



***Lessons From The Mouse:
Applying Disney World's Secrets of
Success to Your Organization,
Your Career, and Your Life***

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Lessons From the Mouse

Applying Disney World's Secrets of Success to Your Organization, Your Career, and Your Life

Presented at the

**Press Ganey
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**by
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Lesson 1

Perform With a *Relationship* Mentality (Not a *Task* Mentality)

Most of the jobs at Disney World have certain repetitive tasks, such as telling guests to “watch your head and step” as they board an attraction, emptying endless trashcans throughout the day, or reciting the same spiel (such as on the Jungle Cruise attraction) twenty times a day, five-days a week. It would be easy for those jobs to eventually become so routine that they become robotic. And worse, for them to *appear* robotic to guests.

The Disney rule is to treat each guest as a VIP – a **V**ery **I**ndividual **P**erson. And you certainly can't do that if your actions have become robotic. Disney cast members are expected to build relationships with guests. They are expected to make a real connection with each guest, even if it's only for a few seconds. Sometimes it just takes a sincere smile, or secretly observing a child's name stitched on his Mickey Mouse ears and welcoming him or her by name. The result is that guests feel Disney cast members care about them as *individuals* and have a sense of relationship.

Some tasks become so routine that we do them without thinking. The bank loan officer who instructs her customer to sign here, here, and here, without acknowledging that the customer is using the money to send her only child to college – has fallen into the trap of the task mentality. Or the hospital receptionist who, without looking up, hands a patient a clipboard full of forms to fill out – has forgotten how nervous the patient may be. In both of these scenarios it is likely that the employee has performed these tasks so many times they can do them without thinking.

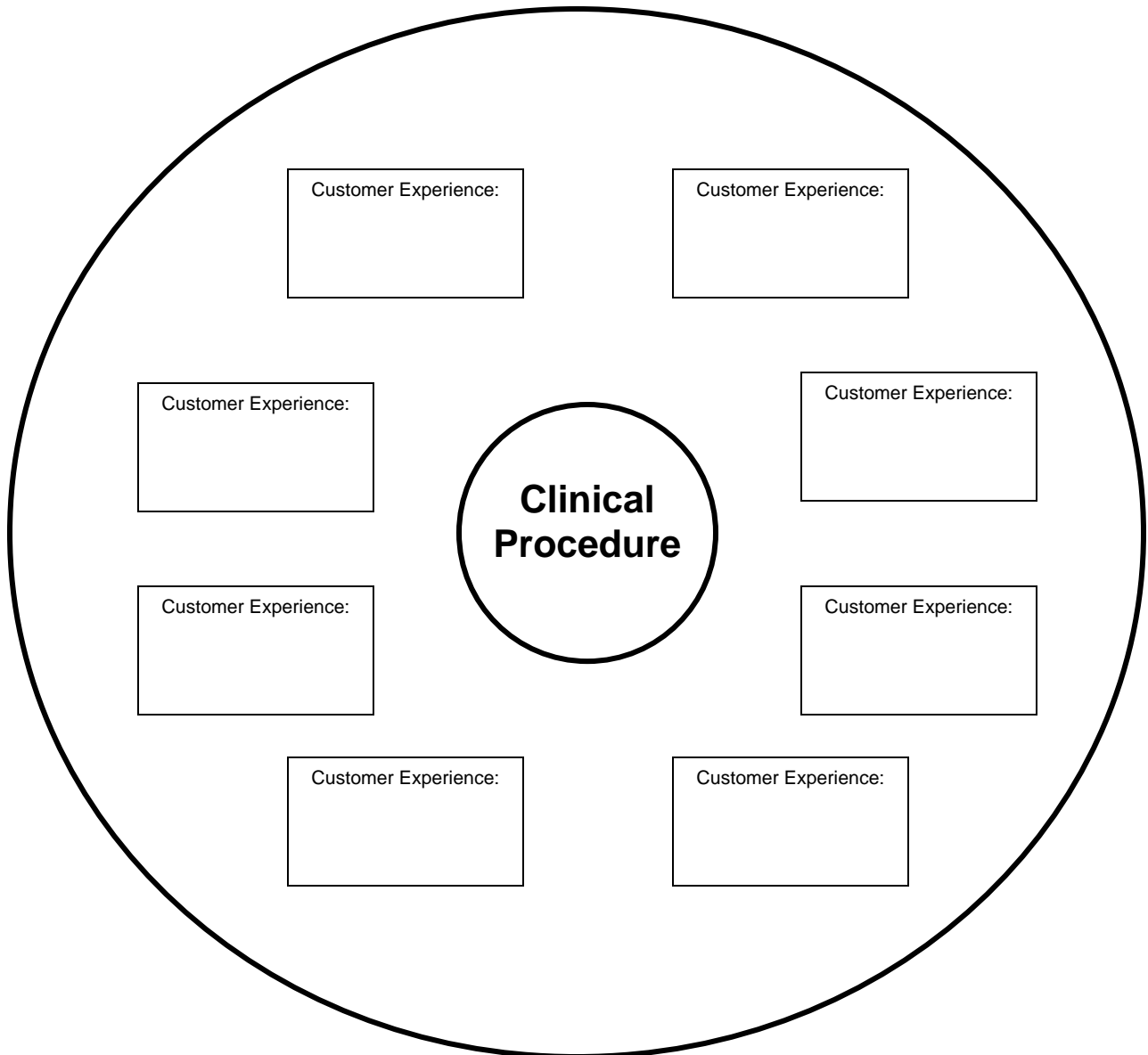
The problem is this – **When we operate from a task mentality, customers feel *processed* rather than *valued*.** And it's hard to generate loyalty when customers feel processed. The secret is to identify those routine tasks that involve customer interaction and commit to staying mentally present and fully conscious of how you come across while performing these tasks. It's about maintaining a *relationship* mentality versus a *task* mentality.

