

STRATEGY # 1: REMEMBER EVERYONE IS IMPORTANT (Part 2)

If you want your employees to deliver excellent customer service, you'd better provide them with excellent leadership – qualities such as listening, coaching, recognizing people's efforts, and giving people decision-making authority. The customer doesn't come first; *leadership* comes first.

4. **Greet people sincerely.** Some leaders get so wrapped up in their work and in projecting a commanding image that they walk right past people without acknowledging them or worse yet, acknowledging only some of them – usually the same ones day in and day out. I always stopped to say hello to as many Cast Members as I could. I'll never forget the look on their faces when I asked how their husbands and wives were or when I remembered where they had been born or that a child had recently gone off to college. I also remember the wounded expression of an employee who told me that her manager of ten years did not know whether she had a son or a daughter. It would have made a tremendous difference to that woman's work performance if her boss had shown a genuine interest in her family. As the old saying goes, "People will not remember what you said, but they will remember how you made them feel."
5. **Reach out to everyone on your team.** Everyone wants to be heard and respected. It's one of our most basic human needs. But hearing all voices is not just vital for building morale and self-confidence; it's a crucial source of information for you as a leader. By reaching out to everyone on your team, you gain the benefit of a variety of perspectives. Never underestimate the wisdom and resourcefulness of your frontline staff. After all, they're the ones in the trenches day after day seeing things you don't see and picking up information you can't possibly have. Let them know you appreciate their advice, even when it is the opposite of what you were thinking or something you disagree with or might not want to hear. Over the years I've seen countless examples of how involving people at all levels leads to continual improvement in productivity, innovation, and problem solving.
6. **Make yourself available.** Do everything in your power to be there for people when they need you. Like good parents, great leaders are always available. When something of concern to one of your people comes up, try to see him or her as soon as you can. That's the reason I include this essential tip in my time management seminars: Always leave blank spaces in your calendar to accommodate the unexpected, because the unexpected is often more important than the expected.
7. **Listen to understand.** Making yourself available is an empty gesture unless you genuinely listen. As Stephen Covey put it in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, "Seek first to understand, then to be understood." Too many leaders fail to stay focused on the person they're speaking with because they're thinking about something else or rehearsing what they're going to say next. Good leaders, on the other hand, take the time to let people express their thoughts completely. Yes, this requires patience. But it's vital to hang in there, because you never know when a glimmer of an idea might shine through.

"There's always going to be bad stuff out there. But here's the amazing thing – light trumps darkness every time. You stick a candle into the dark, but you can't stick the dark into the light."

Jodi Picoult

"Worrying gets you nowhere. If you turn up worrying about how you're going to perform, you've already lost."

Usain Bolt

"Culture must be reminded every day. The history gives us a starting point to learn from the past, produce in the present, and prepare for the future."

Kevin Eastman