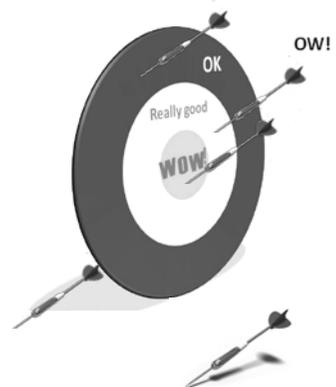


What enables most big **WOW** moments to happen are all the small, consistent **WOWs** leading up to them.

Chapter One: Setting the Stage for the **WOW**



Setting the Stage for the **WOW**

What makes us say **WOW**? Is it incredible athletic ability and accomplishment, such as that of Michael Phelps, the most highly decorated Olympic medalist to date? Maybe it is incredible artistic or musical talent, such as that of Jackie Evancho, the 10-year-old opera singer who burst onto the stage of America’s Got Talent in 2010, and recorded a debut album that went platinum when she was only 11. Maybe extraordinary forces of nature like Niagara Falls, or incredible feats of mankind such as fighter planes taking off and landing from aircraft carriers make you say **WOW**.

*Two Sides of the **WOW***

All of the above, and more, make us say **WOW**! There are many **WOWs** in big, wondrous, seemingly-impossible events, and in people that move and inspire us and then continue with their lives, as we continue with ours. They are outward manifestations that represent the “fun” side of the **WOW**. But they occur only sporadically, and their effects are fleeting. Let’s face it – if these **WOW** moments occurred all the time, they would cease to be **WOWs** because they would then

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be considered commonplace. So, as wonderful as these **WOW** moments are, we don't live our lives in them every day.

Rather, we live our lives in the more sedate side of the **WOW**, which may look less exciting at first glance, but is absolutely necessary in order for the fun side to exist. This is the side where our pride comes through, and where our dedication, commitment and expertise show us (or *should* show us) that we all matter, and that what we *do* matters, every single day. Everyone who helps create the fun side of the **WOW** knows that the critical factor that allows those moments to happen is what is done leading up to them. It is in the actions taken by the entire team to create small **WOW**s on a daily basis, to be the absolute best they can be and to get the absolute best out of everyone around them. As a result, we must continuously strive to be better, more skilled and more creative in order to produce the next fun **WOW** that will impress an increasingly sophisticated audience.



Ironically, the seemingly sedate side of the **WOW** can actually be more fun, because this is where we get more opportunities to make a difference more often, more consistently, and with more long-lasting effects. How great does it feel to help a customer solve a problem and know that you just made their experience (and their day) a little better? Or to offer someone a few kind words of praise or encouragement that make them feel a little better about themselves? Or to teach someone a new skill or mindset that helps them go on and build a better life? That's where the true **WOW**s are: in helping each other and making our world a better place.

And why do we work hard to create **WOW** products and services? To help others be more successful, make life more comfortable and

make needed goods more accessible, convenient and affordable. Of course making money is a crucial part of the equation, but most often it begins with trying to make something better for someone else.

But it takes work. Think about it: Michael Phelps didn't become the most highly decorated Olympic athlete in history without practicing every day for years to become the best he could be. And what would have happened if the people who made the time clock used in one of his crucial races had come to work the day it was manufactured saying, "*I'm tired today. So what if it's off by 1/100th of a second?*" (Phelps came from behind and beat one of his competitors by 1/100th of a second to earn one of his gold medals in 2008.)

A space shuttle doesn't just go to the moon and return safely without an entire team of people striving every day for years to ensure near-perfection at the moment of truth and every step of the way as that feat is accomplished.

And customers and associates are not completely impressed by their experiences with an organization unless all of its people focus on creating **WOWs**; not just on some days, but *every* day.

*The Difference Between a Workplace and a **WOWplace***

What is a **WOWplace**, and how is it different from an ordinary workplace? To reiterate the definitions provided on the first page of this book, here is my definition of each:

Workplace	WOWplace
A place where EMPLOYEES HAVE to go because they make a PAYCHECK	A place where PEOPLE LOVE to go because they make a DIFFERENCE

TURN YOUR WORKPLACE INTO A **WOWPLACE**

In a workplace, you find employees who are grateful just to have a job . . . any job! They often don't care what it is or how they do it, they're just there for the paycheck.

