

*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 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.

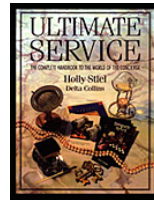
So if these things were supposedly standard at any good hotel, what constitutes higher level service at any operation, whether in retail, hospitality, or a call center? What behaviors make up concierge-level service? And how could we teach these behaviors, ensure they were being used consistently, and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



Adapt the Lessons To Your Situation

1. What are examples of your receiving above-and-beyond service?

2. When have you gone above-and-beyond for your customers?

3. How could you go above-and-beyond more frequently to wow your customers?

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 including 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¢/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 submerged 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?***

Service Secrets from the World's Most Luxurious Hotel

What makes a hotel 7-star? How do they hire and train staff to ensure service fit for kings? Dubai's world-famous Burj Al Arab hotel holds the answers.

Our guide, the gracious and delightful Jonathan Evans, Manager of Learning and Development, took participants from my four-day "Customer Complaint Management" course on a private tour of the grand hotel. He explained what we wanted to know — how do you hire, train and manage over 1000 employees, including 140 butlers, to deliver best-in-class service to such discerning guests.

To set the scene, imagine sighting the Burj Al Arab (meaning "Tower of the Arabs") in the distance as we approach. It looms off shore 1053 feet high. The shape is representative of the sail on an Arab dhow (boat) which has plied the Arabian Gulf for centuries.

As we get nearer, we see the wall facing shore is white fabric. At night, lights illuminate it with an ever-changing display of solid colors, turning to the next color every three seconds.

After passing security, we cross the curved bridge to the man-made island on which the Burj Al Arab sits. We pull into the reception circle, passing the Rolls Royces the hotel uses to shuttle guests to and from the airport, as well as to other venues owned by the parent company, Jumeirah.

We are greeted by beautiful men and women offering us dates on a silver tray, cool towels to freshen up, and Arabian coffee. Before us stands a three-story fountain of dancing water sprays illuminated by different colored lights. We look up at the 590-foot atrium — the Statue of Liberty could fit inside. But we notice something is missing — a Reception Desk. Guests are greeted at the front door by their own personal butler who escorts them directly their room to check in.

There are luxurious couches nearby on which guests are resting. A 30-foot red curved couch invites us to rest while we wait for our escort.

Jonathan greets us and explains that the basis for their exemplary service is their philosophy. All colleagues operate with the company's guiding principles — they call them the Three Hallmarks:

- ▲ Smile/greet the guest first. A guest should never have to connect first.
- ▲ Never say “no” as the first response to a guest. Sometimes you must tell a guest you can't accommodate their request, but that should never be your first response.