniques include surveys, listening post, focus groups utilization studies, and most important, the feedback Guests give to employees.
•	<b>Create a Guest profile</b> —Knowledge about customers includes demographics (information about the physical characteristics of your customer base) and psychographics (information about their attitudes, lifestyles, values, and opinions). Both provide useful information for creating service quality.
•	<b>Use the Guestology Compass to manage customer information</b> —The compass collects and analyzes customer needs, wants, stereotypes, and emotions. The company can use this information at a macro level to provide mass customization, while employees can use the same tool to personalize their interactions with customers.

*continued...*

## Be Our Guest | *Disney Institute (cont'd)*

### The Magic of Service...*continued*

- **Articulate a unique service theme**—A common purpose defines an organization’s mission, communicates a message internally, and creates an image of the organization. At Disney’s parks and resorts, “We create happiness by providing the finest in entertainment for people of all ages, everywhere.”
- **Define your critical service standards**—Quality standards are the criteria by which service is judged, prioritized, and measured. The four standards in Disney parks and resorts are Safety, Courtesy, Show, and Efficiency.
- **Recognize the primary service systems**—Delivery systems are the methods by which Quality Service is implemented. Organizations have three major delivery systems: Cast, Setting, and Process.

### The Magic of Cast

- **Make a memorable first impression**—First impressions are lasting ones. Start sending the right messages to prospective and new employees from the very first point of contact.
- **Communicate the heart and soul of the organization first**—Your heritage, values, common purpose, and quality standards are more important than the paperwork associated with new hires. Use new-employee orientation sessions to communicate your organizational vision and culture.
- **Speak a service language; wear a service wardrobe**—How you look and how you speak communicates an image in the customer’s mind. Make sure that your appearance and language reflect your brand of Quality Service.
- **Establish a set of performance tips**—The guidelines are a set of behaviors that ensure that employees know how to act courteously and respect the individuality of each Guest. They form the baseline for delivering and measuring Quality Service performance.
- **Build a performance culture**—Performance cultures are sets of location-specific behaviors, mannerisms, terms, and values that direct and enhance an employee’s role in a specific business unit. They use shared values, visions, and missions to help the workforce optimize and customize service delivery.

### The Magic of Setting

- **Define your setting**—Setting is the environment in which service is delivered to customers, all of the objects within that environment, and the procedures used to enhance and maintain the service environment and objects.
- **Tell your story through the setting**—Walk through the service experience in your organization wearing the customer’s shoes. Observe and critique the setting, and align its messages with the service story you want to tell.

Guide the Guest Experience with setting. Consider the directional aspects of setting. Make sure the physical layout of your organization (or its website or phone system), interior design, and signage keep customers on the track for a great service experience.

*continued...*

## Be Our Guest | *Disney Institute (cont'd)*

### The Magic of Setting..*continued*

- **Communicate quality service to all five senses**—Customers build their impressions of you using all of their senses. Ensure that your customers’ experiences with the sights, sounds, smells, touch, and tastes of your organization are consistent with expectations and with your theme.
- **Separate onstage and backstage**—Screen business functions that do not involve customers so that they do not interrupt the delivery of service. Give employees back stage space to rest and relax.
- **Maintain your setting with a consistent, comprehensive effort**—Use the design process to build maintenance into the setting, and enlist every employee in the in the maintenance effort.

### The Magic of Process

- **Take a process orientation to service delivery**—Roughly three-quarters of service is delivered via processes. Processes are the policies, tasks, and procedures used to deliver service.
- **Collect and analyze combustion statements**—Combustion statements indicate service issues that need to be solved. Listen to and study your Guests to identify and optimize those issues before combustion points become explosion points.
- **Optimize Guest flow throughout the service experience**—Create the perfect service flow by optimizing the operation of products and services, allowing Guests to self-manage their experience, and effectively managing unavoidable waits.
- **Equip your cast to communicate with Guests**—Fielding questions immediately is an important component of customer satisfaction. Provide your Guests with the right information in the right manner at the right time.
- **Create processes for Guests who need service attention**—Treat all of your Guests like VIPs – very important, very individual people. Identify Guest who need service attention, like children and people with disabilities, then implement processes designed to ensure they get a positive service experience and communicate those processes throughout the organization.
- **Debug service processes continuously**—“Plus” your service processes at every opportunity. Fix design flaws and oversights, adapt new technologies and techniques, and solve your customer’s problems before they ask for help.

### The Magic of Integration

- **Build a service organization greater than the sum of its parts with integration**—Integration is the work of aligning and distributing your service standards over the three delivery systems of cast, setting, and process.
- **Meet Guest expectations with headliners; the plus experience to exceed Guest expectations**—Headliners are those combinations of standards and delivery systems that are natural matches. At Disney parks and resorts, they are cast and courtesy, setting and show, and process and efficiency. The remaining combinations can be used to distribute service standards in unexpected ways to surprise and delight Guests.