In a **WOWplace**, you find people (not just nameless, faceless, employees) who are thankful to have *this* job, at *this* company, with *these* people! In a **WOWplace**, people care about delivering **WOWs** to each other, inspiring them to deliver **WOWs** to their customers. Of course, they still care about and need the paycheck, but they also care about doing the job right and find ways to earn their paycheck in a manner that benefit everyone around them, no matter what title or position they hold.

Contrary to popular belief, creating the **WOW** isn't just about big, flashy one-time actions that create fleeting impact and then are gone. Not that those big flashy **WOWs** are not appreciated and needed. After all, they are often what attract people to you – customers and associates alike.

But you also need the small, everyday, consistent **WOWs** that create lasting impact on everyone around you. You need **WOWs** in every single interaction with associates and customers, because *that's* what gets them to stay with you.

*Three Components of Creating and Delivering the **WOW***

Creating the **WOW** is not a one-time action. We can't simply create an experience, deliver it once, and consider our job done. It is an ever-improving process for surprising and delighting our customers and each other on a regular basis. We must guard against creating **OW** experiences for our customers or associates by allowing them to feel that we are taking them for granted, or that they are just another number.

*Setting the Stage for the **WOW***

To do this, we focus on three distinct components of creating and delivering the **WOW**:

Creating It: we must find ways to keep moving forward with new **WOWs**, such as offering new products and services, finding new ways in which to offer and deliver them, or discovering ways to improve what we currently offer to keep up with the ever-changing needs and desires of our customers.

Sustaining/Maintaining It: we must find ways to keep it fresh in order to continuously provide the same exceptional experience each and every time, to each and every person with whom we interact.

Improving/Building Upon It: we must constantly create new **WOW** experiences, rather than allowing everything (or anything – even a **WOW!**) to stagnate and go from **WOW** back to ordinary.

*Creating the **WOW***

The first step is creating the **WOW** in the first place. This is where we take a situation that is an **OW** experience, and find ways to turn it into a **WOW**. It is where we:

- ⦿ Identify the current experience and all of its elements.
- ⦿ Identify areas for improvement.
- ⦿ Brainstorm ideas to provide customers with something new (or something old they've been asking for that we could not – or just did not – provide before, but can now).
- ⦿ Analyze the ideas for anticipated impact, feasibility, financial impact, and potential unintended consequences.
- ⦿ Develop, train, implement and reward the ideas that can be implemented now, and identify ideas for possible implementation later.

TURN YOUR WORKPLACE INTO A **WOW**PLACE

*Sustaining/Maintaining the **WOW***

This step is where we review the **WOW** for processes, procedures, mindsets, and motivation to enable our associates to deliver a consistent experience every time. Through this process, we look for areas where any experience could differ from one occurrence to the next, from location to location or from customer to customer, creating inconsistencies that hurt our brand. It is also the step where we seek ways to breathe new life into repetitive actions to keep them fresh, even when we have done them “a million times.”

In order to accomplish this, we have got to make the **WOW** part of our culture, part of everything we say or do. Why are Disney associates called “Cast Members?” It is to help them focus on the fact that they are always “on stage.” Imagine going to Disney World, Sea World, or a Broadway show and enjoying the experience so much that you return at a later date to enjoy it again, maybe bringing others with you this time. But instead of the same experience you had on the first trip, the second trip is ho-hum, drab, or even just average, simply because the people delivering the experience have done it 3,753 times before and are just tired of it.

This is not the experience you have anticipated for months! It is not the one you raved about to your friends, who were expecting that same **WOW** experience, only to get something that’s “pretty good, but certainly nothing to write home about.”

Not only that, but imagine an associate or actor asking you to, *“Please understand that I’m just tired of doing this. Imagine if you had to play the same role over and over again every night for seven years. You wouldn’t be able to do it, either!”* Would you understand and say, *“We just paid \$10,000 to be here for the week (or \$400 to see this show), and it’s not what we wanted. But hey, you’re tired of it, so that’s all right!”* Of course not! No one would expect you to do so,

Setting the Stage for the WOW

and you would probably want compensation for the disappointment and cost, wouldn't you?

