



## **Making Magic**

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Part 3 in a series of 6 article discussing change

Have you ever been to Disney World? Did you enjoy your stay? Were you amazed by the architecture, shows, and costumes? Did you feel as if you had stepped into another world? If you experienced any of these feelings, the people at Disney have cause to smile because that is exactly how they want you to feel.

The cast members of Disney and its entities make it a personal goal to surpass any expectation of a guest to their theme parks. They strive to make your experience an exciting and memorable one to ensure that you will return as a guest again.

It would be absurd to deny the power of Disney in the entertainment industry. Even if you were not captivated by the characters and magic of Disney, you have to admit that they are doing something right. How else could they maintain tens of thousands of guest everyday? The answer to this is simple – they create value.

What exactly is value? Webster defines it as “something having or held to have real worth or merit.” By definition, value is an intangible item. Most business owners find it difficult to grasp the concept that they should give their customers an invisible product such as value. Perhaps it would help to consider what exactly Disney does to create loyal guests.

Tom Conellan, author of *Inside the Magic Kingdom*, has examined the methods that establish Disney as a powerhouse in the entertainment industry. He found that Disney creates a completely different mindset for their cast members. Notice that the employees of Disney are always referred to as “cast members.” This creates an image, or experience, of something theatrical. Disney’s customers are never “customers;” they are “guests.” These two seemingly trite labels hold immense power. There is great connotation in the label of “guest” as opposed to “customer.” The first label creates an emotional bond, whereas the second label implies a business exchange.

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I am not suggesting that all business owners start greeting their customers as “guests,” but it is something to examine. Without customers, you would have no business. It is certainly in your best interest to establish loyalty with your customers. Without loyalty, your business could fall victim to a competitor with value.

The concept of value should not be held exclusively for the customers. Let’s take another look back to Disney for an example of value. Did you know that every night the hitching posts lining Main Street are stripped and painted? Initially, this appears to be an exorbitant waste of energy and money. Would you as a guest in the Magic Kingdom really notice this maintenance detail? Probably not, and Disney doesn’t intend for you to notice. This act of extreme beautification is completed every night for the sake of the cast members. This task of stripping and painting create a strong bond between the company, the cast members, and the work environment. Stripping and painting these hitching posts is an outward and visible sign to the cast members that their work environment is just as important as the experience they create for the guests of Disney.

The point of value is this – it is essential to both team members and customers. Without value for the workplace and the product, there is very little reason to remain loyal to a business. Have you ever wondered why some customers remain year after year and others disappear after the initial sell? Could it be something that you offered, or didn’t? Or could it be something offered by your competition? These are burning questions for business owners wishing to create value for their customers. The mere fact of assuming your customers are loyal is dangerous. Ralph Waldo Emerson said it best – “a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds.”

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