*continued...*



## Be Our Guest | *Disney Institute (cont'd)*

### The Magic of Integration..continued

- **Make the Integration Matrix part of your organizational toolbox**—The Integration Matrix is an expanded tic-tac-toe board that combines service standards and delivery systems. Use it to analyze and manage the design and development of Quality Service.
- **Manage every service moment**—On the Integration Matrix, each combination of a service standard and a delivery system represents a service moment of truth. Each should be fully considered and developed to deliver a magical service moment.
- **Choose service solutions that are high-touch, high-show, and high-tech**—When analyzing service solutions, look for those that meet a Guest's need for interaction, vivid presentation, and efficiency.
- **Plan and manage solution implementations using storyboards**—Use storyboards – visual maps of service solutions – as an aid to implementation.

That's how Disney does customer service. A common purpose generates quality standards. The standards are defined and delivered using three basic systems that every organization shares: its people, its physical assets, and its processes. All three are integrated and aligned to produce the Disney brand of magic.

*Isn't it time for you to create some practical magic of your own?*

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## Be Our Guest | *Disney Institute (cont'd)*

### Recommended Resources

1. **Read** 10 facts about your hospitality ministry that Auxano Founder and Team Leader Will Mancini uses as the foundation for Auxano's Guest Perspective Evaluations.
2. **Understand** how the first 11 minutes a Guest is on your campus determines to a large degree whether they will return or not. Auxano Founder and Team Leader Will Mancini has developed 7 checkpoints that will help you move toward a great Guest Experience at your church.
3. According to Auxano's Guest Experience Navigator Bob Adams, the development of your hospitality ministry turns on one word. **Take** the one-word challenge here, and also discover a wealth of Guest Experience resources awaiting you on his website.
4. **Read** what Carmine Gallo, communications coach for some of the world's most successful brands, thinks any customer-facing organization (like your church) can learn from studying Disney's guest experience practices.
5. **Read** why Danny Franks, Connections Pastor at Summit RDU, looks to Disney to provide principles helpful in their guest services delivery.

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## Go Ahead Actions for Vision Clarity

by Bob Adams

### Vision Clarity Connection

Your competition, the rival that will keep people away from your church, is any business, service, or experience your guests have encountered in the past few weeks. Although too much of their world is merely adequate, your guests know excellence, and they return to places where they experience it.

#### What would it take to create this level of excellence at your church?

*How about a little Disney magic?*

As you will learn from reading *Be Our Guest*, the “secret” to Disney’s magic is both an art and a science. The heart of Disney’s magic is *attention to details*. They start with a great story and then design ideas to create an experience. They implement training and processes like any well-run organization to make sure they operate safely and efficiently. They rely on the intuitive hospitality and friendliness of their outstanding cast to make sure each guest feels like Disney designed the place just for them. The result? A culture of world-famous experiences and legendary guest services.

Read *Be Our Guest* to help your organization focus its vision and align its people and infrastructure into a cohesive strategy that delivers on the promise of exceptional guest satisfaction.

### Go Ahead

#### Setting

To understand the importance of setting, take your leadership team on a series of field trips to at least two retail establishments or service-based businesses and one church in your area.

- Were you greeted upon entering the establishment?
- Was the place clean?
- Were all the employees wearing clean clothes? If there was a “uniform,” did all employees wear it?
- Did employees engage you and other customers or just chat among themselves?
- Were employees visible and available for questions or too busy?
- Did employees lead customers to requested destinations or merely point at the location?
- If employees didn’t know the answer to a customer’s question, did they seek the answer from a colleague?

Upon completing these field trips, have your teams come together to look at their results. What messages were the settings at the various locations sending? Apply the same type of discovery actions to your physical setting. Develop plans that will address deficiencies, allow expansion in new areas, and enable continual evaluation of your setting.

#### Process

One of the best ways to understand the pulse of your guest services is to experience it in action. Over a period of one month, have each of your leadership team experience the guest services teams in action by observing and interacting with all phases of your process.

- What repeated patterns are you observing?
- Is there a reality gap between the ideals you are espousing and the training programs designed to deliver those ideals?
- How will you close that gap?
- What measures can you put into place to ensure a regular information flow from your front lines?



## More About Bob Adams

Bob is an absolute fanatic about guest experiences. Growing up, he watched his father serve customers at the gas station his dad built and operated for 44 years. Somewhere along the way, observing and participating in “experiences” of all types captivated Bob. For over 30 years he has woven the concepts of experience into the church setting. Always striving to learn more, he is continually connecting with corporate leaders in the customer experience world, learning and then translating practices for churches. He writes, speaks, and consults on the topic frequently. He gets the opportunity for front-line engagement at Elevation Church in Charlotte, NC, serving as a Guest Experience Coordinator for the Uptown Campus.

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