**How To Anticipate And Fulfill Resident Needs and Wishes. Wow Like The Ritz Part 2.**

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In a recent post titled “Wow Your Senior Living Residents Like the Ritz”, I tout the virtues of this hotel empire’s legendary model of customer service. The article describes the three steps of service that form the core of the Ritz-Carlton model and discusses the application of steps 1 and 3 to the senior living industry.

Today’s article centers on step 2:

**ANTICIPATION AND FULFILLMENT OF EACH GUEST’S NEEDS**

Have you seen the movie Patch Adams? There is a scene in which Robin Williams’ character Dr. Patch Adams surprises one of his patients by fulfilling her lifelong dream to swim in a pool of cooked spaghetti. Her face lights up like a child as he lifts her into the pool, and as she wades through piles of wet noodles she looks like she is having the happiest day of her life. It’s an unusual example, but this is what pops into my mind when I think about meeting the expressed and unexpressed needs and wishes of senior living residents.

As a senior living owner/operator/employee, you try to meet the expressed needs of your residents every day. Mr. Falco likes his eggs over easy. Mrs. Janis prefers to wake up at 6 am. Mrs. Nyberg likes to be reminded when Bingo is about to start. Meeting expressed needs and preferences is so important and goes a long way toward building a community of satisfied and loyal residents. But how often do you think about meeting the unexpressed needs of your residents?

Diane Oreck, VP of Ritz-Carlton’s Leadership Training Center says legendary service is about surprise and delight. It’s about providing unexpected, unique, and memorable moments. She trains employees to have a “Radar On – Antenna Up” approach so they can pick up on moments of opportunity to surprise and delight their guests. Employees are actually trained to break routine to solve problems and own them until they are resolved. They work hard to anticipate customer needs and are empowered with up to $2,000 to resolve any customer concern. The $2,000 is symbolic of trust and in practice is rarely used.

Check out these real Ritz-Carlton story headlines:

***Lost Elmo doll returned to girl’s home with a picture book documenting his adventures at a Ritz-Carlton hotel while separated from his owner.***

***Ritz-Carlton retrieves guest’s lost sunglasses from Caribbean Sea after lost during paddle boarding excursion.***

***Ritz-Carlton head chef personally delivers banana cheesecake and recipe to guest poolside the morning after receiving compliment on his tasty dessert.***

***Ritz-Carlton filets and prepares 200-pound yellow fin tuna caught by a guest after guest asks for extra ice to protect his fish for the ride home.***

I realize some of these examples seem extreme. I’m guessing you are not about to jump into the Caribbean Sea to retrieve a pair of lost sunglasses! But they *can* serve as motivation to find ways to occasionally surprise and delight your residents by meeting their unexpressed needs and wishes. Doing so will make your residents raving fans and loyal advocates of your community, resulting in positive word of mouth that spreads like wildfire, higher resident retention, and more move-ins.

What are some realistic and achievable ways you can meet *your* residents’ expressed and unexpressed needs and wishes?

**IDEAS FOR MEETING EXPRESSED NEEDS AND WISHES**

* Have every resident complete an “About Me” form that captures what they like to do for fun, their hobbies, their favorite foods, what they did in their career, the names of their close family members, etc.
* Make it part of normal routine to have every employee read the forms and listen to residents so expressed needs and preferences can be understood and met whenever possible.
* Compile a list of community activities, events, and outings that match the interests of groups of residents and work them into your activities calendar.
* Plan surprises on special days like birthdays and anniversaries to act on something from each resident’s personal list.

**HOW TO PREPARE EMPLOYEES TO MEET UNEXPRESSED NEEDS AND WISHES**

* **Radar On – Antenna Up.** Train staff members to identify unique opportunities to meet the unexpressed needs and wishes of residents throughout the day. During new and ongoing training, provide realistic scenarios and ask employees to think of creative and realistic ways to respond.
* **Empower.** Staff members should know they are permitted to act on opportunities to meet unexpressed needs and wishes that arrive in the moment. They need to know they are trusted to divert from normal routine to go the extra mile in small but meaningful ways.
* **Share The WOW.** Have weekly staff meetings where employees are encouraged to share their stories of going above and beyond for residents.
* **Recognize.** Acknowledge staff members for their extraordinary effort. Ritz-Carlton goes so far as to have “First Class” cards people can give to each other as a pat on the back. The cards can be given peer-to-peer, manager-to-staff, staff-to-manager, etc. A literal pat on the back also works.
* **Practice What You Preach.** Many community leaders do not understand the extent to which their actions influence the attitudes and behaviors of their employees. Model the behavior you expect from your staff members and they will trust and believe in you and advocate for the success of your community.

P.S. Embracing a strong customer service mentality that empowers and recognizes your staff members will have the wonderful side effect of lower employee turnover. The lodging industry as a whole tends to run a 60-70 percent turnover in a year. At Ritz-Carlton, turnover rates are in the low 20s.

***OK, now it’s your turn. If you are already doing some of this stuff or have some great ideas, give me your stories so I can share them with the world. If you plan on trying some of them, please let me know how it goes!***



The Best Customer Service Uses Ritz-Carlton Radar On, Antenna Up Model

***Posted by***[***The Chief Outsider***](https://www.chiefoutsiders.com/blog/bid/92733/the-ritz-carlton-radar-on-antenna-up-customer-service-style)

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Does your company offer the best customer service?

