



# The value of relentless customer service in tough times

John Tschohl ♦ Restaurateur and founder of BellyMelly

To clarify the value of quality service, I believe that service retains the customers you already have, attracts more customers, and develops a reputation that encourages customers to do business with you in the future... even during tough times.

How do we do that? The best we can do is put ourselves in the customer's shoes: Do things for a customer the way that the customer would do themselves

and then we add the magic.

Case in Point: Wilderness Safaris.

Wilderness Safaris' customer service is light-years ahead of nearly every company in the world—even Disney. I've been on five trips with them and look forward to five more.

Wilderness Safaris was founded by two young safari guides in the early 1980s. They deliver unique experiences to guests and fair returns for

shareholders and stakeholders, while ensuring Africa's wilderness areas are sustainably protected. They operate camps in Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, Rwanda, Zambia and Zimbabwe with access to over seven million acres of Africa's wildlife and wilderness areas.

The company is as committed to reducing its negative impact on the environment as it is to maximizing its bottom line. The sustainability team's ultimate goal is to achieve total carbon neutrality. They take care of their people and the earth.

Wilderness Safaris makes sure that financial benefits of their operations flow to the nations and local people wherever they operate. This helps with conservation of wildlife areas and employs staff from neighboring communities.

Many of the people Wilderness Safaris hires have never had a job. Most start with little formal education. The organization provides training and work experiences, transforming them into the most customer-service-driven employees I've ever seen.

Accommodations are as luxurious as a Ritz Carlton suite, even if they are under a canvas roof. In your "tent," beside your bed, you'll find a handwritten note welcoming you by name. The night before you leave, another handwritten note thanks you for coming.

Keith and Wilderness Safaris know that customer satisfaction drives their success. They empowered "Relentless" focus on customer service on the day they started operations.

As in any organization, 99% of a customer's experience comes from decisions of front-line employee. At Wilderness Safaris, employees are truly empowered to make and implement customer-focused calls constantly—few decisions come from above.

Wilderness Safaris workers love their jobs and their enthusiasm is infectious. Warm and welcoming, they are genuinely friendly and call you by name throughout your visit. This attitude helps create life-changing journeys that can change visitors' perspectives on the planet. They inspire visitors to effect positive change

in their lives and spheres of influence.

At Wilderness Safaris, employees feel empowered and excited to contribute. On their own, they devise training modules to implement good ideas and practices that serve customers. The organization rewards this energy and initiative, with recognition for completing extra training modules.

**You can "feel it" at Wilderness Safaris.** Everyone shares an infectious energy with a clear focus and positive attitude.

**You "see it" at Wilderness Safaris.** Employees working confidently to make customers happy.

**You "hear" it at Wilderness Safaris.** Employees really own the "our" in "How will this affect our customers?"

Wilderness Safaris exists to protect pristine wilderness areas and the flora and fauna that they support. The company believes that by protecting these areas, and including the local communities in this process, Wilderness Safaris will make a difference to Africa and ultimately the world.

It's vital that everyone in their organization understands how their work connects to customers. They make a "Relentless" effort to connect the dots. Empowerment has become an integral part of their organization's culture; a part of each employee. They need to be confident and believe in their own abilities

But magic happens on empowered front lines and that kind of customer service takes focused investment. You have to nurture it. You have to teach and reassure and support people for acting empowered. Wilderness Safaris knows that spending money on their employee training is much better for business and employee satisfaction than other more traditional ways of doing business. They have created a culture that will help them and their employees through the tough times. 

*John Tschohl is an international service strategist and speaker. He is founder and president of the Service Quality Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota. His new book, Relentless is now available. John's monthly newsletter is available online at no charge. He can be reached at 1-952-884-3311 or online at [www.JohnTschohl.com](http://www.JohnTschohl.com). Also on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.*

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