

Become Brilliant in the Basics

by Dave Anderson

The most important thing is to serve hot food hot and cold food cold. J.W. Marriott

Mr. Marriott was right. What good does it do for a restaurant to spend millions on a facility if the food isn't hot, the waiter doesn't smile or the floor isn't swept? How foolish for a hotel to spend tens of millions on a building if the receptionist is rude, there's a ring around the tub or room service is fifteen minutes late. What a waste for a car dealer to put his name on a sign, invest millions in a facility and inventory just to have unkempt, ill trained salespeople offending customers with a poor first impression, lack of product knowledge and abrasive personality. Companies that increase success year after year and sustain excellence are brilliant in the basics. They sweat the small stuff because they know there is no 'small stuff.'

Until the people representing your company are crisply presentable, articulate in the virtues of your products/service and see their job as a prospect's servant rather than master, what your people 'are' will speak so loudly your customers won't be able to hear what they say.

Top leaders do not take a casual approach to mediocrity at any level in their organization: cleanliness, courtesy, worker competence or attitude levels. They hate mediocrity enough to snuff it out. They don't 'handle' mediocrity; they devastate it by becoming brilliant in the basics.

Companies like The Men's Wearhouse or Southwest Airlines continue to excel while competitors fall farther behind or become extinct altogether. They do so not because they are fancier or outwardly more sophisticated than their counterparts. These companies are brilliant in the basics. Their people are well trained, empowered and motivated by clear mission, vision and corporate core values. These corporations have leaders at the top with a crystallized idea of how to please a customer: by putting their employees first. In fact, both these organizations make no bones about the fact they put their employees ahead of their customers. This is because only once employees are treated like they are number one will customers ever be treated that way. Basic, yet brilliant.

Is your organization brilliant in the basics? If not, nothing else will matter much. Employees won't be competent or motivated; customers won't be delighted nor will they return and success won't be meaningful nor sustainable. Maybe it's time to tone it down, leave the ivory tower, put a hold on those elaborate strategies for a while and jump back into the trenches and lead your people back to the basics.