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Enhancing Guest Relations for  
Sports and Entertainment Venues

Ruby Newell-Legner, CSP • 303-933-9291

www.GuestRelationsTraining.com • Ruby@GuestRelationsTraining.com

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*Ruby Newell-Legner, Certified Speaking Professional, is considered The pre-eminent Customer Satisfaction Expert in the Sports & Leisure Industry today.*

*Ruby helps sports and entertainment venues create a guest experience worth more than the price of admission.*

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*Visit GuestRelationsTraining.com to find out why Ruby was chosen to train the Guest Relations Staff for Super Bowl XLI, The Grey Cup and The 2010 Olympics.*

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## Are you an Administrator, Manager or Leader?

*By Ruby Newell-Legner, CSP*

My very first winter job was working at a movie theater. I sold tickets, bagged the popcorn and worked in the concession stand. The people I worked with gave me my first glance at the different aspects of running a business.

My supervisor had the role of administrator. He was all about "The Rules." He made sure we only gave the children's price to those under the age of 12. That was always a hard call for me when mom or dad would make the "teenage-looking" child wait by the door as they stepped up to the cashier window - I always wondered what kind of lesson parents were teaching their children about honesty when the parent lied about the age of the child to get a lower price.

My boss was all about the rules and would rudely question the parent when he saw the size of the person who had a "children's" ticket. Clearly he missed the lesson about creating a positive guest experience for families. He was just more interested in making sure everyone went by "The Rules."

The owner of the theater was in charge of the next area of responsibility. He was all about "Management." He focused on efficiency.

His office was upstairs next to the projection booth and sporadically he would "run" downstairs to see if we were doing our job. He liked to take the stairs two at a time going

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## Promoting Staff Development with Ease!

*By Ruby Newell-Legner, CSP*

My first visit to Dubai was in June 2005 to provide training for Jumeirah Group. They understand that to create a service-oriented culture, you have to start by creating a learning organization. A perfect embodiment of this principle is the staff at Wild Wadi Water Park.

Located in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Wild Wadi is the largest waterpark in the Middle East. Covering more than 12 acres of paradise, it is located just offshore of the Burj Al Arab, reported as the only seven-star hotel in the world. Both are owned by the same company: Jumeirah Group.

Wild Wadi employs 800 staff from 44 nationalities. Every staff member is hired for his or her friendliness and "smile-ability," and it shows. Not only that, but when Wild Wadi hires its staff, each one commits to a plan that includes attending 6 hours of paid training sessions per month. As a reward for this extra training, managers monitor the park's Customer Service Ratings very strategically and base employee bonuses on the score.

Read on for other steps that Wild Wadi follows to create a positive learning environment:

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*“Ruby’s Guest Services training sessions for our event supervisors exceeded our expectations. She did an exceptional job and probably gave Dolphin Stadium our most informative and fun supervisor training sessions in our stadium’s history.”*

*Andrew Major, Sr.  
Director Guest Services and Ticketing  
Dolphin Stadium  
Miami, Florida, USA*

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*“BC Place’s recent Stadium-wide Guest Relations training with Ruby Newell-Legner was an enormous success! Ruby brings a passion to customer service that inspires while it teaches new behaviors and attitudes important to our facility. Ruby’s presentations left everyone invigorated, empowered and ready to create exceptional guest experiences. The feedback from the participants demonstrated the phenomenal success of the training and some of her great tips and recommendations are already making a difference!”*

*Howard Crosley  
General Manager  
BC Place Stadium  
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada*

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### *Are you an Administrator, Manager or Leader from page 1*

up and down so we always knew when he was coming. We would hear the "Thud, Thud, Thud" when he hit the first set of stairs. That was our cue to do a once over of his pet peeves. He hated it if we left the sliding top door of the freezer open for more than a second even if we were serving multiple guests. We heard about it if we overestimated the size of the crowd for each show and popped too much popcorn. On those occasions we would get a lecture about how expensive the popcorn, oil, and electricity was to make the popcorn.

I wonder how different it might have been if someone in the company had been a true leader who could have shared the vision of what a positive movie experience should be like for our guests. You see I was treated like an hourly employee, someone who came in, worked my shift and went home. I was never really invited to be part of the company.

