



We exist to serve others so they may better serve the world.®

Written by: Bryan K. Williams

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5-Star Employees - Part 1

One of my previous articles was about “5-star leaders”, and those types of leaders are committed to only one standard: Excellence. They expect nothing less from themselves or from their team. While it is important to describe excellent leadership, it is also important to describe another key piece of the service excellence puzzle...the “5-star employee”. 5-star employees are equally passionate with excellence and take great pride in engaging their customers with purpose-driven service. I can still remember the exact moment when I realized that there was a difference between an employee and a 5-star employee. At the time, I was a banquet server in a luxury hotel and was given a tray of hors d'oeuvres to serve the guests. The chef stopped me before I served the first guest. He asked if I knew what the hors d'oeuvres were and how they were prepared. It became immediately clear that I only had a vague idea of how to describe the items. The chef then looked at me directly in the eyes and said, “You are NOT a professional”. Those words forever changed how I viewed service delivery. After that one-sentence from the chef, I went back to the kitchen and thoroughly acquainted myself with each hors d'oeuvres' name, ingredients, and preparation. When I returned to the banquet function, I saw the chef, pulled him to the side and thoroughly explained each hors d'oeuvres. He then said “Now, you are a professional”.

Being well prepared is the first step to serving with excellence. 5-star employees are consistently well-prepared, purpose-driven and passionate about their work. In fact, over the past several years I've had the good fortune of serving in various capacities and have focused on eight very specific service commitments. Collectively, they are called “commitment to engage my customers”, and are now available on a pocket card exclusively on www.engagemenow.com

Here are the first four commitments:

Commitment 1: I will welcome you as if you are a guest in my own home.

Imagine that you have a friend that you have not seen in a long time. If that friend is coming to visit, you will likely be extremely happy to see them. Your happiness will be obvious through your body language, smile, and tone of voice. The same is true when customers choose to patronize your business. Welcome them! Be eager to serve.

Commitment 2: I will tell you that I look forward to serving you and mean it genuinely.

When my wife and I were shopping for our current home, we used to visit various open houses. At one particular open house, the agent was particularly professional and genuinely service-oriented. Even though he must have given dozens of house tours that day, we felt like we were the first tour he gave.

****Tip:** Customers don't care how many hours you have worked today. Each customer wants (and deserves) to feel like their experience with you is unique and fresh...not commercialized and stale.

Even though we were not yet ready to select an agent, he said that he looked forward to serving us. Not long thereafter, we selected that agent and it was a wise choice. He would regularly say “I am at your service” or that he looked forward to seeing us.

Commitment 3: I will create a total experience by anticipating your needs.

The customers' total experience is made up of several touchpoints. 5-star employees who take pride in anticipating their customers' needs can enhance each touchpoint. At a recent dinner in Spain, the server thanked us for dining at his restaurant and subsequently gave my wife three roses. Nice touch! After returning to the room, my wife laid the rose in front of the bathroom mirror so she could admire them during the remainder of our stay at the hotel. The very next day, we went for a walk and when we returned to the room, the room attendant had carefully clipped the rose stem and placed them in a nice vase. Those two simple gestures added tremendous value to our hotel stay. Interestingly, I always tell people that it usually does not cost anything extra to create an exceptional memory for their customers. That room attendant paid attention, took action, and created a lasting memory.

Commitment 4: I will tell you that it was a pleasure to serve you, and invite you back.

Having the opportunity to serve others is a privilege and should not be taken lightly. 5-star employees have a great habit of thanking their customers for the opportunity to be of service. Not only do they thank their customers, but 5-star employees also articulate how much they wish to be of service to those customers in the near future. I have been to a few restaurants that have a great process to enliven this particular commitment. Whenever guests are leaving the restaurant, the staff closest to the exit, stop whatever they are doing and give a gracious goodbye to the departing guests. They thank the customers for visiting and invite them back.

****Tip:** This same process, or some variation of it, can be applied in any business.

Be a 5-Star employee and use these commitments to engage yourself, your co-workers, and your customers. Focus on one commitment everyday and think of specific ways to provide engaging service to every customer. If you catch someone on your team providing engaging service, genuinely thank them! Write a thank you card or give some other type of personalized recognition. As I've written in previous articles, to get excellence, you must focus on excellence. There is nothing more powerful than 5-star employees encouraging each other. Be well-prepared...be purpose-driven...and be passionate about giving engaging service.

Order Bryan's new book at: <http://www.engagemenow.com/book.html>

Engaging Service: 22 Ways to Become a Service Superstar

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