This concept is especially difficult when the **WOW** experience is being delivered to children. How do you ask a child to understand that it was not as good this time because *“Barney is tired (of being Barney!)”* or because *“you’ve already been here and ‘know the drill’ so it’s not new to you anymore. Therefore, you can just go ahead and I’ll be here if you need anything.”* All they know is that it is not the same, and they are disappointed.

What seems like “nothing new” to the people providing the experience is perceived very differently by those expecting it.

Service Provider's Perception	Customer's Perception
This is nothing new; you've been here before – you know the drill. Just go ahead and do it again. I'll be around (somewhere) if you need anything.	I don't matter; I'm not special any more. I only mattered the first time I came here. Why are they ignoring me?
Why do I have to go through it all over again the same way, as if it's brand new?	Why aren't I being treated the same way as before? What's changed?
It won't be as much fun because they already know what to expect; it's not new any more.	It's not as much fun as it was the first time; it's not the same.

By not providing the same experience as the first time because it is not new anymore, the service provider actually creates a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is not as much fun – not because it is no longer new to the customer, but because the service provider changed the experience

TURN YOUR WORKPLACE INTO A **WOW**PLACE

and made the customer feel differently (less special) than they felt the first time around.

Another interesting way to illustrate this point is to think of a favorite song. You know the tune and all the lyrics; you even know the special way that artist sings it. You buy the CD and listen to it until it is figuratively worn out! Years later, the artist goes on a comeback tour to perform his greatest hits. You buy tickets to the concert and eagerly await that “signature” song. But when the artist sings it, he changes it because he is tired of the way he sang it 10 years ago, or because he’s thought of a cool new way to sing the song (and assumes his audience will think it’s cool, as well).

Bad assumption! Turns out, that is not what you – the fan – wanted to hear! You wanted to hear every nuance of the song you grew up with, the song that was played on your first date, or at your wedding, or when you needed to be re-motivated as you prepared for a 5K run.

The reality is that the artist was focusing so much on what he wanted to do and how he wanted to do it that he lost sight of what his fans really wanted to hear and how they wanted to hear it. But if we want to design and consistently deliver **WOW** experiences, we need to remember that it is not about us. It has to be about them, about what the other person wants, not necessarily what *we* want. It is wonderful when our desires mesh with our customers’ desires, and we are all satisfied. But sometimes we just have to “turn that dial” from everyone’s favorite radio station: WIIFM (What’s In It For Me?) to WIIFY (What’s In It For You?), even if it is not exactly our favorite thing or our favorite way.



WIIFY

*Improving/Building Upon the **WOW***

This is the final component, which focuses on how we keep improving our services and products to avoid becoming complacent and stagnant, thereby allowing competitors to surge ahead of us. In this step, we find ways to:

- ⊙ Continue filling the current needs of our customers and associates, but do it more effectively, efficiently or profitably.
- ⊙ Build upon existing products and services to fill new needs that arise.
- ⊙ Satisfy new and existing needs in more creative ways, providing better experiences for everyone involved.

By employing brainstorming and other idea-generation methods, including listening to customer complaints and requests to discover where they want us to improve, we cull **WOW** ideas, brainstorm ways to make them a reality, and implement them properly and thoroughly, keeping associates excited and engaged, and customers coming back for more.

Although creating, improving and building upon the **WOW** is not always easy, probably the most difficult component of creating and delivering the **WOW** is sustaining it, being able to consistently create **WOW** experiences for each and every customer, day in and day out – without letting up – because if you let up, you let customers down. In fact, in many industries, inconsistency is one of the biggest drivers of customer dissatisfaction.



The same is true with regard to how all associates consistently treat each other. What happens when you never know how someone is going to react to something you have said or done? Will he take offense? Will she get upset or angry over nothing? Will he smile and laugh over a small mistake, forgiving you because he understands that

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we all make them, or will he rant and rave, humiliate you in public, and possibly even get you fired?

*The Vital Importance of Consistency in the **WOW**place*

Consistency is critical to maintaining a **WOW**place because you can't **WOW** anyone if no one ever knows what to expect from you. The following story aptly demonstrates what happens when people do not know what to expect.

