Case Studies and Discussions of Exemplary Service
What’s Your Definition of Above-and-Beyond Service?

My friend, internationally acclaimed concierge-level service speaker Holly Stiel and I were talking about what constituted world-class service. I had just returned from Malaysia and Singapore where I stayed in 4- and 5-star hotels. I gave her a few examples of what I thought was extraordinary service:

▲ The bellman who took me to my room of the 600-room at the Berjaya Times Square Hotel called me by name two days later, with no contact in between.” That’s standard at a high-end hotel,” Holly said.

▲ The concierge at The Legend Hotel who escorted me from the lobby down nine floors to hail me a cab, even though there was a doorman who could do it. Holly shared, “All concierges would assist...
you in getting a cab if they didn’t have another
guest waiting.”

The front desk clerk at the Gallery Hotel who took
my carry-on luggage and escorted me to my room.
“All guests should be escorted to their room,” Holly
said. True, but it’s usually by a bellman, not the
front desk staff.

The front-desk and bell staff at the Gallery called
me by name throughout my week-long stay.
“Hotel staff should know and use guests’ names all
through their stay.”

I argued that even though these things might be in
the Standard Operating Procedures, they were hardly
standard in my experience, or at least not prevalently.

So if these things were supposedly standard at any
good hotel, what constitutes higher level service at any
operation, whether in retail, hospitality, or a call center?
What behaviors make up concierge level service? And
how could we teach these behaviors, ensure they were
being used consistently, and measure the results of their use?

Holly said we had to teach staff how to think like a
concierge. She says, “The practice of exercising creativ-
ity, ingenuity and efficiency to fulfill a customer request
are job requirements that are nurtured and honed by the
people who are known in hospitality for ultimate service.
The attitudes and skills that make a successful concierge
are applicable to many service-oriented jobs, from ad-
ministrative assistant to security guard, ticket-counter
clerk to telephone service representative. It is the spirit
in which the job is performed that makes the difference."

But how does one teach resourcefulness? Creative thinking? Putting yourself in the customer’s shoes? How do you know when your people are going above and beyond? And what does above-and-beyond look like to your customers? They may think it is just what is expected when you think your staff has bent over backwards to provide a special service.

Adapt the Lessons To Your Situation

1. What are examples of your receiving above-and-beyond service?

2. When have you gone above-and-beyond for your customers?

3. How could you go above-and-beyond more frequently to wow your customers?
I recently learned about two leaders who exemplify outstanding corporate customer service leadership. They are in an industry not known for innovation — automobile sales and service. Rita and Rick Case now own 14 dealerships in 3 states with nearly 1000 employees and own the largest Honda dealership in the world.

How do they do it? As you would guess, they not only hire great people, but they treat them well. The employees in turn treat the customers well. But the leaders have designed ways to reward the customers for continuing to do business with them. Here are a few examples:

▲ Rewards program — Customers earn points for every purchase they make. These points can be redeemed for discounts on future purchases, including new vehicles.

▲ Free car wash — With a purchase of a vehicle, you get a card that allows you to get a free car wash
anytime you want.

▲ Gas station on site — Rewards program members save 5-25 cents/gallon.

▲ Free rental car with service.

▲ Clerk of the Courts office — At their main dealership people can pay their speeding tickets, get their driver’s licenses renewed, and get a marriage license. They even have a chapel so couples can get married! Forty to 50 couples a month say their nuptials there.

▲ Salespeople call customers monthly — They tell them how many rewards points they’ve accumulated, how they can be redeemed, and any specials the dealership is running.

▲ Rick and Rita also show their customers they care about their community by being active on charity boards and chairing large fund raisers. Their main dealership is a voting site. Additionally, after being concerned about people being trapped in submerged vehicles, they manufactured and distributed 50,000 emergency escape hammers.

What could you try that is out of the norm to show your customers you care?
Adapt the Lessons To Your Situation

1. Rick and Rita thought of unusual ways to serve their customers. What do you currently do to serve your customers that is different than your competitors?

2. How can you come up with unusual ways to serve your customers?

3. What can you adapt from this story to implement in your organization?
How does a 7-star hotel hire and train staff to ensure service literally fit for kings?