Questions for Applying Lesson 1

1. As a customer, what are some examples of robotic (task-oriented) service you have received?
2. How did you feel about your experience when you received robotic service?
3. In our organization, what routine tasks could potentially appear robotic to customers – with the result that they feel they've been simply processed?
4. What can be done to personalize the tasks listed in question #3?
5. How can we make what is automated in your organization (such as voicemail, phone trees, or Web site) more “animated?”

The “Real” Customer Experience

In any healthcare situation, the quality of clinical care is at the heart of the patient experience. Patients expect a high level of provider competency and care. The patient’s perception of the overall experience, however, is impacted by several “mini-experiences” that surround whatever clinical procedure is provided. While patients won’t always understand the details of a particular medical procedure, they do understand how they were treated throughout the larger experience.



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Task Versus Experience

Task-Based Performance	Experience-Based Performance

Lesson 2

Preserve the Magic – Never Let Backstage Come Onstage

The concepts of “onstage” and “backstage” are critical to preserving the Disney magic. Imagine a child actually seeing Cinderella smoking a cigarette. Years of therapy might be called for. Or imagine seeing a maintenance truck near the Frontierland Train Station – it doesn’t really fit the *frontier* theme, does it? Such disconnects would destroy the illusion that Disney has spent billions to create. As cast members, protecting the magic is a key part of the job. They’re expected to ensure everything is “show ready” for guests.

No matter the organization, there is a brand image you want customers to have in mind. And that brand image can be compromised very easily. Clearly distinguishing “onstage” from “backstage,” and keeping the two completely separate, helps to preserve the integrity of your brand. Even a seemingly harmless action like leaving a stockroom door open can create a “visual intrusion” when customers can clearly see all of the stockroom clutter. Or notes and memos about employee policies taped up on the wall in full view of customers. Do customers really need to know that returning late from a break may result in disciplinary action?

And backstage isn’t just a physical place; it’s also an attitude. We’ve all overheard employees discussing things that have no business being discussed onstage. Customers don’t want to hear employees discussing last night’s keg party or hear employees complaining to each other about their supervisor. Most customers are annoyed when they have to get the attention of an employee whose head is buried in a magazine. Each of these perfectly natural employee behaviors belongs backstage where they don’t interfere with the customer experience.

Questions for Applying Lesson 2

1. What makes up the physical backstage of our organization?
2. What makes up the “attitudinal” backstage of our organization?
3. What magic or brand image should not be compromised?
4. What does being “show ready” mean in our operation?
5. How can we ensure our operation is always show ready for customers?

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The Physical Backstage

Backstage Reality	Onstage Expectation

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The “Attitudinal” Backstage

Backstage Reality	Onstage Expectation

Lesson 3

See Through the Customer's Lens - "What Time is the Three O'clock Parade"? Is Not a Stupid Question

Every Disney cast member can tell you about funny questions Disney guests ask. How about "What time is the three o'clock parade?" or "Can we see where Walt Disney is frozen in the castle?" or "When will you be turning off the rain?"

