

Chapter One

The Experience Path

Why We Wrote the Book and How to Use It

Disneyland will never be completed. It will continue to grow as long as there is imagination left in the world.

—Walt Disney

We set out to write *The Experience: The 5 Principles of Disney Service and Relationship Excellence* in an effort to engage the marketplace in its greatest area of need: the Experience for the frontline consumer. While my career has focused on relationship building, relational inflection points, and relationship momentum, I am now blessed to be able to collaborate with one of the finest customer service trainers in the world in Bruce Loeffler. Bruce spent more than 10 years working within the walls of Disney and several years as its Coordinator of Service Excellence. We have now combined our collective travels, experiences, and intellectual property to deliver this manuscript to you. We invite you to use this book as a tool for creating “Ambassadors” through Exceptional customer service and by building relational Experiences.

The book’s second chapter presents the “I. C.A.R.E.” Principles that you can use to test yourself, your services, and your organization using the Experience Quotient™. The idea was to create a path for you

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and your organization to achieve the Exceptional. Therefore, the book has been separated into three parts:

1. “Preshow”—for the book’s overall idea, path, and premise
2. “Onstage”—for the ingredients to create an Exceptional Experience for your customers
3. “Backstage”—for the Experience created behind the scenes in leadership and for employees

We have carefully choreographed a blueprint for you to pontificate on the Principles; to use our Non-Negotiables and Quotient Questions to challenge yourself, to be supported by our Actionables; and then finally to test your company via our website (www.ExperienceQuotient.com) to see exactly what level of Experience you are providing.

We have spent an enormous amount of time testing a model that we believe provides the key to unlocking customer satisfaction, repeat business, and new customer growth. This book will allow you to advance methodically up the levels of the Experience hierarchy while gaining insight and specific details as to what the customer is seeking—and how to deliver it.

If you are interested in a beautifully choreographed concert of tactics that ends with a deliverable and an Experience for your customers, we encourage you to engage in the One Level Challenge at the end of this book. This is your personalized path to increasing the quality of the Experience you provide and, as a result, converting loyal customers into Ambassadors of your brand. We are excited to be your guides along this path.

Why Ambassadors?

You might be wondering why we have chosen the term *Ambassadors*. In 1815, the Congress of Vienna officially recognized ambassadors

as having extensive powers to control the flow of information, maintain diplomatic relations, and project the influence of their chief executives. The word *ambassador* comes from the Medieval Latin words *ambactia* and *ambactiare*, which mean to “go on a mission.” This “mission” is what happens when we cultivate an Experience that is valued and shared both internally and externally. In short, we are empowering others to be conduits to the magic and to go out and share the story.

Just as we need ambassadors for our national diplomacy, organizations need them to speak on behalf of the Experience. The issue is that these Ambassadors have to be developed. While people often share negative experiences on a regular basis, your customers and Ambassadors will share only positive Experiences of a certain level. Hence the purpose of this book: to empower you to deliver a higher level of the Experience.

Today’s Ambassadors come in all forms. Many of them are consumers who like to share the experiences they have had with your product, company, or service. Some are employees who proudly carry the flag of the company and have a vested interest in your success. But they all share one thing in common: they are ordained to evangelize the world for your endeavors.

Why Disney?

It’s no secret that the Walt Disney Company is the most recognized company in the world for the Experience and level of service excellence it provides. In fact, there is virtually no company on earth that connects people better to fun, enjoyment, happiness, fulfillment, service, and pure joy than the Disney Company. We have taken our eyewitness account of the service and relationship excellence at Disney to develop a model that was built to reflect and honor the hard work of Walt and Roy Disney, Dick Nunis, Van France, and the other

founding fathers of Disney. In doing so, we considered important questions such as:

- What is it about Disney that differentiates its parks and their people from every other theme park—and truly, every other business—on the planet?
- What if your company could channel the excitement, develop the people, instill the principles, and get every employee engaged in the same way Disney does? What difference would it make in your business?
- What makes Disney so unique?

The answer to each of these questions is very simple: Disney creates an Experience unlike any other in the world, and its customers love it. Nearly every company we researched during our study has a desire to provide the service and create the impression that consumers experience within the walls of Disney; however, very few have been able to replicate it.

In the following pages, we define the five I. C.A.R.E. Principles that differentiate Disney from the typical service-oriented company. Our goal in creating these Principles—as well as our Experience Quotient tool—was to make our model applicable in virtually every industry that relies on a service offering or a service-oriented product to gain customers. Together, these tools act as a guide on how to intentionally and repeatedly deliver excellence for anyone or any entity that desires to provide an exceptional Experience. We want to enable *your* people to become true internal Ambassadors of the Experience, thus creating external Ambassadors out of their customer base who are committed to sharing their Experience with others.

Disney is not the only organization that we have studied that has mastered the Experience. We will discuss a few examples of other great American companies throughout the book. Whether it is Tractor Supply or Starbucks in retail, the Mayo Clinic for hospitals, the Four Seasons in

the hotel industry, or even Southwest Airlines in transportation, they all have one thing in common: these companies, along with the Disney Corporation, possess a relentless resolve to creating the best Experience possible for their clients and customers. And they are all currently executing their Experience on an exceptional level.

The recipe is simple; but execution is the key. The first step is being committed to causing a certain level of the Experience. The second step is the execution thereof, as it is the actual Experience delivered that will empower and entice others to share their findings with the world. This journey is an investment into the development of the relational interface and service expectations of each phase of your business or entity. Get ready for what we believe is going to be a groundbreaking endeavor supported by years of fieldwork, empirical evidence, and a path for creating an unforgettable, repeatable, and shareable *Experience!*