



## 'WOW': A HIGHER CALLING TO CUSTOMER SERVICE!

A few recent events have been on my radar and given me pause to reconsider what exactly a "Wow" customer experience is. Like good art, we all know it when we see it. But what goes into providing this kind of experience? And what helps us create a culture that sustains these experiences, so our customers (and future ones) keep coming back. Pretty timely notion; this past week, we had the pleasure of presenting awards to individuals throughout our workforce system who achieved great accomplishments, with the assistance and great services provided by our career center system. I was proud to see news of these winners distributed to all the press outlets throughout the state and in an upcoming NASWA bulletin. Two of these individual achievers were chosen by their WIA area leaders to be featured in the 2008 DWD Calendar. Great stories. But alas, it is also a week in which I had to respond to two legislators—one state, one federal—about reports of not-so-great customer service.



Roderick Nunn, CWDP

So what pragmatic steps can we take to identify and replicate 'Wow' experiences for our customers? One of the presentations at the Governor's Conference provided some information that may give us a start. Fred Firestone of the Ethical Selling Institute (shown below) presented a session called "WOWEDFactor<sup>SM</sup>: How to Build Significant Value through Employee/Customer Interactions." In the session, he defined the WOWEDFactor as "a personal experience a customer has with an employee of a business that is perceived by the customer to be so humanizing, engaging or connecting, that the customer's perception of that individual, and consequently the business, becomes significantly enhanced." Significantly enhanced...that fits well with the goal of our marketing



and improvement initiatives, to condition Missourians and businesses to see the Missouri Career Center brand as the place, both physically and virtually, where they receive "knock your socks off" customer experiences. Good customer service is not only the lifeblood of

organizational survival, it is the right thing to do. This is supported by some serious research. From the session: A much-quoted survey of consumer habits shows that 68% of all lost business results from the indifferent, uncaring attitudes of employees toward customers, and only 14% is lost because of product dissatisfaction. That's leaves only another 18% for the issues we can't control, like customers moving away or dying. Says Firestone, "A company can spend a lot of money on advertising, décor, mission statements and brochures. The ultimate influencer of service image, however, is the person with whom the customer is dealing." So, at the end of the day it's the transactions between our customers and front-line workforce professionals who influence our public image in ways that we can't fathom here in central office.

Let me digress a bit to say that I am convinced the ultimate form of customer service we can provide an employer is a skilled worker, and a job seeker, a family-supporting career. That's a high level view from the stratosphere and we know it's not quite that simple. As practitioners you have to engage and connect customers on a personal level before you can offer a talent solution. But it is important to keep our eye on the prize and know that if we get those ultimate forms of customer service correct, we will have also satisfied taxpayers and voters, the ultimate influencers in a republic.



As we have discussed, we face increasing pressures from policy makers as well as external competitors to deliver increased public value with limited resources. Consider the difficult question: If we did not have a captive audience of UI four-week reporters and TANF clients, how many consumers of our services would shop elsewhere? Well, if you are building a competitive brand on things like MoCRC, Alchemy SISTEM and other skill development solutions that Career Builder and Monster can not deliver, then have no fear!

Now back to the question of the higher calling of 'Wow' customer service. In the WOWEDFactor session, attendees received a continuum of value levels that illustrates this: The levels are 1) Ok, but seen it before; 2) Moving on up; 3) Impressive; 4) Really impressive; and 5) The Ultimate WOWED. Note how this scale starts with "Ok" (as opposed to Offensive or Abysmal.) Secondly, consider what it would take to make someone be "Ultimately WOWED," given how many customer transactions most people have in a given day...and given how much other work saturates our day (e.g. case notes, meetings, etc.).

Impossible? No, we do it regularly throughout our workforce system. Part of it is based on the fact that we often connect with people at a time in their lives when they are facing significant challenges, and are grateful for our services and compassion. It is also due in part to some terrific people we have, who are willing and able to do what it takes to 'Wow' customers. Let's look at several of those in the following section that is the first installment of our Workforce Weekly "local best practices" feature, suggested by the Conference Attendance winners.

