

Creating End to End Connections

Celebrity Cruises is a large cruise ship company which operates in Alaska, the Caribbean, the Galapagos Islands, Europe, South America and the Pacific. Founded in 1989, the company differentiates itself from other cruise lines by offering an exemplary customer service, outstanding dining and an on-board spa experience. They are consistently recognised as industry leaders and in 2003, Conde Nest readers deemed seven Celebrity ships among the top 10 large ships in the world. Many of the techniques that Celebrity staff use, are cost effective yet highly efficient.



This case study is based on a 7 night “Hubbard Glacier Cruise” which departed Vancouver and visited three ports and the Hubbard Glacier in South-eastern Alaska. The ship used for this journey was called the Mercury and catered for 2000 guests and 800 staff. I was fortunate to experience this cruise in July 2007.

Ensuring Comfort Prior to Arrival

Upon booking by phone or internet, we were asked to provide our postal and email addresses and details of our country and city of origin. We were then sent emails with details on a) how to find the Cruise Ship Terminal from the airport or port where we would arrive from; b) web links with FAQs; and c) embarkation forms for immigration to help speed up the embarkation process. A 1-800 help line was also provided to deal with any additional enquiries that we had.

In addition to this, we were also mailed a package of information which again outlined the location of the Cruise Ship Terminal and offered pre- cruise tours.

Learning People’s Names and Asking Questions which Show You Care

Celebrity staff went out of their way at all times- not just when it suited them- to make guests feel welcome. One of the most simple, yet effective techniques they employed, was to remember guests’ names and any of their regular habits. So, when wandering around the ship, we were often greeted by our names and asked how we were. Similarly, our likes and dislikes were remembered: this included things like the way we liked our coffee, any special dietary requirements we had, and things such as our need for babies bottles to be cleaned every morning. What we appreciated most was that once staff learnt our needs, they were often provided without any prompting. To us, this was exceptional service.

Checking up on Customers' Experience Mid- Journey

Part way through the journey, we met one of the staff, who had met us on Day One of the cruise, and remembered our names, despite not seeing us until Day Four. When we met, she asked, in a sincerely meaningful way, how we were finding the cruise. When the staff member asked this question, she sat down at our level and listened carefully to our comments, apparently without passing judgement on our thoughts.

The following day, we received a note under our hotel door thanking us for our frank thoughts and asking us to continue to pass on our thoughts on the Cruise. The note, which was typed but hand signed, finished by saying that guest satisfaction was a key priority to the company. It provided us with another opportunity to reflect on our experiences and served as a reminder for us to pass on any criticisms or issues to this particular staff member.

This technique ensured we were given the opportunity to express our thoughts and made us feel like our views really mattered to staff. It was such a simple technique, but one which we had never experienced before. From Celebrity's perspective, this technique ensured that staff had the opportunity to rectify any guest complaints during the cruise, rather than leaving guests feeling dissatisfied for the duration of the journey.



Keeping in Touch After the Journey's End

This simple and effective technique involved keeping in touch with Celebrity guests following the trip's end. Towards the end of the cruise, we were asked to fill out a feedback survey which covered aspects such as food, service, rooms and the cruise experience. Following this, we were- and continue to be- kept in regular email contact, with updates on new cruises, specials and Company news.

This cost effective technique means that should we decide to undertake another cruise, the Celebrity brand will be kept at the forefront of our minds.

How Can I Apply these Techniques to My Business?

Celebrity Cruises are a cruise line catering to the mass tourism market and thousands of guests. How can this relate to Tasmanian businesses in order to improve customers' experiences?

The answer is easily. Celebrity's techniques can be applied to a wide variety of tourism and at most time will cost very little to implement.

Ensuring Comfort Prior to Arrival

When guests book their experience with your hotel, B&B, tour, transport company or attraction, make sure that they know how to find you, before they leave their home or their accommodation. A package of information sent via email or the post, followed up with a thorough induction upon arrival, allows guests to orientate themselves and



feel comfortable, giving them more time to experience what you have to offer.

Learning People’s Names and Asking Questions which Show You Care

Staff inductions are excellent opportunities to teach your staff techniques to recall names. They are also a great opportunity to suggest that staff aim to remember one thing about guests during their stay/ tour / evening dinner and ask a question relating to that issue, in order to facilitate personal connections being made.

Checking up on Customers’ Experience Mid- Journey

Whether a day trip, ten day cruise, a food and wine experience, or a 7 day stay in an accommodation house, there are always opportunities to ask guests at the mid-point of their experience, how they are finding it. However it must be remembered that asking the question is only 50% of this technique to improve experience. Listening in a respectful manner is just as important, as this will ensure guests are made to feel that their thoughts are valid and that their experience is of primary importance.

Extending the Life of the Experience

This simple and cost effective technique simply requires that a guest database is created and held, and that guests are happy to be contacted by the company in the future. Guest details can be easily recorded at the booking stage.

