

## STRATEGY # 4: CREATE MAGIC THROUGH TRAINING

After Hurricane Charley struck Orlando in 2004, I received a letter from a top executive of an insurance company that insured Walt Disney World Resort. By coincidence, he had been staying at Disney's Yacht Club and Beach Club Resort as the storm approached. Now he was writing to tell me how impressed he was by how Cast Members had hustled to take precautionary measures like tying down every loose item on the property. The insurance executive said he originally thought he'd seen a lapse in Disney's preventive planning – no one had secured the chairs and table on his terrace – but when he returned to his room from dinner, those items were sitting inside his room, along with a note saying they'd be returned to the terrace when the hurricane passed.

When an organization can perform that well in a crisis, it's because its employees have been thoroughly trained. Every single Cast Member at Walt Disney World had rehearsed the emergency preparedness plan many times, and all of them played their roles to perfection. That rigorous preparation not only saved lives and property but paid off financially. We opened for business the morning after the deluge, and we didn't even meet the deductible on the insurance policy.

Once you have the right people in place, your task as a leader is to give them everything they need to excel. My son, Daniel, once told me, "Dad, you can't fire your children; you have to develop them." Well, if leaders applied that wisdom to their employees, they'd find that a lot fewer of them quit or get fired. Like good parents, good leaders prepare their people to take on future responsibilities by providing appropriate educational opportunities and exposing them to important developmental experiences.

If you think that training and development are the exclusive role of human resources or some other department and that you are too busy to bother with them, you might want to rethink what it means to be a leader. Consider this story I'm fond of telling to managers. A father says to his daughter, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" She answers, "I want to be a teacher." The father says, "But, honey, don't you really want to be a doctor like me? Doctors are very important. Without doctors many people would get sick and suffer." "But daddy," says the little girl, "without teachers there would be no doctors!"

I assure you neither your personal success nor your paycheck will give you the same satisfaction as seeing the people you lead achieve their goals and aspirations. The leaders at Walt Disney World have found that to be true. Training and development permeate every level of the company; they are the primary reason the Disney brand is synonymous with service excellence.

*“I’m beginning to recognize that real happiness isn’t something large and looming on the horizon ahead, but something small, numerous and already here. The smile of someone you love. A decent breakfast. The warm sunset. Your little everyday joys all lined up in a row.”*

Beau Christopher Taplin

*“The joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives.”*

Russell M. Nelson

*“Integrity is choosing courage over comfort; choosing what is right over what is fun, fast, or easy; and choosing to practice our values rather than simply professing them.”*

Arthur Unknown