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### **Service Excellence Isn't Magic; It's Hard Work** By Theresa Minton-Eversole

Corporate America is no “Magic Kingdom” of late. But no matter the business environment, The Walt Disney Company hinges its success on sustaining a culture of service excellence that ensures a quality employee (or “cast member”) experience and great guest experience.

#### **The Power of Story, Loyalty**

Storytelling has provided The Walt Disney Company leaders with a source for perpetuating the company's culture. Stories help its leaders pass along the company's traditions, history and values, as well as help to:

- Create an emotional connection.
- Keep a culture alive.
- Communicate a vision.

“Every leader also is telling a story about what he or she values through their actions and behaviors,” said Disney Institute's Scott Milligan, SPHR. “We judge ourselves by our intentions, but others judge us by our behaviors.”

And those behaviors are the foundation—or the Disney Difference—on which employee culture and cast excellence are based, Jones said. “Our cast members are our customers, too. One way to keep employees happy is to make sure everything is in its place for them,” she said. “Doing that will keep them satisfied and with the company. And having loyal, satisfied employees leads to positive financial results.”

So how do you build customer loyalty? “Our two key metrics are intent to return and intent to recommend,” Milligan said. “We want people to keep coming back to our facilities and to recommend to others that they come to visit us, too.”

Disney believes there are six steps to creating customer and employee loyalty:

- Identify your customers.
- Align your promise.
- Identify your strengths.
- Deliver your strengths.
- Value your employees.
- Connect emotionally.

Also key to sustaining customer and employee loyalty is maintaining service standards of excellence, which Disney achieves by focusing on courtesy, safety, efficiency and show.

But what makes Disney unique is its ability to clearly articulate to its employees the difference between their task and their purpose. Employees' tasks, or jobs, are important, but they are always secondary to the overall purpose. Everyone in the organization is held accountable every day for delivery of the company's purpose, which is to connect emotionally with each guest and provide him or her with an exceptional experience.