

CEFMA | CORNER

COMMIT, CHOOSE, CARE: GUEST SERVICES SHOULD BE A TOP PRIORITY

People come to events for any number of reasons, but at the top of this list resides wanting to be entertained. They step out of their normal lives to attend a game or a concert to have fun. In these economic times, we are fortunate that many people today are choosing to spend their hard earned money on a game in our venue. They demand a level of service that meets their expectations. Guess what? They should! For the most part, the performances on the court or stage are unpredictable. We can control our level of service that guests receive. Our level of service should, at a minimum, meet their expectations or people will stop coming.



Nick Britton



Ever heard these comments? “I wish the lines were shorter,” or “the music is too loud,” or “my hot dog is cold!” If they are familiar comments, then we need to make some adjustments to ensure all of our guests’ expectations are being met. Fortunately, these comments allow us to make our events better for the future. As you read this article, my intent is not for this to be the end all to our guest service woes. It is to shed light on a couple of areas that could impact how we treat our guests as they walk through our facility doors. To me, it is as simple as three words that all begin with the letter ‘C’—Commit...Choose...Care.

Commit

Commit to taking necessary steps that make an enjoyable experience for everyone. Are we committed to accommodating every guest’s needs and solving their problems? After a behind the scenes tour of Disney World, provided at the 2009 CEFMA Convention, I became intrigued by their commitment to service. It appeared that cast members (cast members are what Disney refers to as their employees) were committed to putting their best efforts into their work. It has been proven that for every customer who brings their complaint forward, there are many who are silent complainers. For those people who do call, e-mail, or send a letter complaining about their less than desirable experience at one of our events, we have to be committed to solving their problems. The first step to responding is answering their call. It is imperative that we respond to their requests even if to say “thank you for your taking the time to contact us. We appreciate hearing from avid fans such as you.” Next step, make our guests’ experience better. By listening and adapting to what our clients and guests want, we should be sure that any legitimate problem is corrected. If we all are committed to a high level of service, the chances are great for a guest to experience the entertainment they desire.

Choose

Choose to make a positive impact on everyone. In any profession, our choice can impact numerous people, places or objects. The first choice we have to make is attitude. Ask yourself: am I in the right frame of mind to respectfully handle all the challenges that are in front of me today? If the answer is yes, then it is likely that we will make the right decisions to positively impact someone’s life. If we answered no, then we need to seek an attitude adjustment. A positive attitude can enlighten someone’s day. The second choice is the one that impacts how we treat guests as they enter our facility. We can choose to treat our guests with respect and courtesy, or we can choose to brush them under the rug and hope they come back to our next event. If we choose the latter, then be prepared to lose those guests. The best way to maintain a fan base is to choose the road that leads to smiling faces walking out the door. We greet all of our guests who walk through the doors of Hilton Coliseum. It can be as simple as “Welcome to Hilton,” or “enjoy the game.” As guests leave, a person will hear our staff say “enjoy your evening,” or “thank you for coming, see you next time.” The right mindset and a smile go along way. Choose to make someone’s day.

Care

Care for people. Being in the service industry is all about caring for people’s needs and wants. We should care enough about guests to treat them with the respect and dignity that any human being deserves. A few years back, I heard a speaker by the name of Rick Nielsen, the president of Blueprint for Life, Inc., Designs for Successful Living. His message was about the principles of caring. His message was based on four talking points that spelled the word CARE: concern for others, aiming to accommodate, recognizing your role and to express encouragement. When it comes to guest service, concern for others and aiming to accommodate should be a home run. We should aim to accommodate their desires from their arrival to their departure by listening and taking a hands-on approach. Our ticket office does a great job at holding trouble seats for an event. Trouble seats are ones that you kill to take care of guests who might need to sit somewhere else for some reason or another. At an event this past fall, we relocated 35 people for various reasons. They either had challenges with stairs, they realized their seats were separated or they were deathly afraid of heights (a new one for me.) We cared enough about these guests and accommodated them with seats that met their needs. If they win, we win. Care enough to go the extra mile and make someone’s day!

Is there such a thing as perfection in the service world? We can hope. Plus, there is always room for improvement! The choice and commitment to care for individuals will make them want to attend other events in the future.

Thanks for this article to Nick Britton, assistant athletics director for event management at Iowa State University.