

Owning the Customer Experience

The Orlando Magic recently moved the second strongest season ticket holder base in the NBA. They did so not exclusively with strong sales, but with a substantial emphasis on customer service.

By Jared Frank
Editor of SEAT
Association of Luxury
Suite Directors

The hospitality industry has redefined good customer service. More accurately, customers have redefined good customer service. Because they are paying premium prices for all the modern bells and whistles, their demands are higher. Stadium or arena experiences better not just satisfy, but exceed expectations. Otherwise, service providers are not cultivating retention or enticing loyalty. Rudimentary commandments like “Stay Close to Your Customer” simply are not good enough anymore. So take note, the Orlando Magic represent a new standard of customer service.

Customer service should never be a checklist. The Magic’s approach, while certainly complementing what they have done in the past, is a big shift because it allows the organization to look at what they are doing through the eyes of the customer versus a task they are performing. Literally every touch point is analyzed through a customer lens in order to “own” the experience. “We felt like most organizations focus on goals and objectives with their employees, and that in turn the employees focus on their tasks or tactics to accomplish these goals and objectives,” explains Scott Bowman, Vice President of Season Ticket Services & Operations at the Magic. “[The new standards] forced us to really own the customer experience and to look at everything we do through their eyes and not just as a task that we check off once it is accomplished.”

The entire process is a cross-fertilization that promotes good feelings for customers and increases the team’s morale as well.

Customer service transcends any one department within the Magic front offices. “Every single employee at the Orlando Magic needs to own the customer experience regardless of what department he or she represents,” says Bowman. “By having the entire organization go through this exercise, it allows us to reinforce the message that each of us, as individuals, owns our customer experience.”

The Relocation Process

The Magic’s seven full-time season ticket account representatives and two premium service account representatives, who are commissioned on both renewals and additional sales that they receive from the existing season ticket holder base, had the opportunity to own their customer experiences through the process of relocating ticket holders from the Amway Arena to the new Amway Center, which is scheduled to open October 10th later this year. The arduous process began last November when the Magic distributed a Relocation Handbook to all season ticket holders. The handbook communicated, by level, all of the new amenities and benefits of seating opportunities, pricing, the process for relocating seats and frequently asked questions. The handbook also included a DVD that contained a fly-through of the outside and inside of the Amway Center and a Seating Preference Survey that was also available online.

In December, the Magic pre-selected season ticket holders’ preliminary seat assignments in the new Amway Center based on their 2009-2010 seat location at the Amway Arena. These seat selections were made in order of priority number within each Amway Center pricing category. The priority number was derived from the purchase date that the season ticket holder opened up his or her account.

Jumping ahead to January/February of this year, the next phases were seat selection appointments, which were scheduled according to priority number and were held either online or in-person at the Magic’s Experience Center. During these appointments, season ticket holders had the opportunity to review their preliminary assigned seat location in the new Amway Center and elect to keep, upgrade or downgrade from their current seat. After all of these appointments were completed, they opened up the opportunity for season ticket holders to add seats as well, also ordered according to priority number.

Above: The new Amway Center will open on 10/10/2010.



The 13,000 Orlando Magic season ticket holders now occupy seven levels at the new Amway Center.

Managing Expectations

The Magic brand is very strong in Central Florida. With a team winning on the court, an organization heavily involved in the community and a new arena right around the corner, there is more value in a Magic season ticket than ever before. With 13,000 season ticket holders, a large percentage of which who have been in the same seats in the same building for 20 years, a few seat holders were bound to have expectations that were not met. But the Magic mitigated these issues with constant dialogue in order to meet, manage and ultimately exceed expectations for nearly every customer. “Making sure that we were clear and precise in our communication to [season ticket holders] was crucial in managing their expectations about the process,” says Bowman.

The entire process is a cross-fertilization that promotes good feelings for customers and increases the team’s morale as well. The Magic organization’s continuity and culture starts with its ownership and trickles down into a cycle between its staff and its customers. The organization also works diligently to manage the expectations and time of its service representatives. Having the second largest base of season ticket holders in the NBA certainly keeps the Magic service staff busy year-round. “We work with them on managing their book of business by setting a year-round season ticket holder touch point program and are able to recognize and reward them for achieving

goals within that program,” says Bowman. “It also allows us to coach and develop any of our employees who might be struggling.” With such a strong support system, the Magic are able to retain not only season ticket holders, but its employee base as well.