## 'WOW' CAREER CENTER EXPERIENCES

### **Bugling Success in Springfield**

"At the Springfield Career Center, whenever we receive a call from a client and they have found employment, or they are here in the building and let us know they have gained employment, we sound the 'Bugle Charge' over our intercom, and the staff does the 'wave.' If we have clients at our desk they will ask what we are doing, and we explain to them. They enjoy it and hope one day they will hear that same bugle for them. For internal motivation, we have a trophy that we pass around to the staff when they have done an outstanding job. It is a big chicken on a stand, which customers will ask about!"  
- Tracy Polk, Springfield Career Center

### **Step-By-Step Help in Arnold**

"Linda Clark, of our Career Assistance Program, had a customer who came into the Arnold Career Center severely depressed. She had recently experienced a traumatic event in her immediate family and didn't even know where to start in reaching her goal of becoming a nurse. Linda encouraged her worked with her step-by-step as she completed her demanding prerequisites. She was accepted on her first try to enter the nursing program at Jefferson College, one of our One-Stop Partners in this region. When the last set of classes before clinicals was extremely demanding and anxiety threatened our future nurse, she called Linda for a pep talk instead of dropping out. Today she is working nights as an LPN at a highly-regarded residential and skilled nursing facility and continuing her education in order to become a registered nurse."  
- Debbie Wilson, Arnold Career Center

### **Making the Process Easier in Jefferson City**

"I have an informational page that I share with my customers. If they are not comfortable working with a

computer or if they are not familiar with the GreatHires page then they can use the instructions on the attachment. I go over the sheet with them to ensure that they understand how it works. This has been a very useful tool in the office here in Jefferson City. I feel that the customer wants to be more in control of their job search; however, I reinforce that if they need anything at all that is what we are here for. I use a highlighter to mark their user ID/password just in case the page is lost. I let the customer enter any specific user ID/password that they have and explain the importance of not losing the sheet."  
- Samuel Patterson, Jefferson City Career Center

### **Reuniting Mother and Son in Kennett**

"A woman came into the Kennett Career Center seeking assistance, and during assessment it was determined that she had been separated from her son, due to Hurricane Katrina. Doing some extra investigative work, I was able to reunite this mother with her son by way of my sister in Little Rock, since he had settled at a camp north of Little Rock, after they had gotten separated. We went to the camp and brought him to Camp Callahan in Kennett where they were reunited. I believe that it's okay to share a little of yourself when you provide the human touch with Career Center services."  
- Emily Modlin, Kennett Career Center

### **Overcoming Obstacles in the Ozark Region**

"A customer came in on August 1st and enrolled in CAP. He had recently lost his job and this was the first time he and his family had ever received assistance. He was eager to find employment—especially since his wife is expecting a child in mid-September! We helped him search GreatHires and other websites, and helped him with his resume. He was very discouraged, but I kept reminding him that



he would be successful in his attempts to obtain employment. He came to our Career Morning fair on August 20th and met with several employers. One of them was very impressed with his resume and asked him to come to their office and take a proficiency test. Due to his previous work experience, great test score, and wonderful interview, he starts work on September 10th as a Senior Customer Service Tech with Teletech. He is very excited and thanked me for my encouragement and help during his job search process.” - Hayley Kreymer, Springfield Career Center

**Sedalia: She was so good, we hired her.**

“Recently we had a young lady visiting our center searching for a job. She was very bright and, upon review of her resume, sounded like a good candidate for the Business Retention Specialist for the Workforce Development Board in Sedalia. We told her how to apply and on August 14, she revisited our office and was excited to say she had gotten the job with the Board! She said how grateful she was she had come in and we ‘had gone the extra mile’ to help her.” - Linda Collins, Sedalia Career Center

