

When in Rome...

Alan Williams is Director of SERVICEBRAND GLOBAL, a consultant operator and change agent focusing on the service sector (particularly retail, hospitality, leisure, professional services and facilities management). He supports organisations to create strong SERVICEBRANDS® by aligning strategy in brand identity, employee engagement and customer experience.



Ask people about their summer holidays and you'll find them talking a lot about SERVICEBRANDS® (service-based experiences rather than simply products). From the team at the hotel finding nothing too much trouble or the taxi driver offering a first-class service to the tour guide providing exceptional advice or the restaurant owner going the extra mile. It is SERVICEBRANDS® which create the impression of our holiday – not just the local sights and sounds. And the opposite also applies. How many times have you heard people complain about sulky and unhelpful airline staff or local police being unsympathetic when a wallet has been lost or stolen? It's our experience of service that generates the most comments and complaints – just read review websites such as TripAdvisor.

And so it was this summer when my family travelled to Frascati, just outside Rome, to celebrate our son's 21st birthday. It was neither the awe-inspiring Colosseum, the beautiful Villa Grazioli Hotel, nor the fabulous food at Pizzerferina that were the most memorable aspects of our visit. Instead it was the team at the hotel who were so helpful from taking a family photograph and keeping one of the rooms for late check out, to arranging tiramisu as a dessert birthday cake for six. It was the taxi driver who took us to Castel Gondolfo, opened the doors of the passenger seat so politely and took us, as a surprise, to a vantage point

with beautiful views across a lake. It was the knowledgeable guide at Santa Benadetta vineyard who demonstrated such a passion for the vineyard, "we treat our vines like sons". It was the Colloseum guide who knew we had already purchased tickets to the monument but still took time to recommend a local restaurant for lunch, and made sure we understood the directions. And it was the waiter at the Hosteria Nerone where we received a memorable greeting "Welcome, I have a table especially for you, the food is good...but the service is a bit undependable." Which wasn't true at all. All these small touches from SERVICEBRANDS® made for a memorable experience and reconfirmed the power of relationships over transactions.

Much has been written about service excellence and the customer experience, about brand attributes and personality, and the employer brand and employee engagement. But in the real world, these areas do not exist in isolation, they are inextricably linked. The SERVICEBRAND® concept is simple: it is all about managing a business holistically so that the brand, the employees delivering the service and the customer experience are aligned.

The bottom line

The people relationships element of service is a powerful force that is too important to ignore, even if it is more challenging to define and measure than transactions.

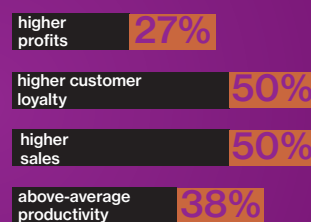


Source: Brookings Institution

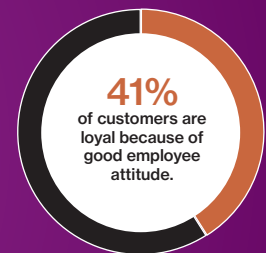


Source: Enterprise IG 2004 and Ken Irons, Market Leader

Higher than average levels of employee engagement also realized



Source: Gallup



Source: Enterprise IG 2004 and MCA Brand Ambassador