Case in Point:

I was in a store one day, when a woman and her son came down the aisle. The boy stopped in front of a toy that caught his eye and he started asking his mother for it. She said, "No." He asked again . . . and again . . . and again. The mother kept denying his request until finally, after about the sixth time he asked, she slapped his backside.

He burst into tears, not from pain but from shock. The woman said, "*What are you crying for? I said 'No'.*" to which her son replied, "*Well, how did I know that this time you meant it?*"



Out of the mouth of babes. Apparently, this mother and child had a history of her telling him "no" but changing her mind if he persisted enough. As a result, the child didn't know when he had crossed a line and gone too far. I'm sure many of us can relate.

This is a great example of what happens when people are inconsistent in their words, behavior, or reactions. It does not just apply at home with our children, but everywhere we go, including the workplace. Erratic, inconsistent or unpredictable behavior from leaders creates an atmosphere of distrust that can permeate a workplace and cause associates to be reluctant to proffer creative ideas, either to solve problems or advance innovation. Thus, consistency is impera-

tive, since associates are responsible for delivering the experiences requested and expected by their leaders.

*Do You Have Workers, **WOW**ers . . . or **OW**ers?*

Let's face it: we can talk about creating **WOW** experiences all we want, but if all our **WOW** services are not delivered in **WOW** ways, by **WOW** people, with **WOW** attitudes, they are inconsequential. An ordinary workplace will never turn into a **WOW**place without **WOW** people.

Therefore, we must take inventory: Who is in our organization? Do our associates "bind" customers to us through their words and actions, or do they drive them away through apathy (at best) and disrespect (at worst)? Do we have a workplace with workers and **OW**ers? Or do we have a **WOW**place with **WOW**ers?

We all know people (inside and outside of the workplace) who are **OW**ers – people around whom we have to "walk on eggshells" because we never know how they will act or react. It is that very randomness and inconsistency that cause uncertainty and fear. There is no room in the **WOW**place for either.



But a **WOW**place has **WOW**ers – people dedicated to creating the **WOW** at every opportunity, in every interaction. **WOW**ers are people who can be counted on to consistently remain focused on treating others with respect, and as valued human beings – often even when the other party is not behaving respectfully. They keep their eye on the goal, which is to solve a problem, rather than try to disrespect someone else because they have lost control of their emotions, and often their tongue.

What makes someone a **WOW**er? Everyone shows their **WOW** in different ways, and the "test" is not how outgoing someone may or

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may not be. I have seen many gregarious people give “lip service” to being **WOW**, but cannot be counted on to actually do it. And I’ve seen many very quiet and shy people who would go to the ends of the earth to help others.

The **WOW** is not in appearances. In fact, how often do we admire someone because of an incredible talent such as acting, singing, or skateboarding, only to find out that the person underneath the incredibly **WOW** surface is not so **WOW** after all? The **WOW** is in people’s hearts and their attitude and willingness to go the extra mile to help others succeed. **WOW**ers are people who can be counted on to make others feel safe, valued, respected and engaged. And *that* is accomplished one small **WOW** at a time.

This does not mean **WOW**ers are perfect. They have their moments, just like everyone else. However, because they are much more in control than not, they are more easily forgiven when they behave “out of character” and create an **OW** rather than a **WOW**.

There are several important factors that make people **WOW**ers, including the fact that:

- ⊙ They are secure enough not to be threatened by the **WOW** actions of others, but recognize and reward those actions, rather than trying to take credit for them.
- ⊙ They do not believe that acknowledging others’ accomplishments diminishes their own.
- ⊙ They never act as though they are too “cool” to be **WOW**ed by – and acknowledge – the actions of others; to laugh or chuckle at a joke, to smile at a kindness or to praise someone for a job well done.
- ⊙ They never think they are the only **WOW**ers in the world, but realize that great ideas can come from many sources and are willing to keep an open mind to suggestions from others.

*Setting the Stage for the **WOW***

So, how do you develop a process where you can create **WOWs** – and not **OWs** – *by design*, and not *by mistake*, making it a vibrant and integral component of your culture?