In the face of such seemingly silly questions, the inviolable Disney rule is never to make a guest feel stupid. Guests are out of their comfort zones, the place can be overwhelming, and it's the cast member's job to understand and address the question behind the question. For example, when a guest asks, "What time is the three o'clock parade?" cast members know the guest really wants to know, "What time does the three o'clock parade get *here*?"

And in those circumstances when a guest is completely in the wrong, the Disney philosophy is; "The guest may not always be right, but they will always be our guest." Stated another way, **"The guest may not always be right, but let's allow them to be wrong with dignity."**

Customers are not stupid – it's just that they may not know what we know. True; they didn't read the sign, buy the right part, call the right phone number, or give the right specifications. But they're not stupid. They're out of their comfort zone – and each of us has made the same mistakes when we're in unfamiliar or confusing situations.

If we're going to create or sustain customer loyalty, we have to look at every situation through the "lens of the customer." When we view situations from the customer's perspective, then and only then can we understand the question behind the question or the issue behind the issue. Then, and only then can we preserve the customer's dignity as well as their loyalty.

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Questions for Applying Lesson 3

1. Describe some of the common yet bizarre customer questions or behaviors that sometimes occur in our operation.
2. In the circumstances listed in question 1, what is the question behind the question; or the issue behind the issue?
3. What examples of internal speak or jargon should we avoid when conversing with customers?
4. How can we ensure that customers who make a mistake are “wrong with dignity?”
5. What processes can we implement to better understand the “lens of the customer?”

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The “Lens of the Customer”

Customer situation:

Based on the customer’s situation, describe the *emotions* the customer is likely experiencing:

Based on the customer’s likely emotions, what are the customer’s *needs*?

Based on the customer’s likely emotions, what are the customer’s *wants*?

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Lesson 4

Little Wows Add Up

Walt Disney World guests often exclaim, “It seems like Disney employees will do anything to make a guest happy!” And while cast members may sometimes do extraordinary things – like arranging for a family to be grand marshals of the parade – cast members are usually extremely busy loading people on rides, scooping ice cream nonstop, sweeping the streets, checking guests into hotels, and so on. While they create “big wows” when they can, the reality is that cast members focus on doing *little* things that wow, such as asking guests where they’re from, taking a quick photo for a family, or just smiling sincerely.

While these examples represent genuine acts of kindness, they don’t necessarily knock your socks off. But the magic of these little wows is that they add up. Small, yet sincere personalized actions, as they accumulate, have a tremendous impact. And when these wowed guests leave at the conclusion of their vacations, they can’t wait to come back. And they tell their friends, “Disney employees will do anything to make a guest happy!”

While it can be a daunting task to constantly come up with grandiose gestures that dazzle customers, it’s pretty easy to come up with behaviors that cause a customer to simply think, “That was nice.” Think of a time when a company’s employee remembered something about you, paid attention to your children, or shared some useful information you didn’t know about a product. These are all examples of little wows. And while taken individually these actions may seem like no big deal, little wows add up.

So, while the big wows are wonderful (and we should all create them when we can), the real magic is consistently creating little wows.

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Questions for Applying Lesson 4

1. What are some examples of occurrences that have caused our customers to literally exclaim, "Wow!"?
2. What are some examples of simple courtesies that prompt smiles and gratitude from our customers?
3. What actions can we take that demonstrate we truly care about the customer's experience with our organization?
4. What behaviors demonstrate excellent responsiveness?

Lesson 5

Know What Frustrates Customers and Do Something About it

While Disney World's mission is to create magic for guests, sometimes less-than-magical events occur. Rain, closed attractions, and long wait-times are just a few examples of circumstances that can result in guests being frustrated. Guests often save for years to visit Disney World, and their expectations are understandably high. Any glitch in the experience can easily cause frustration that is out of proportion to the actual problem – but the guests' perception of the problem is the only perception that counts.

Rather than ignore those problems, however, Disney faces them head on. Over the years, for example, Disney "Imagineers" have addressed the wait-time issue in a number of ways, such as posting wait-time signs, providing entertainment while guests stand in line, and designing the queue into the story of the attraction. Most recently Disney World created Fastpass™ - a process where guests can make reservations to go on major attractions, reducing wait times dramatically. These are all examples of finding out what frustrates off customers and doing something about it.

