

“GREASE THOSE SKIDS, OR YOU WILL...”



The crisis has slowed the progress of all businesses. However, since the situation is improving, companies should take measures to win their customers back.

That's right, you will slip, skip and slide (even skid) as we move further into the recovery. The taste of the upswing has been tantalizing, but the path is still strewn with obstacles and challenges, as we pursue that ascension into economic recovery.

What a tough few years. We have done everything to survive - cut our staff, extended our Vendors, held off on renovation and upkeep, trimmed our advertising and marketing - all not quite to the bone, but pretty close. Now, we see some light and have some decisions to make about how we move forward with our Brand(s).

Everyone shares the same lament - "due to the economy, I am holding firm on any activity or investment". The sentiment is understood. We hear this from Gaming, from Lodgings and Restaurants, Entertainment and Recreation, and from Retail. But, consider the counter argument- **this is exactly the opportunity to shine and gain momentum and market share.** Do not be left behind!

This is the time for re-engagement of our resources and market. That expression, "Grease Those Skids" is very appropriate, for we have to roll that load, ride that cresting wave, to a loftier plane, where we are the Brand of Choice. Some times, it must seem just like Sisyphus, pushing that boulder up the hill, only to have the massive rock slip from his grasp and hearty shoulder and begin a descent. The downward momentum is slowed, and he begins the process, again - faithful to his objective (actually, he was cursed). Most of us feel the same way - tired, frustrated, even anxious - yet we know what we must do to recreate the Memorable Customer Experience for which we were, once upon a time, known.

The first consideration would be our Standards. Attention to them has lapsed, and **our service, product and facility(ies) need a thorough review and new commitment.** Then, we need an evaluation of that effort to ensure that our message is consistent with what we have promised. Did we deliver? In-depth Quality Assurance and certainly the use of Mystery Shoppers will give you immediate Feedback from Professionals. The most telling response will come from your Customers and Guests, who want you to succeed. Bring them back into the fold and solicit their Feedback, act upon their considerations, and let them know you appreciate their contribution and business.

Next, we need to look at our staff, those Ambassadors of the business. They probably feel spent and unappreciated, as well, for we have downsized them, expected more from them, radically altered schedules in our attempt to keep the business afloat. Pretty beaten-up! Not a great mood out there, yet we depend upon them to deliver the message - a disconnect which needs to be addressed.

Here are some ideas: Many employees feel like casualties in today's workplace, and smart employers will engage some type of "Survivor Training" - ramp up the communication, tell the truth

but share your strategies, always accentuate the positive, recognize good performance, reward excellence through affinity programs (everyone knows the budget is tight - be creative, and show you actually care), and become visible (leave your desk). Naturally, you will also want to reinstate some training and development programs to bring their skills back up to speed, provide some motivation and certainly support your new invigorated Standards.

Lastly, how do we get our message out? We have tapped into our data base of Customers, we have solicited Feedback, tightened our operation, and we have reengaged our employees. Now, **we must re-look and perhaps re-think how we communicate with the marketplace**. Most everyone is wired, yet inundated with too much information from too many sources - our phones, our PC's, our radios, TV's and print. Pow, bam, bombarded! Beyond favorable word of mouth, you have marketing resources available to create the research and plan the strategy, select the promotional vehicles, and begin to introduce your Brand again to that hungry marketplace. Targeted advertising through Press Releases, ads and general interest articles help spread the word!

If only Sisyphus had our POA. Why, he'd be sitting atop the mountain, enjoying a cup of nectar with a winsome maiden. He was doomed, however to his toil, but we are not. Align your resources and move forward (and upward) decisively to the goal - the Memorable Customer Experience.

By Ragsdale Hendrie, Hospitality Performance

The author believes that Remarkable Service is the portal to the Memorable Customer Experience. Seek solutions at: www.hospitalityperformance.com

Date: 2010-11-08

Article link: <http://www.tourism-review.com/on-the-way-to-recovery-news2481>