

Caterpillar Plows By Cayman Beach Resort

If a man drives a Caterpillar on a beach in front of a Caribbean resort and no one is around, does anyone hear it? The answer is quite likely a “yes.” Even if no one is on the beach, people in their rooms notice the sound and sight of a big machine not typically captured in Caribbean vacation advertisements.



On our second day at Morritt’s in the Grand Cayman, my husband and I witnessed a Caterpillar dodge through tourists on the beach on a beautiful Sunday. The driver clearly had some business to do on the property, but seemed more concerned about his construction assignment than the people on the beach. And when he finished his work, much to the surprise of the tourists, he rumbled out down the beach instead of the parking lot.



The Caterpillar scattered sand a few feet away from people soaking up the sun, interrupting their peaceful afternoon, and causing some of them to flee their chaise lounges for safer ground.



If Morritt’s Resort were ISO 9001 certified, something like this shouldn’t have happened. Managers committed to customer satisfaction have provisions in place to monitor customer experiences taking place on their property. They also have established processes to help ensure customers concerns are taken care of promptly and appropriately.

Not only did the hotel have a disconnect between management

and the maintenance crew, they also had a disconnect between the front desk and housekeeping staff. My husband and I discovered this through our pillow request. The first few days of our stay at Morrirt's, we made numerous calls to the front desk requesting more pillows, but never received them.

Finally we decided that we'd try talking directly with someone in housekeeping and we got some extra pillows within the hour. Most travelers expect to call the front desk if they need some toothpaste or extra blankets. It's an unwritten "standard" in the hotel industry. After we made repeated calls and nothing happened, we began to wonder if they cared about their customers.

When a customer expectation is not met, this is, in ISO language, a "nonconformity." I don't believe Morrirt's has a record of the pillow or Caterpillar nonconformities we experienced here. Although there are numerous wonderful things about this resort, I wouldn't come back a second time, and I wouldn't go out of my way to refer anyone. From the evidence I witnessed during my stay, they're not fully committed to continuous improvement or customer satisfaction and this is a deal-breaker in my book.

Ibis, an ISO 9001 certified hotel, is serious about customer satisfaction. Check out their 15 minute problem resolution policy. This type of policy fosters employee commitment to excellence which is key to building customer loyalty. It also provides a means for sharing common issues and documented best practices among their hotels throughout the world.

If you're interested in learning more about the benefits of ISO 9001 certification for your hotel, contact Dr Lorraine. Once you establish a culture of continuous improvement, your hotel will flourish in unexpected ways.

If you'd like to share a hotel story, I encourage you to post your rating and review on Expedia or Hotels.com.

Chipotle Serves Healthy Fast Food

Check out this great ABC News Nightline interview with Steve Ells, Founder of Chipotle Mexican Grill:

If you haven't already eaten at a Chipotle, take your next opportunity to try their fabulous food. It's the best tasting and healthiest fast food around! Ells cares about the food served at Chipotle from start to finish, literally, not only for the people, but also the animals. Much of the food served in Chipotle is organic as well.

Ten Great Reasons to Stall Your Advertising

Most people who see an advertisement in a restroom stall or urinal are likely to read it because they have at least a few seconds to spare and they're compelled to read just about anything in front of them, even graffiti.

In the image below you see several colorful examples from Midwest Indoor Advertising:

Here are ten reasons you should consider advertising in your restrooms (a.k.a. indoor advertising):

1. Entertain while building brand recognition.

2. Target men or women of specific age groups.
3. Hold audience captive for 30 seconds or more, longer than most other forms of advertising.
4. Get your message through to the young, the affluent, to those who are out spending.
5. Offer phone numbers, calendar events or web sites that people can enter directly into their PDA on the spot.
6. Reach specific geographic locations.
7. Provide compelling news or facts that motivate reader to take action.
8. Capture people when they don't mind taking the time to read, unlike telemarketing, web site pop-up windows, emails, and other less appealing forms of advertising.
9. Customize your ads to suit a number of target markets.
10. Utilize this cost-effective form of advertising in your restrooms even if you don't do it anywhere else.

If you're interested in finding an ad agency who can help you with indoor marketing, see IBAA's membership directory:
Indoor Billboard Advertising Association Membership Directory

Even if you don't have a big budget to advertise outside your business, consider placing ads for upcoming events or specials in your own restrooms. Kaibo Restaurant, Beach Bar and Marina at Rum Point in Grand Cayman hung framed cork boards on the back of their stall doors. Although they would look better if they were centered on the door, some signage is better than none. The off-center would, however, make more sense if the hooks were moved more to the right so that a hanging purse, beach bag or towel wouldn't cover the sign.

