

The Celebrity Experience

How every business can prosper - and profit -
by approaching customer service like Hollywood

How would you describe the state of customer service today?

If you said "dismal"—or a similar, more colorful word—then join the crowd.

Nine out of ten people say that it should be easy to provide customer service, yet literally half the time they do not have a positive experience, according to a recent survey by Creative Strategies and Connell Associates.

Donna Cutting couldn't agree more. A stage actress turned business writer-speaker-consultant, Cutting is on fire about customer service in America—the good, the bad, and the ugly—and delivers hope and help in a new book, **The Celebrity Experience: Insider Secrets to Delivering Red-Carpet Customer Service** (Wiley, 2008, \$24.95).

Cutting spent a year and a half interviewing people who own, manage, or work for companies that cater to the Hollywood elite. Her mission? To learn how "real-world" businesses can follow their lead and provide celebrity-caliber service to their own customers.

In **The Celebrity Experience**, Cutting shows how every company, regardless of its business or budget, can create a red-carpet experience and turn their customers into adoring fans. With Hollywood as her backdrop, she shares fascinating behind-the-scenes stories and helpful hands-on advice. Other ideas and insights:

- Best practices and service secrets from the Hollywood A-list
- How "regular" companies—from mega-corporations to mom-and-pop businesses—are becoming service stars and boosting their top and bottom lines
- Seven steps for getting started—from owning up to where you are now to rallying your team to help develop a service strategy
- What every employee can do even when their company or boss isn't on board
- Why no company is safe from customer "disservice" blogs and Internet sites

(more)



In a recent survey on customer service, half of all respondents said that most companies simply do not provide good service. The worst offenders: phone and cable companies.



DONNA CUTTING

wasn't a typical kid. Instead of playing games and watching TV, she was busy putting on talent shows for the neighbors, rehearsing her Oscar speech in the bathroom mirror, and signing autographs for anyone who would ask—usually her parents. Today, Cutting is using that same passion and energy as a professional speaker specializing in customer service and employee morale— two

hand-in-hand topics for the times, when good service seems hard to find. She lives in St. Petersburg, Florida, with her husband, Jim, and Snowball, their Maltese puppy. Contact her on the Web at thecelebrityexperience.com.

THE CELEBRITY EXPERIENCE

Insider Secrets to Delivering Red-Carpet Customer Service

Donna Cutting

Wiley

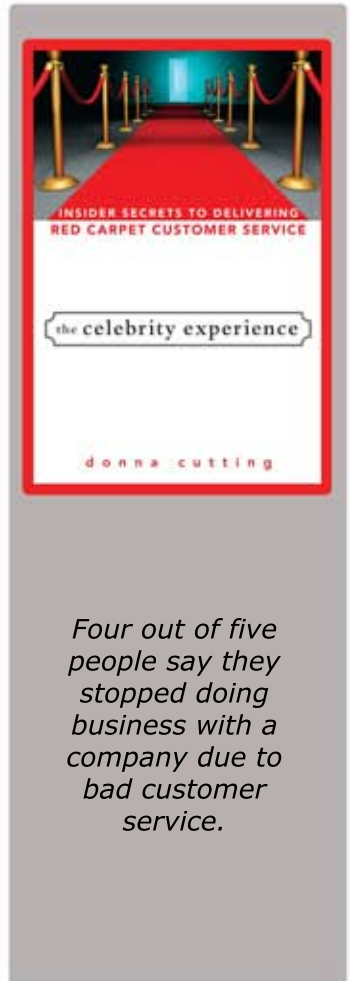
ISBN 978-0-470-17401-2

Hardcover

256 pages

January 2008

\$24.95



Four out of five people say they stopped doing business with a company due to bad customer service.

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www.thecelebrityexperience.com

The Celebrity Experience

What can your company learn from Hollywood?

When it comes to customer service, the answer is simple: Everything!

Hollywood superstars get red-carpet treatment wherever they go. Now, smart companies are waking up to the fact that treating their "everyday" customers like celebrities can boost their business—and their bottom line. Help your organization be one of them—no matter where you fall on the org chart. How? Heed these "tell-all" lessons from Hollywood insiders—service stars who run companies that cater to the Hollywood elite:

The answer is always "Yes!"

We live in a "No!" service culture—such as, "No, you can't talk to a real person"—so who wouldn't love to hear "Yes!" more often? Starting now, work to wipe the word "no" from your vocabulary. Sure, it may not always be practical—or possible—but strive to say "yes" and then, just as they do in Hollywood, work like crazy to figure out the "how."

Be unforgettable

Do one thing for your customers that your competitors won't. Be the one—the one corporation, small business, department, team, or person— who's doing something truly unique. Create a memorable experience or moment that really stands out—and sticks in people's minds. In Hollywood, being memorable is everything. The same goes for your service—and don't you forget it.

Serve a singular customer

Service is an individual experience. (Just imagine serving Tom Cruise and Halle Berry at the same time.) So, while the goal is to give all your customers red-carpet service, serve them one person at a time. This A-list treatment—both in Hollywood and the "real world"—adds up and makes everyone feel like the star of their own show.