*Creating the **WOW** is a Matter of Will*

Whether you need to go from **OW** to **WOW**, find ways to consistently keep the **WOW** going, or discover ways to ramp it up in your company, leaders and associates must answer one crucial question: “*To **WOW** or not to **WOW**?*”

This is the question everyone must ask with every interaction with co-workers, bosses or customers. The question every leader must ask is how to inspire their associates to *want* to **WOW**, rather than simply maintaining the status quo or doing just enough to get by . . . maybe. The crucial element to address is that associates will only be motivated to create **WOWs** for others when someone else cares enough to create **WOWs** for *them*.

Creating the **WOW** is a matter of will:

Will I

Or

Won't I

“Will I or won't I do what is absolutely necessary to satisfy this customer's needs, or enhance my co-workers' ability to do their job effectively, or even just make someone's day a little more tolerable – and even enjoyable?”

The answer to this one question reveals our willingness and ability to **WOW** everyone around us. Consistently answering this question with “I Will” means the difference between sporadically doing a great job, and regularly doing such an excellent job that it becomes predictable and reliable, and turns into a **WOW** for every customer and colleague we encounter.

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Thus, it is important to hire the right people for the position, not only in terms of the hard skills and experience they possess, but for their mindsets and attitudes. Are they flexible? Are they willing to learn and grow? How well do they get along with others? Are they willing to go the extra mile for their customers and their co-workers? Are they a good fit for the position and its responsibilities? Do they possess the emotional maturity and people skills to be successful?

These are not new concepts or questions, but often people are dazzled by hard skills and experience, and assume that the attitudes and mindsets either must be there, or are not so important because the person has already achieved a measure of success.

But if we are trying to create a **WOW**place, we are not talking about simply achieving a measure of success. We are talking about achieving the highest level of success. Many companies focus on asking prospective associates about their “can do” attitude, when what they *really* should be asking about is their “will do” attitude. “*Can do*” focuses on skills. “*Will do*” focuses on attitude. And attitude is everything.



*Going From OW! To **WOW**!*

Everything we collectively do creates either a **WOW** – or an **OW** – experience for our customers and fellow associates. But what we do after the first **WOW** or the unexpected **OW** allows us to either **WOW** them by proving what we are made of, or **OW** them by fulfilling their lowest expectations.

Think of a time when something went wrong with a product or service you had purchased. When you called the company to inform them of the problem, what did you expect them to do? You expected

them to fix it, of course! This is only natural. In fact, when you called the company, your Real hope was that they would “make it right” – at *their* cost and *your* convenience – not the other way around.



But does this always happen? Unfortunately, more often than not the answer is a resounding NO. Newspapers and the Internet are rife with stories of customers having to deal with companies selling products and services that fail to deliver on their promise, cause customers pain or inconvenience, and whose representatives are not empowered to “do the right thing” to “own” and correct the problem. Whether due to ignorance, incompetence or indifference, the actions of these representatives are usually the cause of the biggest OWs and cost companies current business as well as future referrals and repeat business.

In addition to ensuring that associates possess and maintain a “*Will do*” attitude, on the next page is a simple template that will help associates create **WOWs** by design.

*Aim for the **WOW!***

The template uses a familiar shape to guide your thinking in order to analyze and improve any situation and go from OW to **WOW**. It helps you conduct a gap analysis to determine where disparities exist between the current experience and the desired one.

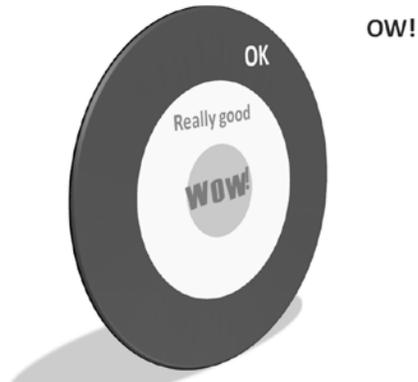
Imagine that every interaction you have with another person is like a target. Your goal is to **WOW** them, and the **WOW** is the bull’s-eye. An OW experience occurs when you miss the target altogether. In between the “OW” and the “**WOW**” are experiences that can be described as “OK” and “Really good.” These are the areas where average companies and their associates operate. **WOW**places operate

TURN YOUR WORKPLACE INTO A **WOW**PLACE

in the bull's-eye, with every associate focused on the ultimate goal of creating **WOWs** with every action and interaction.

You will notice that the actions that get you closer to the bull's-eye often start with the knowledge of what creates an **OW**, as well as building upon the actions that make up the “hits” on the outer rings of the target.

