

Take a “Vow to Wow”

In the process of updating one of my books, I came across a heading that I had written in for COSTCO...“Vow to Wow.” Since day one, COSTCO has had an unwavering commitment to doing the right thing for their members, employees, suppliers, and the community. Their strategy is to make sure customers come back. Their merchandisers are meticulous about choices in product for customers and have set detailed standards on everything from the size of cashews to the thread count of bed sheets.

That unbeatable value proposition on quality products and *customer service* has inspired roughly 90% of COSTCO’S 85 million cardholders worldwide to renew their \$55 to \$110 memberships each year. **Wow!**

For a twenty-two week stretch concluding on January 29, 2017, the company reported net sales of \$52.26 billion, an increase of 5% from \$49.98 billion during a comparable period last year. **Wow!**

The same holds true for Disney. Have you ever heard of Disney’s reputation for exceptional service? Empowerment is a religion there. Employees are thoroughly trained and then told that they have the authority (delegated to them) to do whatever is necessary to deal with problems on the spot in order to make customers happy.

Cast members (as front line employees are called) do not say, “That’s not my job, I’ll get a supervisor.” When people with problems call a number at Disney World, the first employee who answers the phone makes an effort – a heroic effort, if necessary – to solve the problem. The employee does not send the caller all over the company.

The Disney philosophy is reflected in a statement that every organization in America with a desire for customer loyalty should mount on the boardroom wall: “Management Must Not Only Support the Front Line But It Must TRUST It As Well.”

Disney believes that front line employees should be the first and the last contact for customers. These employees and all Disney employees are treated with respect. **Wow!**

Disney realizes great financial benefit for its quality service standards. Because clients are willing to pay for helpfulness and friendliness, for cleanliness and for fun, The Disney Company attributes its enviable achievements in employee commitment and customer service to “pixie dust.” And best yet, the formula for pixie dust is not secret. It is Training + Communication + Care = Pride. **Wow!**

Singapore Airlines is a paragon of service excellence among airlines. The airline sets the quality standard for the world in customer service. The difference with SIA is that they walk their talk.

Singapore’s standout service makes for a famously pleasant journey during which flight attendants are trained to treat customers with extreme care and respect. Personal TVs with plenty of entertainment options and hot towels served before take-off are just some of the economy perks. The airline’s home base at Changi International Airport is one of the finest facilities in the world and has been named by Skytrax as the Best Airport in the World four years in a row. **Wow!**



“You have to make [it] a great place to work before you can make it a great place to shop”

Stew Leonard's Supermarkets is headquartered in Norwalk, Connecticut and operates four stores: in Norwalk, Danbury, and Newington, Connecticut plus in Yonkers, New York. More than 400,000 customers a week are served by 2,000 employees. Sales are estimated at \$400+ million for all stores. They sell more of every item they carry than any other store in the world and are listed in *The Guinness Book of World Records* for having "the greatest sales per unit area of any single food store in the United States."

One thing Stew always says at the store is, "You have to make Stew's a great place to work before you can make it a great place to shop!" The company's culture is built around an acronym for S.T.E.W.: **S**atisfy the customer; **T**eamwork gets it done; **E**xcellence makes it better; **W**OW makes it fun.

My take on this is to:

1. Vow to treat customers like life-long partners
2. Vow to not disappoint or anger customers
3. Vow to see the business through customer eyes
4. Vow to deliver more service than you promise

"Take a vow to have 100% customer service every time, every day, always and, you'll 'Wow' them every time." ~ John Tschohl

About the Author: John Tschohl is an international service strategist and speaker. He is founder and president of the Service Quality Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Described by *Time* and *Entrepreneur* magazines as a customer service guru, he has written several books on customer service. He just released the 10th Edition of *Achieving Excellence Through Customer Service*. The Service Quality Institute (<http://www.customer-service.com>) has developed more than 26 customer service training programs that have been distributed and presented throughout the world. John's monthly strategic newsletter is available online at no charge. He can also be reached on Facebook, LinkedIn & Twitter.



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