

Give 'Em 'Bags Fly Free' Passion

Inspiring your team with enthusiasm about your company helps them communicate that enthusiasm to the customer.

By Bryan Rader *Bandwidth Consulting LLC*

We talk all the time about focusing on end users by excelling at what they demand: quick installations, good value for service, depth of choices, broadband speed.

But to satisfy subscribers in a meaningful way, we need passionate associates who bring energy and enthusiasm to their roles. Think of Southwest Airlines when it was the only airline in the industry to maintain the “bags fly free” policy. Do you remember the ad in which guys on the tarmac lifted their shirts to show the words painted on their chests? Those weren’t Hollywood actors. They were real Southwest employees!

What if your service techs had the same enthusiasm about your company? (Maybe they do.) Wouldn’t it be great if they flashed a “Next Day Installs” sign or an “Upgrade for Free” slogan?

As private cable operators (PCOs), we need this kind of excitement among our staff members to deliver passionate service to customers. Do you really think our competitors are delivering passionate, top-level service? Have you seen their recent customer satisfaction scores? I don’t think so.

So, how do we do it?

In his new book, “Common Purpose,” Joel Kurtzman argues that it’s up to leadership to create this passion. He writes, “Great leaders motivate people by building a sense of inclusiveness, which is how they connect with and become accepted by the group.”

His argument is that the leader should create a common purpose for the organization that, in turn, will drive excellence and satisfy its customer base.

Over the years, I have spent a lot of time with cable operators’ management teams. I have flown hundreds of thou-

sands of miles to meet with and get to know many different cable operators. Every site visit begins in a conference room with the CEO selling me on his team’s passion. He usually starts with something like, “We empower the employee to do what it takes to satisfy our customer...”

WHAT DO YOU SEE IN THE FIELD?

I prefer to assess passion out in the field. I like to drive around with one of the marketing reps. I like to sit in on the service techs’ staff meeting or spend a few minutes with the guys in the warehouse or a customer service rep in the call center. That’s where I find (or fail to find) the real passion – among the associates.

Several years after founding MediaWorks, I knew we had created passion and enthusiasm when I listened in on a Tech Ops call and heard the guys talking about ordering T-shirts, sweatshirts and hats with the company logo emblazoned on them. When associates “own the brand,” you know you’re satisfying your team.

Ever walk into an Apple store? Immediate passion.

Carnival Cruise Lines has the same goal. Micky Arison, the chairman of the company, pushes his team to “create brilliant experiences for people who go on vacation once a year.” He spends a lot of time building his associates’ enthusiasm and confidence in his brand, which

drives repeat business among his customers. He must be generating a lot of passion among his crew to get the level of customer care he demands.

Does this work for PCOs? Absolutely. When I meet with enthusiastic service techs who wear their passion on their sleeve, I can see they’re willing to go the extra mile. They check in twice with the on-site manager to be sure everything is OK. They pass out flyers for launch campaigns and stay late for on-site promotional events.

This type of passion gets you more customers, more loyalty, and more communities to serve.

As a leader, you can’t create this kind of passion without having a genuine interest in the goodwill of your associates. If you treat them like contractors (as many operators seem to do), you’ll get piecemeal, shortsighted work: “Ma’am, I get paid to do the install, not help you load new software on your computer.”

Excuse me, sir, you get paid to grow the company. But without passion, you won’t be able to do it.

Think about your team. Are they passionate about you, your brand, your mission? Are they standing on the tarmac (or at your headend), enthusiastically pushing your company? When you get them to that level, your passion meter will point straight to success. **BBP**

About the Author

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