**Training Unites Job Seekers to Jobs in Kirksville**

“At a Workshop and Community Breakfast Meeting held at the Kirksville Career Center in June, we presented six Alchemy modules to attendees (shown below). Along with the modules, Career Center staff discussed job seeking skills, interviewing, job retention, career exploration, and also offered other employment assistance to those job seekers in attendance. Ten businesses attended the meeting, including Kraft Foods, Maritz Research, Northeast Missouri Health Council, Department of Corrections, Missouri Department of Transportation, Learning Opportunities, Securitas, Wal-Mart, Preferred Family Health Care and Home Depot. The businesses discussed with job seekers what they look for in an employee, current job openings as well as information about their business. The event was very much enjoyed by everyone and was a huge success!” - Cathy Collop, Kirksville Career Center



**Going the Extra Mile in the Central Region**

“A lady from rural California, MO received a letter to come in to the office and do her METP reporting. She found a ride to the Jefferson City Career Center and spoke to DWD workforce specialist, Jeanne Salmons. The customer’s name would not come up on the system due to a coding error, so Jeanne asked Functional Manager, Judy Widner, if there was any way that the coding problem could be resolved, since she did not have transportation and had to rely on a friend to bring her to the Career Center. Judy escorted the lady across the hall to the local FSD office, explained the situation, and the Jefferson City FSD worker contacted the Moniteau County FSD worker who corrected the coding error. The METP customer then went back to the Career Center escorted by Judy where Jeanne proceeded to enroll her into the METP program. Everyone was a winner! The coding was corrected in a timely and efficient manner, the customer was served without sending her back to Moniteau County and the Career Center got an enrollment into METP. WOW! Thanks Jeanne and Judy!” - Jan Vaughn, C-WIB Executive Director

**Helping a Vet at the Clinton Career Center**

“The Clinton Career center takes pride in connecting customers with whatever services are available to help them. We recently had the opportunity to do this in the case of a wounded veteran, who was recently discharged from military due to an injury in Iraq. Under the threat of losing their home in North Carolina, he and his wife had just moved to Missouri to be close to family. The vet’s wife came into the Career Center to look for work, willing to do whatever she could to keep them going. They had used what savings they had to purchase a small piece of property with a barn on it that they were converting to a home. It had no plumbing for a hot water heater, and needed work. In addition to helping with her job search, we were able to set up the vet with our local Vet Rep, who helped with getting his military disability processed, and connected the family to the local VFW and federal Vet Rep. We then found a local company that donated a hot water heater, and connected the family with someone in the Career Center who was able to assist them with food and Christmas presents, through her church. At the first of the year the veteran customer started receiving his disability, and last we heard, they were nominated for an “Extreme Home Makeover” by the local VFW! They appreciated that we helped them search for jobs, but they were more grateful for all of the other ‘extra’ services that they received.” - Radeanna Maples, MWDP, Clinton Career Center



## **Connecting with Businesses in Southwest**

“Joplin Career Center staff recently participated in a unique Business Expo sponsored by the Carthage Chamber of Commerce. The expo used a tailgate party theme and held it at the baseball field. Each exhibitor was asked to provide a question in advance; attendees were then asked to go to each exhibitor booth to obtain the answer to qualify for prizes. We asked, “How can GreatHires.org assist businesses in recruiting employees and job seekers in finding great jobs?” (If you look closely at the picture below, you can see they used the opportunity to generate brand awareness by including our new logo on the water bottles!) Events are being planned for both Joplin and Monett for Disability Mentoring Day, October 17, 2007. Individuals with a disability may apply for the opportunity to be mentored by a local business representative followed by lunch. In Monett, lunch will be provided at the Southwest Area Career and Technical School. In Joplin, lunch will be provided at the Missouri Career Center.” - Robert Ruble, DWD Regional Coordinator



## **Warren Wows in Washington**

“We recently served a newly-retired Army veteran who came into the Washington Career Center for employment assistance. OK Warren interviewed him and called Altivity, Inc. to see if he was qualified for a warehouse supervisor's position. Altivity normally requests a minimum of five years industrial experience, but OK discussed the customer's military leadership and other transferable skills. The employer's confidence in OK's understanding of their business's needs turned that relationship into a job for the customer. OK's track record was a WOW factor that provided employment for a veteran customer.” - Diana Voelker