Most customers have experienced company processes that just don't make sense and cause intense frustration. Sometimes a particular process has been in place so long that the organization simply forgets how irritating it is to customers. Other times the organization decides that their convenience is more important than the customer's convenience, such as the appliance repair company that says they'll be at your house sometime between 1pm and 5pm. Clearly, their convenience trumps the customer's.

All it takes to successfully apply Lesson 5 is an understanding of how customers interact with your organization and to identify any "points of pain." When asked, most customers are quick to share what frustrates them. Frontline employees are another source of information regarding customer frustrations. After all, those employees are usually the ones who bear the brunt of the customer's irritation. And when a company identifies customer frustrations *and* takes steps to alleviate the problem, they set themselves apart from the competition. Customers think, "Why can't other organizations do it like they do?"

Questions for Applying Lesson 5

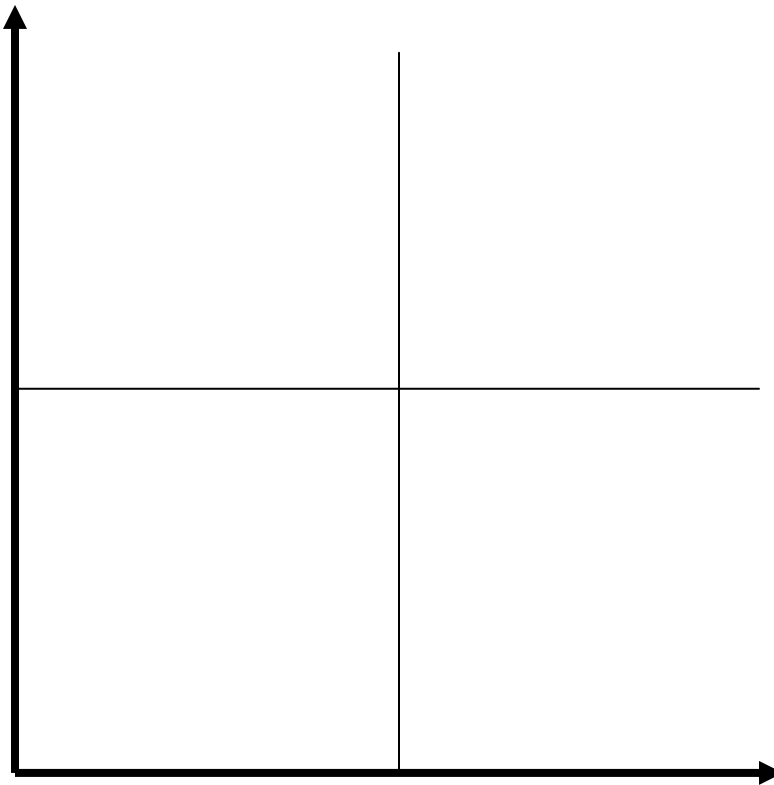
1. What are some frustrating processes you've endured as a customer?
2. How do you react when you experience processes that are designed for a company's convenience rather than yours?
3. What do customers find frustrating about doing business with our industry?
4. What are our competitors (or even other industries) doing to make things easier for customers or customers? What can we learn from them?
5. What can our team do to encourage greater sharing of ideas for improving the customer experience?

Service Recovery

No matter how hard we try to create an excellent customer experience, there will be those times when things go wrong. How the organization handles a service failure will determine whether a customer's loyalty is retained or not.

The Service Recovery Matrix below is not intended as a substitute for good judgment. It is intended to serve as a framework for teams to discuss service failures and possible approaches for effectively handling such problems.

The Service Recovery Matrix



Service Recovery

Strategy _____
(Empathize, Fix It, Red Carpet, Hero)

Possible Recovery Situations	Possible Recovery Solutions

Behavior

Goal

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| Listen | Customer feels you understand the nature of his/her problem |
| Apologize | Customer knows you're sorry the situation occurred |
| Solve | Satisfy customer using one of the four recovery strategies |
| Apologize | Customer <i>again</i> knows you're sorry the situation occurred |

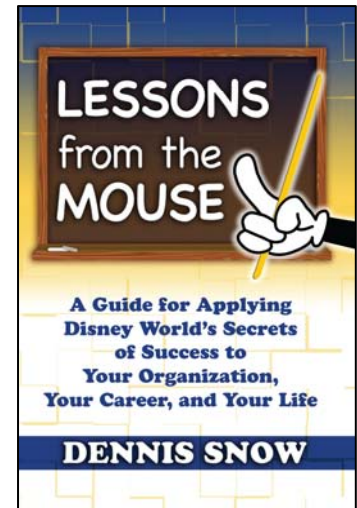
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Dennis Snow's newest book is now available!