Have an "...and then some" mindset

Why go through the motions, when you can be extraordinary? Whatever it is you're doing now, raise the bar by making "...and then some" your mantra. You'll consistently go above and beyond, and your customers will feel like celebrities—and then some.



Sixty percent of people say that outstanding customer service is their main reason for recommending a company.

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Give choice—and voice

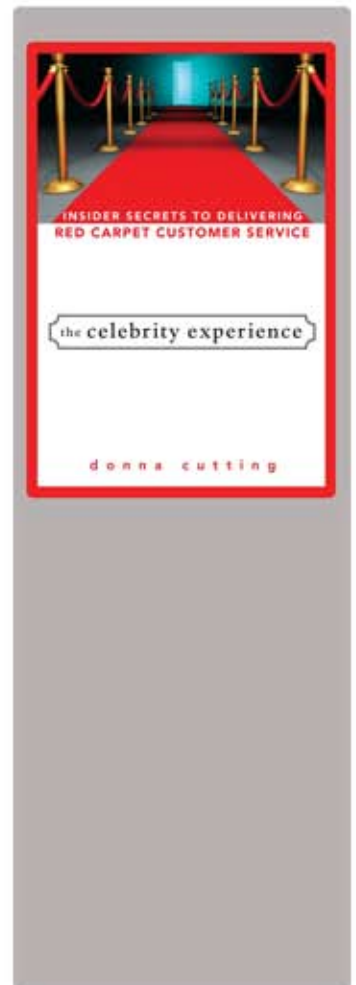
The power of choice has never been stronger. Today, people won't settle for having decisions made for them. They want to "build their own"—from burritos to BMWs—and expect a multitude of options. They also want a voice—ongoing opportunities, through Web sites, blogs, and other more low-tech means, to share their feedback, opinions, and stories. So, take a lead from Hollywood, and give your customers what they love—a smorgastord of choices and the sound of their own voice.

Listen

Want to let your customers know how important they are to you? Then listen to them. Hang on to their every word—from big stuff to small talk—and respond in a way that shows you're paying attention. Listening is the ultimate gift—even for Hollywood's rich and famous.

Refuse to be satisfied

Great things happen when you're never satisfied. With no laurels to rest on, you're continually trying to top yourself—and, odds are, you do. Star-studded service knows no bounds. (Ask anyone in Hollywood.) Remember that thought, and your customers will form their own fan club—yours!



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The Celebrity Experience

Want red-carpet service?

Then learn to be a red-carpet customer and get A-list treatment.

Are you a dream customer—or a diva? Like it or not, service cuts both ways—even for Hollywood celebrities. So mind your own behavior and make the customer A-list. Five red-carpet tips that will help “serve” you every time:

Build relationships

Be friendly with the people you do business with—from the baristas at Starbucks to your UPS guy. Learn their names. Ask how their day is going. And say please and thank you—no exceptions. In Hollywood, the best-liked celebrities always show up with a smile and a kind word.

Remember that “stuff” happens

Be understanding when things go wrong. Accept innocent mistakes. Lighten up when the wait is long. And blame no one—beyond Mother Nature—when the weather wreaks havoc on your flight. Even for the red-carpet crowd, that old adage is true: You catch more flies with honey.

Engage

Be present with people. Stop your rushing or multitasking. Get your thumbs off your BlackBerry. And really listen to the person on the phone, or look at the individual in front of you. The smartest stars know the power of engagement—and you should, too.

Show respect

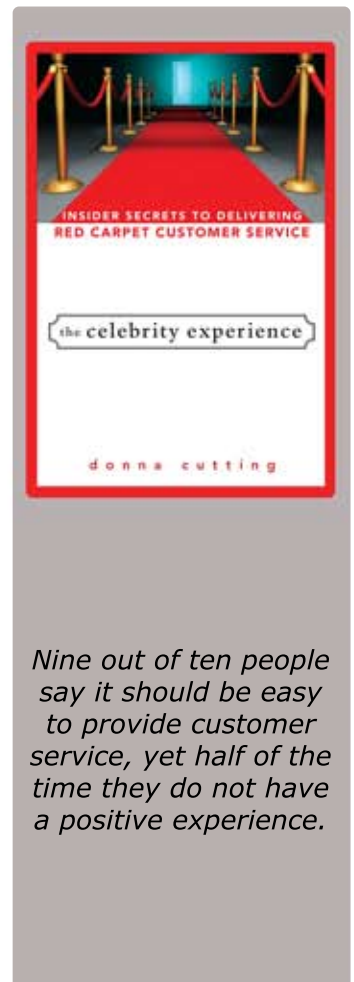
Be honorable at all times. Pay your bills. Value others' property. And tip the people who rely on those tips to make a living. Word has it that the classiest celebs use the “10-items-or-less aisle” at Whole Foods only when they have 10 items or less. Can the same be said about you?

Get good at gratitude

Be appreciative of great service. Let people know when they're doing a fantastic job. Use comment cards to give praise—or ask for the manager to “report” a stellar employee. And call or write to companies that go above and beyond for you. A genuine thank-you is never out of style—even for Hollywood's rich and famous.

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