The Cycles of Service™

The Orlando Magic mission statement reads, “To be World Champions on and off the court, delivering legendary moments every step of the way.” In order to deliver legendary moments, every employee needs some level of service training, and likewise, every employee needs sales training. The line between sales and service is disappearing; department goals are giving way to larger organizational standards.

Enter Ruby Newell-Legner, Certified Speaking Professional and Customer Satisfaction Expert for Sports and Entertainment. The success of the relocation process stems from a foundation cured two years previous. The Magic first turned to Newell-Legner in 2007 to train the service staff. What started out as a project involving just one department quickly grew organization-wide when Scott Bowman saw the expertise and resources that came in partnering with Ruby. “She really connected with our entire staff. The other great thing about Ruby is that she connects you with other people who can make a positive impact on your company,” says Bowman.

“Once we discussed training for the staff at Amway Arena, we started a dialogue and I said, “This is what I can do. This is what I have done for other stadiums and arenas. But you might want to think about this other thing I am doing,’” Newell-Legner says. The “other thing” is her trademarked concept called Cycles of Service™, which walks each staff member through steps or impressions all from the customer’s standpoint. “We analyze all the touch points. For instance, a customer calling the ticket office, getting information, de-

The Magic earned a 90.5% customer satisfaction rating – the highest ever in the sports and entertainment industry.

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-Scott Bowman, VP of Season Ticket Services & Operations

veloping a relationship with a ticket sales representative and how the customer feels after the conversation,” says Newell-Legner.

So the first year, Cycles of Service™ were created for all 18 departments within the Magic organization from both an internal and external customer service viewpoint. Department leaders were coached on presentation skills and went through a train the trainer program to encourage them to teach their staff everything they needed to be successful in their specific roles. The Cycles of Service™



President Suites are just 27 rows from the floor and feature a lounge area, fixed seating for 12 and private access via VIP elevator and suite holders' concourse.

Program takes employees through a three-phase process to help them understand the specific impressions they leave every day both inside and outside the organization. The three steps are:

1. Identify each impression from the customer's viewpoint.
2. Identify the emotions the employee is trying to solicit.
3. Identify the performance standards that are required to solicit that emotion and leave a positive impression on each customer.

That first year was Customer Service 101- impacting the impression left on the customer so they will want to build a long-term relationship. Over the past two years, Newell-Legner has done most of her programs once or twice for almost every department at the Magic. Her on-site meetings have been as small as one-on-one and as large as 800 people. “What is so great about the Magic is that they encourage and value my recommendations, and they really do listen,” says Newell-Legner. “They do not roll their eyes. They really take to heart

that I can really help them if they let me be part of the big picture.”

One of Newell-Legner's recommendations that illustrates the value of Orlando Magic customer service is Service Scouts, a secret shopping company that is based on rewarding positive performance. After her first year, the Magic earned a 90.5% customer satisfaction rating- “the highest ever in the sports and entertainment industry,” according to Jim Smith, founder of Service Scouts. After her second year, 602 staff members received perfect shops. But Newell-Legner is quick to point out, “Of course it is not just about the scores. It is about the end result, which is turning every customer into a loyal fan.”

With the Cycles of Service™ now ingrained into Orlando Magic culture, we fast forward again to the relocation process, where Newell-Legner and Bowman really put the new organizational standard to the test. “The relocation process is like a science,” Newell-Legner observes. “I was so impressed at the intense planning and marketing strategies the Magic used to help season ticket holders select their seats for the new Amway Center.” She continues, “When I try to describe it to somebody, I just say, ‘They had a two-level building and people were sitting here, and now they have a seven-level building, so some seats do not exist anymore in the new configuration.’”

Clearly Newell-Legner and Bowman had their work cut out for them. But working side-by-side, they never lost sight of the end results of owning the customer experience, making every season ticket holder feel valued and allowing fans to feel confident the process was going to be fair for everyone. Bowman expounds, “We want our season ticket holders to feel like they are getting a high return on the investment that they make with us each year, and we need to ensure that they would recommend our experience to their friends and family.”

