

Disney Service Verses Healthcare Caring

An Interesting Perspective

Disney delivers great customer service, however, hospitals have to deliver great customer caring, and therein lays the difference. Customer caring requires a greater dedication to service components. Service needs to be coupled with a passion to the patient's well being. The key word is “caring.” Anyone can deliver service; it acquires a special organization to deliver caring because the latter comes from the heart, not a script. The following comparison emphasizes the advantage Disney starts with and the circumstances hospitals must overcome just to achieve customer service parity. What works for Disney may not work in a hospital environment no matter how many “E” tickets the patient possesses.

Disney Customers:

Disney World and Disney Land are world renowned for great customer service and justly so. However, Disney has a major advantage over most businesses; they start with the vast majority of their customers arriving ready for a great time and adventure. Typically, their happy go lucky customers:

- Plan their trip, usually as a family
- Are excited about the trip
- Save for the trip
- Select activities of interest
- Expect to pay “premium” prices
- Bring plenty of traveler checks and plastic
- Arrive in good spirits
- Purchase souvenirs and expect to eat fast fun food
- Leave in a happy, cheerful, zippitty-do-dah mood

Eagerly share their experience and photos with others.

In reality, under the Disney Mickey facade, the average customer spends most of their time waiting, yes waiting. Some estimates suggest about 70% to 80% of the total time spent at Disney is waiting in one fashion or another. Healthcare may not be that different. If attendees recorded where their time was truly spent, they would quickly realize that being in line, e.g., parking, admission, attractions, eateries, shops, restroom, the parade, and the like is the underlying “attraction” Disney has masterfully camouflaged with a smokescreen of thirty-second rides.

Don't get me wrong, a lot can be learned from Disney's approach to creating and controlling the customer experience. So don't “mickey mouse” around as the saying goes when it comes to customer service, it's too important to your organization's success.

Hospital Patients:

People requiring medical intervention, especially under life threatening circumstances are just the opposites from Disney's customers. Typically, patients arrive not feeling well, with nerve-racking anxiety, apprehensiveness, fear of the unknown, and for the most part, though there are exceptions, don't:

- Plan the trip with great excitement and expectations
- Select the medical tests, activities, room companions, and accommodations
- Save for their medical needs
- Arrive with an over abundance of financial resources and medical coverage
- Purchase souvenirs (a bottle of gallbladder stones that glow in the dark)
- Get excited about the trip to the hospital, often just the direct opposite
- Get excited over the meals and wish they had fast fun food
- Reluctant to share the “total” experience with others
- Leave all smiling, hopping, and skipping through the parking lot

Have you ever seen a line of customers waiting to get into a hospital-land? Perhaps an emergency department on a busy day offers more waiting than Disney. Most people just do not expect to have a great time at a hospital or doctor's office. Further, the chances are the majority of people who are uninsured have never been to Disney Land or World.

The secret to achieving great customer service and hospital caring is based on superior visual and verbal communications that make people feel **welcome**, make people feel **important**, and make people feel **good about them self**. Focus your resources and efforts to create an engaging environment, to hire exuberant employees, and to excel at delivering an exceptional experience for all patients and their family members.

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