

COMMERCE

Ritz-Carlton demystifies customer culture for aspiring companies

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The Ritz-Carlton Naples, FL

By JOE MCCARTHY

The Ritz-Carlton is touting its hospitality credentials with a leadership center that promises to help organizations improve their employee culture.



The leadership center is able to attract companies in seemingly disparate sectors because strong customer service remains consistent across industries. Since business travel constitutes a portion of the brand's sales, the program also manages to paint The Ritz-Carlton in an endearing light.

"We really demystify what outstanding service is," Diana Oreck, vice president of Ritz-Carlton's **Leadership Center**, Washington. "There are so many companies that over-analyze it. At the end of the day we're all consumers and know that when we get great service, it's poetry in motion, it's choreographed ballet.

"We're no longer in a transactional economy and for 31 years The Ritz-Carlton has always been about creating unique, personable experiences, and now other industries are catching up, regardless of what industry they're in," she said.

"The difference between a satisfied and engaged customer is the heart and if you have a

satisfied customer, that's not competitive."

Like us

Not every company is able to persuade other organizations to emulate it, but The Ritz-Carlton has earned a certain amount of respect over the years for its customer service.

The company won two Malcolm Baldrige awards in 1992 and 1999, consistently ranks high in JD Power & Associates' awards and has received a host of other credentials.

Consequently, the brand decided to share its knowledge to raise customer service standards elsewhere. In the process, of course, the brand reinforces the notion that it has an excellent training program and should therefore be emulated, which heightens its reputation, pulls in more attendees and can potentially pull in more guests.



The Ritz-Carlton Community Footprints program

The brand offers a few options for companies to consider.

Full-day courses are offered at properties around the world that delve into the strategies of the brand and the behavior of its employees. These conferences aim to impart "actionable" insights from "leadership training professionals and expert advisors."

Two-hour, three-hour or six-hour presentations can be arranged by organizations.

Multi-day executive education programs are available to senior leaders who want to enact long-term positive change.

"The Ritz-Carlton Journey" goes through five steps, in five distinct programs, that help employees re-learn the basics of service delivery, anticipate guest wishes and become passionate about work, among other functions.

Companies can observe Ritz-Carlton employees in action during an event that includes two courses, an employee panel and a closing debrief.



The Ritz-Carlton kid's program

The brand will also send some of its leadership members for more than six months to monitor and advise a company that is undergoing major structural reformation.

The next course will take place April 29 in Mclean, VA, property. Companies can find out about enrollment and other information [here](#).

Also, the programs aim to boost engagement, productivity and efficient.

Companies from fields such as Healthcare, Automotive, Finance, Transportation, Legal, Energy, Technology, Retail, Fitness, Insurance, Human Resources and Hospitality have benefited from the program, according to the brand.

Behind the curtain

The hotel chain has increased its transparency in other realms as well.

For instance, The Ritz-Carlton expanded its efforts to help students around the world to pursue a fulfilling education by making its “Succeed Through Service” toolkit available to all.

Since the Succeed Through Service project launched with America’s Promise Alliance in 2009, the brand has helped more than 15,000 students. The persistence of children stifled in the United States educational system calls for influential companies to assist where they can ([see story](#)).

"A lot of giving great service is a mindset as opposed to giving money at it," Ms. Oreck said. "There are all kinds of things we can do, such as anticipating needs rather than just reacting."

Final Take

Joe McCarthy, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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