

The Four Seasons Approach to Customer Service

Four Seasons Canary Wharf can boast that it meets the ‘location, location, location’ criteria with its stunning views over the Thames, it also offers beautiful surroundings and superb food but it is the exceptional customer service that makes an impression on me every time I visit. As we all need to be improving the level of service we offer to stay ahead of the competition I asked their former Sales Director **Andrew Peart** to share the Four Seasons approach to service.

Gill: What is your definition of customer service?

Andrew: Well, let me start with an example of service provided by one of our staff: At about 7pm one evening a guest approached one of our Assistant Managers in a rather perplexed state, the guest had just arrived at the hotel and was due to attend an important black tie dinner but had forgotten his shoes. At that time of night there was nowhere to buy a pair - the guest had arrived wearing his comfortable, well worn running shoes. The Assistant Manager noticed that the guest was roughly his build and immediately suggested that he should try on a spare pair of his shoes. They fitted perfectly and the guest was able to go to the event.

Gill: That’s a great story, and I know there are many others here at Four Seasons, but what motivates a member of staff to go that extra mile and lend a guest their own shoes!?

Andrew: It’s my belief that the success of a service organization is dependent on the culture that is created within the company. So, the motivation to provide service is driven by the feeling of worth that an individual has placed in them by that company. When an individual is recognized for their contribution, when they feel respected and know that the company cares for their well-being, this translates into the attitude of service that will be consistently provided.

Gill: Valuing your staff is clearly key, can you break that down into action points?

Andrew: There are 4 main points to address:

1. Recognize the personal contribution of everyone in the company to our business success
2. Provide support and co-operation so that each of us realise our full potential
3. Encourage each other to contribute ideas to enable us to become more effective
4. Recognize excellence among our co-workers and be sensitive to each others needs, creating a climate which encourages long-term satisfying employment.

Gill: So how does this enable you to meet the business objectives?

Andrew: Four Seasons encompasses the following principles:

1. We aim to provide our customers with a product and level of service that is consistently excellent; and outstanding value in terms of quality and satisfaction.
2. To understand our customers and be sensitive to their needs
3. To train and stimulate ourselves and our fellow employees so that the service we give will be performed with courtesy and an ever-increasing degree of intelligence, care and pride, but without waste or extravagance.
4. To deal with others as we would have them deal with us

Now what you must remember is that the attitude of service comes from within the individual. Four Seasons strives to create the culture that achieves this by putting people first and by achieving this goal the company is able to meet and achieve its financial goals.

Gill: Thank you for an insight into achieving exceptional customer service. You have given us much to think about and act upon.