## **An Amazed Customer in Hannibal**

“Our Career Center had a visit from a customer who had just relocated from the State of Michigan and was residing in a neighboring community. He commented when he sat down for his seated interview with a DWD worker how helpful everyone was and the number of jobs available on the GreatHires website. He was working part-time at a local fast food outlet and looking for full-time employment, within a reasonable commuting distance to save on fuel expenses. Following completion of METP registration as scheduled, job searches were completed and he was referred to a full-time position which just happened to be within walking distance of his home. Our customer was hired and has given a two-week notice to his part-time employer, and started immediately at the new job. He commented that he was amazed at the excellent service he had received on his visit to the Hannibal Career Center and surprised he was able to acquire work so quickly. He stated ‘They never treated me that good at ‘job service’ places in Michigan.’” - Rosalie Gulso, Hannibal Career Center

## **Powerful Testimonials**

To Carol Kerley, WFD Specialist, West Plains Career Center: “I just wanted to say thank you for all of the help you have given to me. So many people forget that a kind word, a compliment, or even just a sincere smile can brighten an otherwise dreary day! May all your dreams come true.”

To Rosalind Turner, St Louis Central Career Center: “As the Chairperson for the Social Service Ministry of the Berean Missionary Baptist District Association, I would like to personally thank you and your management staff for helping us to make our first Career Fair a success. Your expertise and knowledge is awesome. It was an honor to work and plan the Fair with you. You were enthusiastic the entire time as we planned the event which is geared toward helping and strengthening families. Your passion for this work made the job easier. There may have been some challenges, as this was our first time having a Career Fair, but touching 157 lives in my opinion, overrides any challenges that may have occurred.” Sincerely, Linda Mackey, Social Service Ministry, Chairperson

“Dear Nancy (Otte), Thank you so much for your assistance this morning with the complicated workforce information on the North County area. It will be very useful in the publication I am working on. I am excited about the program you are working on and hope we will be able to collaborate with you and the chamber on this important business retention/expansion project. I do think the municipalities would really benefit from knowing about the state advantages you plan on focusing on. You know how much I appreciate your help, you really are a

great asset on our Economic Development Committee.” Rebecca Zoll, Executive Director North County Incorporated

For a recent Kirksville Career Fair, Cathy Collop:

- "One of the best Job Fairs in Missouri for employers seeking qualified applicants. If you are an employer, you won't want to miss this one. If you are seeking employment this is the place to be." - Curt Devan, Director of Human Resources, Truman State University

- "This job fair has provided many quality applicants for us, along with giving us the opportunity to network with other local employers." - Amy Baumgartner, Kraft Foods

- "The Job Fair held by the Missouri Career Center made it easy for me to walk right up and talk to the employer I was interested in. The Career Center staff was friendly and directed me where I needed to go. It was so easy I didn't have time to get nervous thinking about what I needed to say when I picked up the application. I know this helped me to get the job!" - Nikki Hindman, Job Seeker

"This note of appreciation is long overdue. Our department had the great pleasure of working with Ms. Gretchen Vander Muelen, Ms. Lynette White, and Ms. Nancy Otte this past spring. We were given a large recruiting task with very limited time. These ladies were so gracious to us and ensured our task was successful. Please extend our gratitude for their hard work and excellent performance. It was such a pleasure working with them. We look forward to continued partnership with your division." -Sincerely, The Recruitment Staff for St. Louis Developmental Disabilities Treatment Centers.

In closing, I hope this will spark some discussion about providing more and greater 'Wow' experiences for our customers. Thank you very much for sharing your experiences that show that we can do it and show the way to implement it throughout our system. You provided so many stories, we couldn't get them all in this issue! If you are interested in finding out more about the WOWEDFactor, check out [www.ethicalselling.com](http://www.ethicalselling.com) or drop Fred Firestone an email at [firestone@wowedfactor.com](mailto:firestone@wowedfactor.com).

## **Q&A FROM ROD**

**Q. Creating “knock your socks off” customer experiences or the alternative: Which will it be...?**

A. The choice (and the consequence) is clear.



Or