For example, to create a “Really good” experience, we do what is considered “**OK**” (the bare minimum) and change it or add another action to it. To create a **WOW** experience, we take what was done to create a “Really good” experience and add even more actions to that.



- OW!** You missed the mark altogether (didn't even try; didn't make the bare minimum).
- OK** You did the bare minimum.
- Really good** You're getting closer, but it's not really a **WOW** yet.
- WOW!** You've really hit the mark! It's hard to hit it, but well worth it when you do.

To hit the bull's-eye, we must ask ourselves a crucial question for each aspect of the interaction: Will this create a **WOW** or an **OW**? For example, ask yourself: *Is my goal on the telephone to put a customer in his place because he is treating me badly? Will I allow myself to be*

*dragged into a power struggle with this person, lowering my standards and behavior to match his? Is it really about me? Or will I keep my eye on the goal and try to turn that situation around by creating a **WOW** for him and a win for me and my company? Is my goal with a co-worker to humiliate her in front of her peers by calling out what she did and chastising her publicly, or is it to help her do her best on the job by coaching and encouraging her in the right direction, privately correcting her on what she could do differently in the future when she makes a mistake?*

Watching For and Performing Gap Analysis Must Become Second-Nature

Rather than being limited to certain situations (after a negative customer event) and certain groups of people involved in the organization (external customers), gap analysis must also occur in the normal course of business. This means that questions are asked:

- ⊙ Ahead of time, in anticipation of group and individual interactions that have the potential to **WOW**.
- ⊙ Every time an interaction between two groups or individuals occurs.
- ⊙ When positive and negative customer events occur.
- ⊙ With relation to internal and external customers alike.

To help you make this analysis an easily doable part of your culture, a copy of the full target template, as well as questions to guide your brainstorming as you use it, are contained in the final chapter of this book, **WOW** Tools and Templates. As you go through the book, these concepts will be brought back and applied in each chapter in order to demonstrate and give you practice with how the template may be used in every situation to create **WOWs** for others.

TURN YOUR WORKPLACE INTO A **WOW**PLACE

*The **WOW** is Often in the Nuance*

Everything we do contributes to someone's experience. It is in all the little things that don't seem to mean anything separately, but when added together create one big experience. Sometimes it is in something someone says or does; sometimes it is in what they do *not* say or do.

The following stories epitomize the nuances that can help us create **WOW** experiences for everyone around us.

The **WOW** is Not Always in the Answer, But in Ownership of the Situation

Case in Point:

I once had a problem with my bank account and called to find out what happened. The representative didn't know, but offered to check on it and call me back within a day or two.

Late in the afternoon on the second day, she called to inform me that she hadn't gotten an answer yet, but didn't want me to think she'd forgotten about me. She just wanted to ease my mind and tell me she planned to keep trying and hoped to have an answer by the next day. **WOW!**



I was impressed by her actions, even before she had obtained the answer to my original question! In fact, it was likely that I would not be **WOWed** by the final answer. I would probably be informed of what had happened and how the bank would correct it. No **WOW** there, although the potential for an **OW** was huge if the bank did not correct the problem quickly.

What **WOWed** me was the way she handled not just the initial call, but the entire process. She took *ownership* of the situation from beginning to end! She didn't forget about me or pass me off to someone else, then blame *them* when the situation wasn't resolved. She understood that the key to creating a **WOW** experience was in the nuance, realizing that the promise to call back within a day or two, regardless of whether she had an answer or not, was just as important as the answer she would eventually pass along to me.

Most people simply focus on getting the answer, not really paying attention to the experience in the time between the initial call and the final contact. This compels them to create **OK** (at best) and **OW** (at worst) experiences for the customer. But if you want to create exceptional experiences for your customers – and for fellow associates as well – remember that the experience starts at the first contact, the first promise, and does not end until there are no more promises to break.

Is Your Phone Greeting a **WOW**?

Case in Point:

The staff at one of my doctors' offices is very friendly, and we talk and joke all the time when I'm there. But on the phone, it is a very different story. When I call, their greeting includes the name of the doctor, but not the name of the person answering the phone. Sometimes I can tell who it is by their voice, but not always. When I give them my name, I am quite surprised (and a little taken aback) to receive stony silence, or a simple "Hello" in return. No use of my name ("*Hi, Sandy!*"), and no offer of theirs.

