

I find it interesting that Disney Corporation trains its associates to always regard their “customers” as “guests”. In the area where I live, we have a Disney store in which all the exclusive merchandise is Disney trademarked. Since I was aware of this policy, I walked into the store one day and asked the sales attendant, “What am I?” She said look directly at me and said, “You are a guest.” I then replied, “I thought I was a customer.” She politely smiled, gently shook her head, and said, “You are a guest.” Can you imagine the positive impact that practice has on business be it a store or on a larger scale, a theme park? “Welcome, friend! You are not here to spend money. You are our guest!” That makes us feel comfortable spending our hard-earned dollars. We want the experience to last, and, just as importantly, we want to come back for more.

Many of us have been to restaurants and as we are paying our bills the cashier asks, “How was everything?” One afternoon at a local seafood restaurant, my response to this question was, “Okay, except the hush puppies were a bit mushy.” Oh my gosh. The cashier came unglued. She raised her voice and said, “Everyone loves our hush puppies!” I must have misinterpreted her question thinking she was asking for honest customer feedback. Apparently, I was mistaken!

The art of politeness and good conversation is dying. One of my favorite speakers about conversational etiquette is Celeste Headlee. Check out her TED Talk on “Ten Ways to Have a Better Conversation”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1vskiVDwl4>

I am the primary customer interface for QualityWBT. Day in and day out, I either assist people who are enrolled in our online classes via phone or email. When they come to me, they need help. Some are worried. Some are angry. No one likes to get the runaround. I am empathetic with every customer. They seem to sense this. No matter how upset they were, I put their minds at ease by assuring them that they will be taken care of. Our goal is happy customers! Not satisfied, happy. Although not the intent, common sense will tell us that not only is this good policy, but they are more likely to return to enroll in more classes.

We may have heard the Golden Rule to treat others as you would like to be treated. I prefer to use the Platinum Rule, “Treat others as they would like to be treated.”

Before I close, I would like to share what the ISO 9001:2015 quality management system (QMS) standard requires regarding customer service. The excerpts provided below are directly quoted from the standard:

Clause 5.1.2 Top management shall demonstrate leadership and commitment with respect to customer focus.

Clause 8.2.1c Customer communication with customers shall include: c) obtaining customer feedback relating to products and services, including customer complaints.

Clause 9.1.2: The organization shall monitor customers' perception of the degree to which their needs and expectations have been met. The organization shall determine the methods for obtaining, monitoring and reviewing this information.

Clause 9.3.2.c.1 requires that top management review customer satisfaction as part of their overall QMS review.

As we have seen, we need to be mindful of customer service. Treating customers with respect, dignity and gratitude directly affects the bottom line. I have found, maybe you have as well, there are more businesses out there who can learn from Chick-fil-A and Disney Corporation. To succeed, we need to take an honest interest in our customers' wellbeing. We can start by teaching our associates to say, "Please and thank you" to our customers as we learn to treat them as "Guests".

**Murray Gonzalez**, ASQ CBA, CSSGB, is Operations & Account Manager with QualityWBT Center for Education ([www.qualitywbt.com](http://www.qualitywbt.com)). He holds a Master's in Psychology (I/O) from University of West Florida. Gonzalez has over 30 years' experience in quality, production, and business management.