I wonder how different it would have been if someone would have helped me learn the intricacies of creating a positive movie experience. I would like to think that would have inspired me to do a better job. But in reality, I showed up, sold the tickets, hoped I estimated the right amount of popcorn and prayed I didn't hear the "Thud, Thud, Thud" coming to check on me.

A true leader energizes their staff to perform. All too often the person in charge sucks every ounce of inspiration out of an employee because they focus on the wrong things. Either they are an administrator, or a manager, but rarely a leader.

Where do you expend your energies?

Are you an administrator who focuses on the rules and procedures?

Are you a manager who is primarily concerned about efficiency and results?

Or are you a leader who shares the vision of your department and venue with every employee and creates an atmosphere where staff is excited and motivated to help you make that dream come to fruition?

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### *Staff Development from page 1*

**Require attendance at frequent staff training sessions.** Some of Wild Wadi's training sessions include language courses in English and Arabic and guest services.

**Choose a good learning environment.** The setting for training must be conducive to training. Wild Wadi schedules sessions with a large number of attendees in an auditorium with state-of-the-art audio/visual equipment. Participants can easily see the presenter on the stage and enjoy comfortable seating. For smaller sessions, Wild Wadi holds sessions in a special training room at the park.

**Make learning fun.** When I was training staff at Wild Wadi in June 2005, it was just prior to the "hot" season. In that part of the world, daytime temperatures during that time of the year can reach 120° F. Thus, we customized the program to prepare staff to deal with the relentless heat. Our program was called: "Stay COOL: Create Ongoing Opportunities to Love your colleagues, your guests and your job!" We infused penguin pictures and stories throughout the program to give participants a visual of "Staying COOL." I even wore a penguin apron to bring home the theme.

In a previous program, Lori Caligiuri, Wild Wadi's Director of Human Resources, developed a simple but effective way to remind staff about the park's dedication to following the "FISH!" philosophy, a popular and widely used video-based training program that emphasizes how having fun in the workplace affects each person and his or her

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## Enhancing Customer Service the GE Way

By Ruby Newell-Legner, CSP

The first time I heard Six Sigma, I thought it was the name of a fraternity. Then after working with GE for a number of years, I learned that this one tool has built their company to be considered one of the best in the world today.

I figured if it works for GE – maybe it can work for the companies I work with. So that started me thinking about how to implement the Six Sigma Strategy for Customer Service and Guest Relation Initiatives.

What is Six Sigma?

First, what it is not. It is not a secret society, a slogan or a cliché. Six Sigma is a highly disciplined process that helps GE focus on developing and delivering near-perfect products and services.

Why "Sigma"? The word is a statistical term that measures how far a given process deviates from perfection. The central idea behind Six Sigma is that if you can measure how many "defects" you have in a process, you can systematically figure out how to eliminate them and get as close to "zero defects" as possible.

Although it sounds rather technical, it is really very simple - Pay attention to what isn't working, evaluate why and implement solutions to make that problem go away.

Six Sigma has changed the DNA of GE — it is now the way they work — in everything they do and in every product they design.

Today's competitive leisure environment leaves no room for error either. We must delight our customers and relentlessly look for new ways to exceed their expectations. This is why Six Sigma Quality can help us improve customer care in our business.

To focus on quality delivery we must review the key elements involved:

- 1) **Our Guests** – They are the reason our business exists. They expect friendly service, competitive prices, accurate information, clean environments and pleasant transactions. On a daily basis we are competing for our guests' leisure dollar. If we influence their perception in a positive way we create customer loyalty. If they have a bad experience, they vote with their feet and take their discretionary spend-able cash elsewhere.
- 2) **The Process** – Most of the time we look at the process from inside our business. We get frustrated by systems and equipment that don't work. When we step into the customers shoes, we gain a new perspective on what guest perception is created by each encounter. We see through new eyes some of the problems that need to be addressed.

- 3) **Our Employees** – This is where the water gets muddy. After looking at a very technical model, it would be easy to say that employees are the most unpredictable element of the delivery chain. I disagree.

When employees have the following elements, they can succeed:

- ◆ a clear vision
- ◆ an invitation to be part of the bigger picture
- ◆ clear expectations and performance standards
- ◆ tools to do their job
- ◆ training to help them do the right thing
- ◆ motivation and recognition for fulfilling the mission

See, it isn't a fraternity or rocket science...it is a model that can help us create a better experience for our guests at all levels.

