

Magical moments; create them, and you will shine every day; make service a priority

By John Tschohl
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MINNEAPOLIS (Feb. 23, 2026) — You have the opportunity every day to create magical moments. Those moments will serve you well. They will mark you as a rising star as you earn the respect of your customers, coworkers, and your managers. In the process, you could also be promoted and earn more money.

To create magical moments, you must be aware of everyone you communicate with and what their needs are. The first magical words you should speak to a customer should be these: “How can I help you?” The first magical words you should speak to a coworker should be these: “Can I help you?”

Those words will open a conversation with — and form a connection to — the person with whom you are speaking. The next step is to actively listen, which will help you identify what you can do to meet their needs.

Let’s look at your customers first. If they have a request — where, for example, are your snowblowers located — don’t just point to a specific aisle. Smile and introduce yourself as you walk with the customer to the location. This tells customers they are important to you and gives you the opportunity to form a connection as you walk to your destination.

If a customer has a complaint, you have an opportunity

to shine. Listen to what the customer has to say. Apologize for the problem, even though you didn’t create the situation, and be empathetic. Give the customer your total attention.

Ask them for suggestions on how you can solve their problems; then offer alternative suggestions they might not have considered. Be calm, compassionate, and considerate when dealing with customers who have a complaint. Give them the kind of treatment and service you would like to receive if you were in their situation.

Now, let’s look at how you can create magic moments with your coworkers. Be a team player. Ask them if they need help and what you can do for them. In the process of doing this, be careful that you don’t insinuate that they aren’t capable of doing what needs to be done. Rather, you might say, “I’ve got some extra time on my hands; is there anything I can do to help you?”

Your coworkers will appreciate the offer of help, and your managers will notice your positive attitude and helpfulness. In the process, you will earn the respect of both groups.

Keep your promises. When your customers and your coworkers can depend on you to deliver what you promise, you will earn both their confidence and their trust. If you

say you will complete a task in three days, do it. Or, better yet, complete it in two days. If you are dealing with a customer who has a complaint or needs information that isn’t readily available, share with him or her when you will have it — and then share it as quickly as possible.

Speed, whether dealing with a customer complaint or helping a coworker, is also critical to providing great service. I caution you, however, not to sacrifice quality for speed. No matter what you do — or who you do it for — make service a priority.

Continuously look for ways to create magical moments. And remember this: Magical moments should always begin with a smile.

● About the Author

John Tschohl is the founder and president of the Service Quality Institute, a global leader in customer service with operations in more than 40 countries. He is considered one of the world’s foremost authorities on all aspects of customer service. Tschohl has developed 20 customer service training programs, including his bestseller, “Achieving Excellence Through Customer Service,” that are used by companies throughout the world. His monthly strategic newsletter is available online at no charge at www.customer-service.com.

Nearly half of high school students now use AI in college search, a growing influence

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WASHINGTON (Feb. 25, 2026) — Artificial intelligence is transforming the way students discover, evaluate, and choose colleges, according to a national survey of more than 5,000 high school students conducted by education company EAB.

The survey shows 46 percent of students now use AI tools such as ChatGPT during their college search, up sharply from 26 percent in spring 2025. Nearly one in five students (18 percent) removed a college from consideration based on information surfaced through AI-generated search results.

“AI has, in a matter of months, moved from the margins to the mainstream of how teenagers explore colleges,” said Madeleine Rhyneer, vice president of consulting services and dean of enrollment management at EAB. “AI is now shaping first impressions, helping families narrow their options, and influencing real enrollment decisions, often before a college ever has direct contact with a prospective applicant.”

While students are rapidly adopting AI for many different purposes in the college search process, many do not welcome AI-generated messages from institutions, and they are becoming adept at spotting them. More than half of students said they would react negatively to messages they perceived to be generated by AI.

“Colleges that succeed in this new environment will use AI to improve relevance and responsiveness while preserving a clear, authentic voice that fosters ongoing

student engagement and genuine relationships with actual school representatives,” Rhyneer added.

EAB’s survey also showed that AI is amplifying student anxiety about careers and the value of college itself:

- 43 percent of students say AI will influence the career they pursue.
- 38 percent believe AI will reduce the number of jobs requiring a college degree.
- 39 percent say AI is pushing them to consider alternatives to college, including starting a business or entering an apprenticeship.

“Students are using AI to help them navigate some of the most fundamental questions about higher education, including whether college is worth it at all,” Rhyneer said. “EAB is advising our partner institutions to focus messaging around tangible outcomes like skill development and career placement, while also ensuring the curricula evolve to integrate AI fluency.”

● About the Survey

EAB’s student survey, conducted across October and November 2025, includes responses from more than 5,000 high school students nationwide. Students were asked about their perceptions of and experiences with AI, their use of AI tools in college search, and their expectations of how AI might change their career path.

● About EAB (eab.com)

EAB’s mission is to make education smarter and communities stronger. It works with more than 2,800 institutions to drive transformative change through data-driven insights and best-in-class capabilities. From kindergarten to college to career, EAB partners with leaders and practitioners to accelerate progress and drive results across enrollment, student success, institutional strategy, data analytics, and advancement.

Eastern Florida State College to host Dental Assisting open house March 9

COCOA (Feb. 23, 2026) — Eastern Florida State College’s Dental Assisting Program will host an open house from 4–7 p.m. Monday, March 9, at its Cocoa campus, 1519 Clearlake Road. The event will be in Building 20, Room 104. Attendees will learn more about the program and its two pathways to completion, tour the dental clinic, take part in presentations, meet with faculty and advisors, and find out how to apply. The registration deadline for the 14-month day program is April 8. The registration deadline for the 16-month hybrid program with online courses and evening on-campus labs is July 8. Those interested in attending the open house are encouraged to RSVP at easternflorida.edu/go/dentalassisting. For more information, contact Dr. Mary Bruno at (321) 433-7575 or email brunom@easternflorida.edu.

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