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Everyone Should Strive For 'Doing Better Than That'

By Denver Severt
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Excellent service enhances the quality of life both for employers, employees and consumers – it is universally beneficial.

So how can we ensure that when something succeeds, it is repeated? And how do we make sure that when something goes wrong it is fixed and the poor design is changed to prevent it from happening again? Or when the problem is beyond repair, how do we make the most of the distasteful service experience?

As a researcher, teacher, keynote speaker and service management consultant, I have the opportunity to walk deeply into the field of service. The walk offers a chance to wear my “service glasses,” which provides greater understanding of situations. Maybe what these “discerning eyes of service” see can help consumers, business owners and service providers.

The discerning eyes of service are not judging. They simply see service unfold in millions of steps similar to a slow-motion film scene. This clears and magnifies service like a dissection. The new magnified sight reveals opportunities for what I call the philosophy of Doing Better Than That, or DBT² for short.

Though service engineering and design are essential, the root of service is based on personal experiences. Studying personal experience and the engineered systems together help forge improvement. Typically we judge what we receive based on some moment, experience, advertisement or past event. If the current product or service improves from the past standard, that creates a genuine transformational-service experience of DBT².

Some personal examples of DBT² enhancing service:

- On a rainy Sunday morning at a Bojangles', I opened my steamy chicken buttermilk biscuit. The steam just reached my nose when Shirley, a Bojangles' employee, walked up to the table. With a sincere smile, gentle, gracious tone, and professional-yet-personal body language, she said: "Good morning. I came to say 'Welcome.'" The biscuit, the steam, and Shirley's welcome, in perfect unison, transformed the chicken-biscuit experience into an unforgettable moment. DBT² plus.
- For a car wash at Mr. Big's, I pulled forward to choices (\$3, \$4, \$5, \$10 and \$20). Next, I proceeded through the wash, and arrived at 24 beautifully maintained, endlessly humming vacuums. They were all without timers, and included in the initial price. Instantly, I was loyal. I did not expect a car vacuum could be a transformational experience, but there were no worries about wrapping the vacuum cord or wasting time finding more coins. Vacuum and wash your ride for a reasonable price with no pressure. Systematic DBT².
- At a mall I saw 92-year-old Henry meet Ida at Panera Bread. I overheard Ida mention she had not been to her favorite store, JCPenny, in five years since she started using a walker. Henry, in his electric wheelchair, smiled widely and said climb on. Ida got on and Henry drove the two of them through the mall to the store. A truly transformational-service experience! Not just for them but for everyone watching. DBT² from a non-customer, non-service provider.
- Sometimes the value of a DBT² experience can be a precious moment to hold onto forever. At a neo-natal intensive care unit, the physician held my 3-day-old son, Noah, to administer medication that would allow his last breaths to be more peaceful. In the next few moments, before passing into eternity, Noah turned his head and looked directly into his mother's eyes for one last look. Though a tragedy, this became a wonderfully transformational experience. Noah could not be saved, but his last moments were magnified forever in time for family. For the doctor, I call this a grace-under-fire element of DBT².

Service situations vary greatly due to the people, process, and product value of the service experience. Experts can create service systems, but what produces a transformational-service experience is discretionary innovation on the part of the service personnel working along with the system. Usually, DBT² experiences are not costly to the business and include simple discretionary actions. For example, the way Shirley welcomed me to Bojangles'.

DBT² service is linked to a more productive economy and a better functioning world. For the business entity, the service provides a large return to the company by transforming a returning consumer into another payment for the business. For

consumers, DBT² experiences improve and enhance life through making transactions and interactions enjoyable, hassle-free, and a value enhancement.

DBT² experiences will keep you returning to wonderful greetings and more chicken biscuits for breakfast, and to humming vacuums for a stress-free clean car. They will let you witness random acts like that of Henry. And for those situations that may not be pleasurable business visits, you will seek those who understand skillful orchestration of care.

For service providers, it is always necessary to ask: What could we do today to allow someone to experience a transformational DBT² service experience?

For everyone in general, try the discerning eyes of service and see how you can improve DBT² in your own acts, opportunities and deeds.

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