In your next staff meeting, use this outline to discuss some of the key concepts of the Six Sigma Strategy:

- ◆ What attributes of our service is most important to our customers?
- ◆ What part of the process is causing us to fail at delivering what our customers want?
- ◆ What service are we capable of delivering?
- ◆ What perception does the customer have of us? What do they see and feel?
- ◆ What steps can we take to enhance our operations so that we can ensure consistent, predictable service delivery to improve what the customer sees and feels?

Utilize this approach to help your team develop their sense of what needs to happen to enhance the overall delivery of the service you provide for the guest. That will make them a member of the "We are all in this together" Fraternity!

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*"Ruby was invited to speak to our staff at The Heat Group/AmericanAirlines Arena in preparation for our busy upcoming season after winning the NBA Champions. It was evident that Ruby was truly dedicated to the success of our corporate family. Many of the staff in attendance found her enthusiasm and commitment to be both, inspiring, and motivating. I have no doubt that Ruby's efforts will continue to produce high quality results from our team long after her presentation."*

*Cary Martinez  
Guest Services Coordinator  
AmericanAirlines Arena  
Miami, Florida, USA*

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*Staff Development from page 2*

interaction with guests. Caligiuri's slogan consists of two words: "Yeah baby." All that is necessary for the reminder to work is for Caligiuri to take a walk through the park. As she acknowledges staff members, she gives them an enthusiastic, "Yeah Baby!" greeting. The response is a thunderous reply from every staff member within ear shot. They reply, "Yeah Baby!" to remind themselves that they are each responsible for making the park a great place to come get out of the heat.

**Reward performance.** Create customer-service champions who put the guest "center stage." To continue the message beyond the initial training session, we created a "Penguin Award" to be passed on from colleague to colleague every 24 hours. The colleague who receives the penguin is responsible for seeking out a different colleague who has demonstrated exceptional customer service. When that happens, the first employee hands off the penguin to the second to say, "I saw what you did and appreciate your extra effort!"

**Set, clarify and monitor specific, high guest-relations standards for each position.** Wild Wadi measures and tracks everything that affects the guest's experience. This includes: speed of entry, speed of service, ease of locker systems and changing rooms. The park staff also monitors greeting, help and professional appearance for the admissions, food-and-beverage, lifeguard, retail and security staffs.

*"I was expecting another boring 'how to make hotdogs and keep beer colder' lecture. Instead, it turned out to be an upbeat, highly motivating exchange of information. The whole room was involved and enthusiastic. Awesome!"*

*Dawn Lamont  
Concession Cashier  
BC Place Stadium  
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada*

**RubySpeaks, Inc.**

9148 W. Vandeventor Dr.  
Littleton, CO 80128 USA

**Phone:**

303-933-9291

**E-mail:**

Ruby@GuestRelationsTraining.com

**Website:**

www.GuestRelationsTraining.com

**Treat your employees as you want them to treat your guests.** Your staff will only treat your customers as well as you treat them. Caligiuri and the other leaders at Wild Wadi have created a positive learning environment. As a result, the staff at Wild Wadi embraces training. All staff members approach each session as a gift. Caligiuri acts as a positive role model by being a great learner herself. She is always hungry for new techniques and ideas she can take back and share with her colleagues.

Although most organizations set their Customer Satisfaction Index goal at 75 percent, Wild Wadi has set its goal at 90 percent. Its current score ranges between 91 and 92 percent. With the learning environment Wild Wadi has created, I am confident the staff there is well on its way to creating a haven to which guests will flock.

**RubySpeaks**

**Ruby Newell-Legner, CSP**  
Speaker • Trainer • Author

*Specializing in Guest Relations Training for the Sports and Entertainment Industry*

Ruby's training sessions are perfect for:

- ✓ Event Staff
- ✓ Security Personnel
- ✓ Parking Lot Attendants
- ✓ Ticket Sellers
- ✓ Concessionaires
- ✓ Catering Employees
- ✓ Ushers
- ✓ Housekeeping
- ✓ Merchandise Sellers
- ✓ Ticket Takers
- ✓ Supervisors & Front-Line Staff
- ✓ Leadership Team



For additional resources, to watch a free webinar and to sign up for Ruby's *FREE* Electronic Newsletter, "Great Customer Service for Leisure Professionals", visit [www.GuestRelationsTraining.com](http://www.GuestRelationsTraining.com)