Lessons From the Mouse ***A Guide for Applying Disney World's Secrets of Success to Your Organization, Your Career, and Your Life***

What can a mouse teach you? When that mouse has been delighting and entertaining hundreds of millions of people for decades, it turns out there is plenty to learn! Dennis Snow's newest book, ***Lessons From the Mouse*** provides ten no-nonsense, practical principles that anyone, anywhere can apply. He entertains while he educates with chapters like "What Time is the 3:00 Parade? Is Not a Stupid Question."

The mouse is very candid here – no Disney pixie dust blinds the reader. Backstage snafus, onstage errors, and occasional chaos emerge in all their drama, humor, or irony. At its heart, though, ***Lessons From the Mouse*** presents ten lessons that guide readers in applying excellence in their own organizations, careers, and lives. The ten lessons include:



- Never Let Backstage Come Onstage
- What Time is the 3:00 Parade? Is Not a Stupid Question
- Little Wows Add Up
- Have Fun With the Job – No Matter How Miserable You Feel
- Don't Be a Customer Service Robot
- Pay Attention to the Details – Everything Speaks
- Never, Ever Say, "That's Not My Job" – Don't Even Think It!
- Everyone Has a Customer
- Figure Out What Ticks Off Your Customers – And Do Something About It
- Take Responsibility for Your Own Career

Find out more information at www.lessonsfromthemouse.com or order from:

Amazon.com
BarnesandNoble.com

For quantity discounts please go to www.800CEOread.com and type *Lessons From the Mouse* in the Search field.

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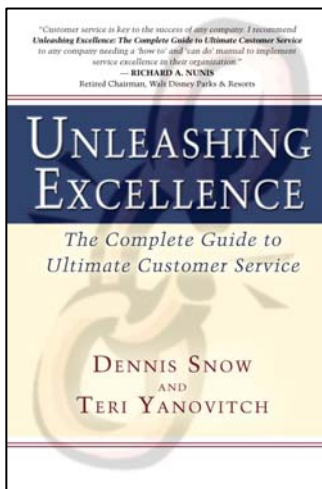
Creating a Culture of Service Excellence (DVD)

Dennis's customer service presentation is now available on DVD. This informative 45-minute DVD covers topics like:

- Looking at your organization through the "lens of the customer."
- Paying attention to the details because "everything speaks."
- Delighting your customers by creating "little wows."

Featuring a keynote speech presented before a live audience, the DVD includes the service principles and stories that bring the principles to life. The content is designed to be entertaining, informative and practical. Use this DVD to:

- Provide content for in-house training programs.
- Introduce new employees to the service standards they are expected to demonstrate.
- Revitalize a company's focus on customer service.
- Re-familiarize employees with the key drivers of a service-driven organization



Unleashing Excellence – The Complete Guide to Ultimate Customer Service (Book)

Many books have been written on the importance of excellent customer service. What has been missing is a "how to" book that takes the reader step-by-step through the key *processes* of planning and building a culture of service excellence. Dennis Snow and Teri Yanovitch have written a book that fills that gap.

Unleashing Excellence: *The Complete Guide to Ultimate Customer Service* encourages readers to take a strong look at their customer service efforts. With practical tools (all of which can be tailored to a company's own needs) readers find a step-by-step guide to building a service-driven culture. Here are tools and approaches that can be implemented by the most experienced company or department, as well as an organization just beginning to focus on customer service.

Nothing is left out of **Unleashing Excellence: *The Complete Guide to Ultimate Customer Service***. If you've been searching for a blueprint for building a customer service program, you'll find it here. The book's chapters include:

- The "DNA" of Service Excellence
- Creating a Service Improvement Team
- Developing Your Service "Non-negotiables"
- Communicating the Service Strategy to Your Team
- Service Training and Education
- Interviewing For Service Excellence
- Developing Effective Service Measurements
- Recognition and Reward Systems
- Implementing a Service Obstacle System
- Building a Culture of Accountability