When It Comes to Guest Experience, What You Manage Is What You Get

How often have you experienced unfriendly or grumpy service on an airline, in a restaurant, or in another service environment? Quite a few times, I imagine. In the vast majority of cases, I would take a bet that this is not so much a result of poor hiring or training, but **a reflection of a poor internal culture**.

Service brands often use the vocabulary of theater to describe what good service looks like. They talk about "performance," "scripts," and "stages" when instructing their staff. However, they forget one crucial difference between acting and working as a service provider. On the stage, the performer has a chance to prepare, and can treat the moment as a separate experience. A sales clerk in a retail environment has to cope with unpredictable customers and shifting levels of demand — never having the opportunity to distinguish the "performance" from the rest of the job.

When brands attempt to script their service performance, but do not give equal attention to their internal culture, it should be no wonder that these organizations inevitably fail to meet consistent service standards. Companies that have combative relationships with their employees, or fail to engage staff in a respectful way, risk seeing these same negative attitudes filter into staff interactions with customers.

Famously great service brands — such as [Nordstrom](#), [Southwest Airlines](#), and [Four Seasons Hotels](#) — go out of their way to develop respectful and positive corporate cultures that act as the foundation for great service. One of my local favorites in San Francisco is [Bi-Rite Market](#). Owners Sam and Raph Mogannam have created a positive and inclusive culture that extends beyond employees, all the way to suppliers and the local community. A few simple behaviors guide how staff interact with customers, known as "guests." Everything else comes down to the naturally optimistic and helpful personality of staff who work in an enjoyable and supportive culture.

Where might your corporate culture be obstructing your ability to deliver the best experiences to your customers?

Read more from Tim [here](#).