Most every company claims to have the best customer service—but would their [customers agree](https://www.chiefoutsiders.com/blog/bid/92682/6-ways-to-turn-customers-into-brand-ambassadors)? When running a midsize business, you face an ongoing battle to effectively connect and engage with your customers. Employees constantly multi-task and resources are stretched. As a result, customer experience management often falls to the back burner.

This is a crucial mistake.

That's why businesses who want to [achieve the best customer service](https://www.chiefoutsiders.com/blog/bid/96475/5-Steps-to-Building-Customer-Service-into-your-Company-s-DNA) take notes from [Ritz-Carlton](http://www.ritzcarlton.com/en/Default.htm). They take a personal, hands-on approach to customer care that any business can learn from. Even mega gadget guru Apple uses their' "Legendary Service" model to help craft their loyalty and customer experience strategy.

Ritz' “anticipatory service" model is paramount to their success in customer service. This means seeking out the customer's unanticipated and unvoiced needs. This could be as simple as replacing an empty tube of toothpaste while a guest is out on business, or handing Roarie the stuffed Ritz-Carlton lion to a crying toddler. Even better, this type of approach can be scaled to a business of two employees to 20,000 employees.

Ritz-Carlton's Secret to the Best Customer Service: Radar On, Antenna Up

*"The reality is if you are just reacting to customers that’s not good enough to be competitive."*



I was lucky enough to sit down with [Diana Oreck](http://www.linkedin.com/pub/diana-oreck/3/ba7/894), vice president of the [The Ritz-Carlton Leadership Center](http://corporate.ritzcarlton.com/en/LeadershipCenter/Default.htm%22%20%5Co%20%22The%20Ritz-Carlton%20Leadership%20Center%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank). She revealed how the company implements anticipatory service, as well as other secrets to their customer service super sauce. Read what she had to say and get some excellent customer service tips:

**Q: One of the Ritz-Carlton Gold Standards is "anticipate unexpressed needs." Why is this important to customer service success and how do you train employees to recognize and act on unexpressed needs?**

A: It’s very important because legendary service is about surprise and delight. It’s not robotic, it’s not scripted. Golden nugget: You cannot give legendary service if you’re on autopilot. So we do a lot of discussion around “radar on, antenna up,” and we actually provide scenarios. We have a daily lineup everyday in every [Ritz-Carlton] hotel around the world. And we will have something called “Radar on, Antenna Up, and Focus.” One of the scenarios might be a young couple comes into the restaurant with a two-year-old baby. What should you do? Then we discuss, you bring a high chair, you bring crayons. We have hundreds of scenarios like that. Because we know that it’s going to be through the unique, memorable and personable experiences that our customers are going to be fully delighted and engaged.

**Q: Obviously desired experience will vary depending on the job, but does Ritz-Carlton have standard characteristics, competencies or personality traits they look for when filling all customer service positions?**

A. Absolutely. We want to make sure they have the spirit to serve. We want to make sure that they are caring. We want to make sure that they are the type of people that will take initiative because the reality is if you are just reacting to customers that’s not good enough to be competitive. We want people that really know how to anticipate. You’ve got to be quite sociable. You want to be interested in learning so if there’s an issue you want to get to the bottom of it.

**Q: What are the biggest mistakes companies make when training customer service staff?**

A: They're not being specific enough. They’ll say things like “Give great customer service.” Well that’s nice, but people need a road map. Never assume anything, make sure you have your service standards written down and allow people to observe you in action. Don’t assume that their mother or father, or previous employer taught them what really great service looks like. Have a written service strategy.

**Q: What sort of things should be in that strategy?**

A. We’re very lucky because again, we really do believe that less can be more if you are choosing very powerful language. And so our three steps of service are straight to the point. No. 1, A warm and sincere greeting, use the guest’s name; No. 2, anticipation and fulfillment of each guest’s needs; and No. 3, fond farewell, give a warm goodbye and use the guest’s name. Simple and to the point. And to us our service strategy applies to the internal customers as well as to our team mates; they should apply to both.

**Q: Ritz-Carlton puts a lot of emphasis on successful new hire orientation. Why is this important for customer service training?**

A: A lot of companies have a notion that employee orientation really needs to be a data dump of the company, and statistics and who’s doing what. It isn’t. What we are looking for at orientation is passion. It’s all about them and it’s all about culture. We feel that orientation needs to be significant emotional experience. Because think about it: you are making a very big decision in your life, to either start a job or change a job. So our two days of orientation, they are solely revolving around our culture, which we call the gold standards.

**Q: Is this also something that helps with customer service employee satisfaction and retention?**

A: Yes, it’s about engagement. I will give you an example. The lodging industry as a whole tends to run a 60-70 percent turnover in a year. Here at Ritz Carlton we run in the low 20s. It’s a huge difference.

**Q: What metrics or qualitative data does Ritz-Carlton use to measure customer service training success (How do you know it's working)? How do you collect this data?**

A: Oh yes, we poll our guests once a month. The Gallup organization sends out surveys to 38 percent of guests that stayed the month before. It’s done randomly with the hope we will get 8-10 percent return. We live and die by that guest engagement number. This is the sum of responses to about 30 questions, including "How likely is that guest to recommend Ritz Carlton? Were they delighted and satisfied with their stay? If there was a problem, did we take care of their problem?" We know if that guest engagement number goes up, our training programs have been successful.