Mission accomplished. The Cycles of Service™ “delivered legendary moments every step of the way” and held up to the strain of 13,000 season ticket holders being asked to pay more for in some cases different seat locations. “Within the Cycles of Service™, we incorporated measurable standards so we could also look at how we took a customer touch point from meeting expectations to exceeding expectations,” Bowman explains. “If we had to do it over again, we would choose the same strategy, because the feedback that we have received has been very positive.” Now the fun begins. Instead of owning the customer experience of relocation, Scott Bowman and the Magic will own the customer experience of a brand new arena, and who knows, maybe an NBA Championship. Now that would be legendary. #

*How does your team deliver legendary moments?
Write to Jared at jared@alsd.com.*



Ruby Newell-Legner, CSP
Speaker • Trainer • Author

Guest Relations Training Expert for Sports & Entertainment Venues

Ruby Newell-Legner, Certified Speaking Professional, founded RubySpeaks, Inc. in 1994 with a singular mission: To provide the hands-on training employees need to create a more customer focused work environment where everyone can excel on the job. Over the last decade, she has presented more than 1,900 programs in eleven countries and has shown tens of thousands of participants how to quickly improve workplace performance and create a legendary guest experience for the fans.

A nationally recognized customer satisfaction expert, Ruby is also a facilitator with a proven ability to create environments where groups can brainstorm effectively, share perspectives and come to consensus-while enjoying the process. She helps organizations build strong teams between front line staff and management, and make exceptional customer service a way of life.

Ruby's high-impact trainings are based on 25 years as a front-line service provider and facility manager. As a previous municipal staff member, she understands the challenges that employees face in meeting the demands of the public. She works with organizations to build better relationships: from front-line employees to customers, between co-workers and their peers, and from managers to the employees they supervise.

With "in the trenches" practical know-how, Ruby has an uncommon level of experience that gives immediate credibility with session participants and allows her to offer suggestions and recommendations based on actual hands-on experience. Her clients range from arena and stadium management staff to leaders in municipal government to Jumeirah Group, the Dubai, United Arab Emirates, based luxury hospitality group that operates the Burj Al Arab, frequently referred to as the only seven-star hotel in the world. Because of her expertise in guest relations training, she was chosen to train the staff to host Super Bowl XLI, the 2006 Grey Cup, the 2008 US Open (tennis) and the 2010 Olympics.



Ruby has worked together to build workplace learning programs for some of the largest, most recognized organizations in the world. Her track record in satisfying clients is identified by the number of clients who have hired Ruby again and again to provide training for their group. With expertise in the areas of guest relations, leadership, communication, management, internal and external customer service, Ruby provides new perspectives and fresh ideas that enhance ongoing initiatives within your organization to create both immediate and lasting results.

Ruby is a Certified Speaking Professional, a designation bestowed by the National Speakers Association to less than 600 speakers in the world.

Her new book, ***Blueprint for Success***, coauthored with Ken Blanchard and Stephen Covey was published in June 2008.

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Ruby Speaks

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A Partial List of Ruby's Satisfied Clients



Allen County War Memorial Coliseum – home of the Komets United Hockey League Team, Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA



American Airlines Arena – Home of the Miami Heat, the 2006 National Basketball Association World Championship Team, Miami, Florida, USA



BC Place Stadium – Host of the 2010 Olympic Opening, Closing and Medal Ceremonies for the 2010 Olympics, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada



Canada Inns Stadium – Home of the Winnipeg Blue Bombers and host of the 2006 Canadian Football League Grey Cup, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada



Dolphin Stadium – Home of the Miami Dolphins National Football League Team, Florida Marlins National Baseball League Team and host of Super Bowl XLI and XLIV, Miami, Florida, USA



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E-Center & Usana Amphitheatre –
Centennial Management Group,
West Valley City, Utah, USA



General Motors Place – home of the Vancouver Canucks National Hockey League Team and primary venue for Ice Hockey events for the 2010 Olympics, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada



Heinz Field – Home of the Pittsburgh Steelers – The National Football League Super Bowl XL Championship Team, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA



Mellon Arena – Home of the Pittsburgh Penguins National Hockey League Team, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA



National Western Complex – home of the National Western Stock, Rodeo & Horse Show, Denver, Colorado, USA



Orlando Magic – National Basketball Association, 2008 Southeast Division Champions, Orlando, Florida, USA



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Qwest Center Omaha – Host to the 2006 NCAA Women's Volleyball Final Four, First- and second-round games of the 2008 NCAA Tournament and 2008 USA Swimming Olympic trials, Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Ralph Wilson Stadium – home of the Buffalo Bills National Football League Team, Buffalo, New York, USA



RCA Dome – home of the Indianapolis Colts National Football League Team and part of the Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis, Indiana, USA



Arrowhead Stadium – home of the Kansas City Chiefs National Football League Team, Kansas City, Missouri, USA