The font on the Kaibo sign below is too small. They should say less with bigger font and with more attractive graphics.

The small font on April Events Calendar from REI shown below could also minimize the impact of their message. It would make more sense to advertise specific events with eye-catching

photos in the stalls and place a larger calendar someplace else where people can read all the details. It would also be easier to keep the calendar more updated where the past weeks rolled off and only the upcoming four weeks were shown. I took this photo on April 27, a time when most of the April events were obsolete.

If you aren't utilizing indoor advertising and need advice on designing a customer communication strategy for your business, contact Lorraine@DrLorraine.net.

If you have more ideas about best practices for indoor advertising, feel free to share your comments.

Barba's Bioclimatic Approach Saves Energy

Javier Barba, principal architect with Estudio BC Architects in Barcelona, designs with respect for nature and its resources. His bioclimatic approach includes incorporating earth-sheltering roofs and harmonizing structures with their surroundings to take advantage of the local climate conditions and good views. His timeless buildings are positioned to take advantage of natural light while avoiding severe solar conditions. Learn more about his principles on this CNN interview:

Write Down Your Processes for Goodness' Sake

"Last time I was here, I had no problem swapping mashed potatoes for the French fries. So why is it a problem today?" a customer retorts with frustration.

"When I bought the car, I was told your service policy was to wash my car every time it comes in for service, but half the time, you tell me my car is ready, but I'll have to wait longer if I want it washed."

Sound familiar? Ever had the rules changed on you?

Are you familiar with the Telephone game in which one person whispers a message into the ear of the next person? The way this game goes is that a group of individuals form a circle and one person starts with the original news. The information is transferred from one person to the next until it goes all the way around the circle. As the message comes back around, the last person communicates out loud to the whole group—and laughter breaks out as everyone comments on what they thought they heard.

This is a favorite party game around the world because it illustrates how much each person distorts the message to the extent that the final message is often completely unrelated to the original. The larger the group, the more erroneous the message becomes. It's downright funny how unreliable verbal communication can be. In a game the result is laughter, but in business, the result is leakage!

Now imagine relying on verbal communication in a company with dozens of employees? How about hundreds of employees, or even thousands. People are talking—you can count on it! It's management's responsibility to ensure they're all sending the same message. If top managers want to allow substitutions, do

all of your employees permit customers to swap mashed potatoes for French fries? If it's your policy to wash *all* cars after servicing them, are you counting how many actually get washed? If these things aren't happening consistently, what impression do you think you're giving your customers?

So what does this mean to business owners and managers? It can be very expensive to count on verbal communication as the primary means of running your business. Verbal communication differs tremendously from person to person. Variability is the opposite of stability or standardization.

If every employee does things his or her own way, the customer ends up having a different experience each time he does business with you. Not only does your business success depend on putting standard practices into place, it also depends on being sure that they're getting carried out every day.

Variability means less predictability and more chaos for your employees and customers. If service or problem resolution is handled a different way each time it happens, customers become frustrated and typically even inform employees *how things were done around here the last time*. Erratic processes increase employee stress and lower customer satisfaction.

IBM Manager Bob Haataia suggests a good idea. Imagine the same circle game but with a new rule—the first person has to write the message on a piece of paper and read it quietly to their neighbor, then pass it on to the next person and so on, until it goes all the way around the circle. This game wouldn't be anywhere near as comical as the first because if everyone followed the rules, the first message would be exactly the same as the last. You can count on it. You can predict it. No game!

If you had 10, 100, or even 1000 people standing in a circle, they could discuss other matters amongst themselves until the written message got around to the last person because they

would already know how the game will end. It will end with everyone getting the same message. There's no confusion and no stress. If a company has well-written procedures and work instructions and employees are properly trained in carrying out these good practices, then the organization has a much better chance at promoting their brand by giving their customers a consistent experience.

God delivered us a message through his son, but he made sure that there were people around to write down the stories. He didn't leave it to chance. If God thinks it's a good idea, I choose to agree.

Some people may interpret the written words a bit differently, and if they do, you have the opportunity to discuss the instructions or procedures to make it more clear to everyone.

Do you have a company mission statement? Are your core business processes written down? Do they support your mission? Is everyone marching in the same direction without tripping over one another?

If you said 'no' to any of these questions and would like help in standardizing best practices in your company, contact Dr. Lorraine for a consultation. Together, we can put together plan for you to standardize and continuously improve your processes and your profitability.