

■ by Ryan Magnon

Creating a Culture of World-Class Service

One of the most important elements for creating exceptional customer experiences is first to develop your own set of service excellence standards.

From my experience over decades in the hospitality industry, I've learned that to create a world-class customer experience, you must start at the top. Gather your senior leadership team and begin with the end in mind: What do we want our guests to learn or experience after their interactions with us? Then, work your way back and ask yourselves how to create the culture, processes and systems to make that happen.

One of the most important elements necessary for creating exceptional customer experiences is first to develop your own set of service excellence standards. These are standards that everyone in your organization will follow, and they guide how you interact with each other as a team, in addition to how you serve your guests. Service excellence standards typically fall into several categories:

1. **Elevated language:** How do you speak and communicate with each other and your guests to show a higher level of intentionality and demonstrate that words do, in fact, matter?
2. **Service delivery standards:** How will you deliver service? How timely will it be? What quality will you build into it? And what skills are necessary to provide that service at an excellent level?
3. **Environmental standards:** How will you ensure the environments you create are excellent? Cleanliness is one example of an environmental standard. The environment you create will determine if your guest feels cared for.



Photo courtesy of Fort Wilderness

Your team may come up with three or 30 service standards; there is no correct number. Once you've created your service standards, ensure they are communicated frequently and with importance across your organization. Talk about them in daily morning or afternoon huddles to ensure they come to life.

As part of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, co-founder Horst Schulze had pocket-sized cards made that included all of the service standards that made the hotel chain best-in-class, which supervisors would review with teams at the start of each shift.

Stay consistent and make them non-negotiable. Soon, you will be creating guest experiences that will be remembered for years to come and impacting lives in the process!

To all the leaders and team members out there preparing to create amazing experiences in your next season, I want to thank you for impacting the lives of others in such a positive way. Giving your time, energy and resources to love and serve guests, you never know how God will change their lives at your camp or conference center. ■



Ryan Magnon is a recognized leader in the service industry with expertise in service excellence, hospitality operations, quality management and leadership best practices. He currently serves in the role of chief operating officer, Ithaca Hospitality Partners. Magnon has enjoyed a successful career, beginning with his service as a quality improvement officer in the U.S. Air Force after selection to U.S. Air Force Flight School. Prior to Chick-fil-A, he served as VP of quality for a new luxury hotel brand, Capella Hotels and Resorts, joining forces with Horst Schulze, the former creator of The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company to create a new standard of excellence in the hotel industry.

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