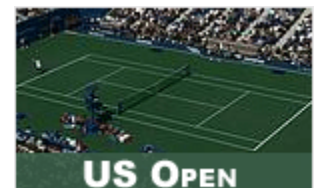


Rexall Place – home of the NHL Edmonton Oilers and the Edmonton Rush NLL Lacrosse Team, and host to the Canadian Finals Rodeo, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada



NORTHLANDS

National Tennis Center – Home of the US Open, Flushing, New York, USA



Wings Stadium – home of the Kalamazoo Wings United Hockey League Team, Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA

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Ruby has proudly presented for
the following International
Conferences in the Sports
& Entertainment Industry



Association of Luxury Suite Directors

International Association of Assembly Managers



International Convention Center Conference

International Crowd Management Conference



International Association for the Leisure & Entertainment Industry

National Association of Concessionaires



Stadium Managers Association

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What Ruby's Sports and Entertainment Venue Clients say about her training programs:

Mark Vaillant, General Manager, ARAMARK - General Motors Place, Vancouver, BC, Canada

"The NHL lockout in 2004/2005 was a very difficult time for NHL venues and in turn caused a high rate of employee turnover. In preparation for the return of NHL Hockey to General Motors Place, ARAMARK was happy to have Ruby conduct a Guest Relations Training Seminar for all of the employees involved in the service of Food and Beverage. This included people from 10 days to 10 years experience. Ruby's ability to customize her program and to use specific examples from General Motors Place was essential in engaging our employees with the training."

"Ruby's ability to bring guest experience values to our employees in a fun and informative setting has allowed us to increase our level of service to over 18,000 ticket holders every game, thus making General Motors Place one of North America's Premier Sporting facilities."

Randy L. Brown, CFE, General Manager, Allen County War Memorial Coliseum

"Ruby not only speaks, but she delivers a very enthusiastic, informative, "out of the box" thought provoking presentation on how to improve the performance of employees. Ruby challenged, Ruby shared ideas, Ruby responded to the needs of over 300 employees of the Allen County War Memorial Coliseum."

"Ruby is the key to turn satisfactory customer service into extraordinary customer service."

Andy Major, Sr. Director Guest Services and Ticketing, Dolphins Stadium (now with the Buffalo Bills)

"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."

We are very happy and excited about our partnership with Ruby and how the Guest Services training session went for our event supervisors. Ruby was able to provide meaningful training methods that kept everyone attentive and interested...they left with a smile and are ready to work with a smile!

Ruby was Terrific! We had 15 year employees comment that this was by far the best training sessions that they have attended."

Scott E. Bowman, Vice President, Season Ticket Services & Operations, Orlando Magic

"As we move toward the opening our new Orlando Events Center in the fall of 2010, we have partnered with Ruby to ensure that we meet our goal of creating legendary moments for all of our customers."

"Ruby has changed our way of thinking by taking us through the Cycle of Service program. She truly gets you to put yourself in the customer's shoes to ensure that we are seeing everything through the eyes of our customers. Her passion for what she does is seen through her many experiences and stories that she shares with excitement and enthusiasm. This program can easily be adapted and applied within any organization, as it is relevant for both internal and external customers."

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What Ruby's Sports and Entertainment Venue Clients say about her training programs:

Randy Mayne - E Center/Centennial Management Group

"I was really impressed working with Ruby, as she customized the program to meet our every need, with a contagious enthusiasm that got everyone excited and ready to learn. I found that two huge successes came out of our training. The first was our team work has improved so much that it is now a regular part of everyday work, and Supervisors were re-evaluating their managing styles and changing the way they managed their people."

Bernie DeLuca, Luxury Suite Manager and Cayce Little, Guest Services Heinz Field

"Our results from 2003 were positive and beneficial in enhancing our knowledge as managers. The feedback from our Team Members was very positive, because you were able to connect with them, made the training fun, informative and made them feel comfortable."

From Attendees at the International Association of Assembly Managers Annual Conference Session Ruby presented called: "Raising the Bar in Guest Relations"

Eric Backlund, Binghamton University Events Center

"High energy, high power approach to caring for the core of our business - our customer!"

Joan LeMahien, Ford Field/Detroit Lions

"Ruby's program is chock full of practical ideas that can be easily implemented back at your venue."

Mary Mycka, Meeting Planner, on behalf of the Board of Directors, Stadium Managers Association

"Thank you for participating as keynote speaker in our 2004 Stadium Managers Seminar... You are truly a speaker who goes above and beyond! We had so many great comments on your presentation, specifically, 'Ruby is a pro, her material is fitting for guest services, managers, and front line staff.'"

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