

*Case Studies and
Discussions of
Exemplary Service*

What's Your Definition of Above- and-Beyond Service?

My friend, internationally acclaimed concierge-level service speaker Holly Stiel and I were talking about what constituted world-class service. I had just returned from Malaysia and Singapore where I stayed in 4- and 5-star hotels. I gave her a few examples of what I thought was extraordinary service:



- ▲ The bellman who took me to my room of the 600-room at the Berjaya Times Square Hotel called me by name two days later, with no contact in between.” That’s standard at a high-end hotel,” Holly said.
- ▲ The concierge at The Legend Hotel who escorted me from the lobby down nine floors to hail me a cab, even though there was a doorman who could do it. Holly shared, “All concierges would assist

you in getting a cab if they didn't have another guest waiting.”

- ▲ The front desk clerk at the Gallery Hotel who took my carry-on luggage and escorted me to my room. “All guests should be escorted to their room,” Holly said. True, but it's usually by a bellman, not the front desk staff.
- ▲ The front-desk and bell staff at the Gallery called me by name throughout my week-long stay. “Hotel staff should know and use guests' names all through their stay.”

I argued that even though these things might be in the Standard Operating Procedures, they were hardly standard in my experience, or at least not prevalently.

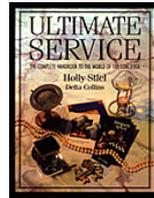
So if these things were supposedly standard at any good hotel, what constitutes higher level service at any operation, whether in retail, hospitality, or a call center? What behaviors make up concierge level service? And how could we teach these behaviors, ensure they were being used consistently, and measure the results of their use?

Holly said we had to teach staff how to think like a concierge. She says, “The practice of exercising creativity, ingenuity and efficiency to fulfill a customer request are job requirements that are nurtured and honed by the people who are known in hospitality for ultimate service. The attitudes and skills that make a successful concierge are applicable to many service-oriented jobs, from administrative assistant to security guard, ticket-counter clerk to telephone service representative. It is the spirit

in which the job is performed that makes the difference.”

But how does one teach resourcefulness? Creative thinking? Putting yourself in the customer’s shoes? How do you know when your people are going above and beyond? And what does above-and-beyond look like to your customers? They may think it is just what is expected when you think your staff has bent over backwards to provide a special service.

Holly is the author of *Ultimate Service, The Complete Handbook to the World of the Concierge* — if you want to order a copy, you can do so at www.ThankYouVeryMuchInc.com/.



Exemplary Customer Service Starts at the Top

I recently learned about two leaders who exemplify outstanding corporate customer service leadership. They are in an industry not known for innovation — automobile sales and service. Rita and Rick Case now own 14 dealerships in 3 states with nearly 1000 employees and own the largest Honda dealership in the world.

How do they do it? As you would guess, they not only hire great people, but they treat them well. The employees in turn treat the customers well. But the leaders have designed ways to reward the customers for continuing to do business with them. Here are a few examples:

- ▲ Rewards program — Customers earn points for every purchase they make. These points can be redeemed for discounts on future purchases, including new vehicles.
- ▲ Free car wash — With a purchase of a vehicle, you get a card that allows you to get a free car wash

anytime you want.

- ▲ Gas station on site — Rewards program members save 5-25 cents/gallon.
- ▲ Free rental car with service.
- ▲ Clerk of the Courts office — At their main dealership people can pay their speeding tickets, get their driver's licenses renewed, and get a marriage license. They even have a chapel so couples can get married! Forty to 50 couples a month say their nuptials there.
- ▲ Salespeople call customers monthly — They tell them how many rewards points they've accumulated, how they can be redeemed, and any specials the dealership is running.
- ▲ Rick and Rita also show their customers they care about their community by being active on charity boards and chairing large fund raisers. Their main dealership is a voting site. Additionally, after being concerned about people being trapped in sub-merged vehicles, they manufactured and distributed 50,000 emergency escape hammers.

What could you try that is out of the norm to show your customers you care?

Adapt the Lessons To Your Situation

1. Rick and Rita thought of unusual ways to serve their customers. What do you currently do to serve your customers that is different than your competitors?
2. How can you come up with unusual ways to serve your customers?
3. What can you adapt from this story to implement in your organization?

***How does a 7-star hotel hire
and train staff to ensure ser-
vice literally fit for kings?***