
QUALITY

“Customers don’t measure you on how hard you tried. They measure you on what you deliver.”

~ **Steve Jobs**

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”

~ **Aristotle**

“The quality of a person’s life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavor.”

~ **Vince Lombardi**

“All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence.”

~ **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

“It takes time to create excellence. If it could be done quickly, more people would do it.”

~ **John Wooden**

There is an old adage that says “measure twice, cut once.” This same principle can apply to whatever we undertake in life. It doesn’t mean that we have to be overly cautious, but we should pay attention to the details and make sure that we are doing things right. None of us want to wear a t-shirt that shrinks two sizes the first time it is put in the laundry. None of us wants to eat at a restaurant that is dirty and has bad tasting food. None of us wants to drive a car that is unsafe. We want quality products in our life. We want quality services. On the flipside, if we give

others quality work or service, we will be held in higher esteem.

Walt Disney created an empire of entertainment through entrepreneurship in animation, film production, and theme parks. He was a creative mastermind and created The Walt Disney Company. He is known for his creativity and high standards for himself, all of those around him, and his company. Today, The Walt Disney Company is a household name around the world and Mickey Mouse is recognized almost everywhere.

Few entrepreneurs are successful in forming a new idea and then being courageous enough to follow it through. But even fewer are successful in maintaining a high-quality standard once they get there, embedding this into the culture of an organization.

Walt Disney was a true entertainer. He viewed every interaction with a customer like he was giving them a show. Because every interaction was important, he had a high standard. He wanted to give the customer everything he could. This has proven to be effective and has brought Disney a great amount of business. However, there were some hiccups along the way, even though the commitment to quality has been there all along.

“The first year at Disneyland I leased out the parking concession, brought in the usual security guards – things like that – but soon realized my mistake,” said Disney. “I couldn’t have outside help and still get across my idea of hospitality. So now we recruit and train every one of our employees. I tell the security police, for instance, that they are never

to consider themselves cops. They are there to help people. The visitors are our guests. It's like running a fine restaurant. Once you get the policy going, it grows." ¹

Disney ensured quality throughout his entire organization by training all of the Disney employees by the Disney standard so that the principles ran throughout the top of the organization all the way to the bottom. A leader cannot ensure quality by force or even by writing a great job description. A leader must create a common vision for this quality and what it can bring about. Today, once someone is hired at Disney, they are immediately immersed in the culture and standards Walt created many years ago. Regardless of how high or low the job every member of Walt's organization is committed to helping the customer. Walt once said, "We strive for perfection, but settle for excellence." ²

Disney has some seemingly incredible standards for its employees, but this is what true quality is about – doing what others will not so that new levels of excellence can be achieved. Parts of the park on Main Street are painted every single night, so that they look fresh in the morning for guests. There is always a trash can within 30 steps, which ensures there is no trash on the ground and customers are not inconvenienced. No shop in Disney sells gum to ensure the park remains clean. Disney even places "Smellitizers" throughout the park to give customers a hint of a scent in regards to the attraction they are at. ³

These standards of excellence are just a few of the many that Disney set to uphold the quality of his

park and company name. Disney achieves quality with their product because they are continuously seeking to go above and beyond to exceed expectations. Walt liked to say, “You don’t build it for yourself. You know what people want, and you build it for them.”⁴

There is no doubt that Disney created a successful franchise that continues to thrive. The success can largely be attributed to his extremely high, unwavering standards. Walt Disney did not look around at other theme parks and animation studios trying to match their quality assurance policies. He created his organization on the principles of doing whatever is needed to please and serve the customer. He passed on this commitment through his employees. Striving for the highest quality of experience has brought Disney success for decades. Walt once said "Do what you do so well that they will want to see it again and bring their friends."⁵

Walt and the entire Walt Disney Company did what they did so well that they are now considered one of the best companies in the world. Walt’s legacy is still carried on today. In Theodore Kinni’s book *Be Our Guest*, he describes the quality expectations at Disney when he says, “There is one thing that every guest brings when they visit Disney theme parks and purchase Disney products – expectations, often very high expectations . . .”

“Many companies wow their customers on occasion”, continues Kinni. “An employee goes above and beyond the call of duty, solves a problem, and earns some high-profile gratitude from a

customer. Maybe that employee will get a premium parking spot for a month or a certificate for pizza. The story will be told and retold and will perhaps be added to corporate lore – but then it's back to business as usual. At Disney, exceeding guests' expectations is the standard call of duty.”⁶

No matter what work we do, we can bring high standards and quality to it. That should be who we are. We don't turn it on and off like a light switch. Disney knew this and that is one of the main reasons that this company has been so successful through the years.