Wait! Are these the same people with whom I constantly joke and laugh while I'm there in person? The difference between their in-person demeanor and their telephone demeanor creates a situation that causes some discomfort when calling their office. It makes me wonder (albeit only for a very short time) if they even remember who I am. And while I feel very valued when I'm in the office, I feel very UN-special when I talk to them on the phone.



This small nuance in communication is exactly the kind of "disconnect" that can cost a business (especially a healthcare-related business, where a personal connection is even more important than in most other types of business) valuable customers.

When someone calls your office, what kind of greeting do they receive? Is it friendly? Informative? Polite, but distant? Does the greeter introduce herself, as well as say the name of the company? And if the caller is well-known to the organization, is she given the warm treatment of someone who is well-known, well-liked, and whose call is valued? Or is she offered the same distant treatment offered to strangers? For that matter, how are strangers treated? Do they feel welcome? Is the person answering the phone smiling, welcoming and enthusiastic, or does she sound tired, bored and annoyed by the call? Are callers given a reason to feel good toward

the company, which makes them want to deal with the company further? Or are they given every reason to hang up and find someone who actually welcomes their call – and their business?

On the telephone, all physical cues are absent, so there is no way to make up for a distant tone of voice with a smile or direct eye contact that lets them know you are engaged with them and happy to hear from them. If your tone of voice does not make up for the absence of physical body language cues, you may as well either ignore their call (the equivalent of ignoring them when they are standing in front of your desk) or tell them you do not have time for them right now (or that they are bothering you) – because that is the impression you could be giving with your tone of voice.

Keep in mind that people want three things from other people: to be valued, appreciated and listened to. If you treat someone who feels warmly toward you as if you do not know or recognize them, they will not feel valued. If you make them feel that they are bothering you, they will not feel appreciated. And if you do not enthusiastically respond to what they are telling you, they will not feel listened to.

That adds up to a whole lot of **OW** – rather than the incredible **WOW** you can create by consistently acting in the same warm, welcoming way whether you are on the phone, in person, or even communicating via e-mail.

Find the Nuances in Your Own Products by Using Them

Case in Point:



I usually go to my bank's drive-up ATM to make deposits and get cash. But I recently found myself near a different branch when I needed to deposit a check. This branch happened to have an outside walk-up ATM, which was convenient and posed no inherent problem.

The *problem* was that sitting right next to the ATM was a trash barrel. First of all, in Florida this can be a smelly proposition, but the problem *that* day was not the smell; it was the fact that it had attracted bees that were flying all around the barrel, as well as the customers trying to use the ATM!

Some people did not notice the bees; others (like myself) were trying to stand as far away from the barrel as possible without losing our place in line. When it was time to approach the ATM to use it, we had to stretch our arms as far as possible to reach the keys, while keeping most of our body away from the barrel.

Although there was plenty of space along the outside wall for bank personnel to place the barrel close enough to the ATM to be convenient for customers, but far enough away to avoid inconvenience caused by smells and insects, apparently no one had taken the time to think it through and find the balance between which factors provided a valued service and which detracted from it. This one small nuance of customer service overshadowed the wonderful services the bank had provided by putting the ATM and the trash barrel out there.

Do you use your own products and services to test them out and see how they work? Do you double-check and at least observe them being used by others to ensure they are the **WOW** you think they are? Not using and observing your own services in action could cause you to overlook vital nuances that can mean the difference between an OK experience and a **WOW**.

You Never Get a Second Chance to Make a Second Impression!

We've all heard the saying that "You never get a second chance to make a first impression." This saying has held up for many years because it's absolutely true. First impressions are important because if we blow that one, we may never get a chance to make a second impression. However, in the world of business, especially in the areas of customer service and its important partner, sales, it is often not about the first impression, it's about the second, a.k.a. the follow-up!

What happens when we do get that all-important chance to make a second impression? Once we have made a great first impression, and someone contacts us to follow up, do we live up to the promise of that first impression? Do we live up to the "elevator speech" we've worked so hard to craft and deliver?

Case in Point:

Many entrepreneurs join leads groups to build relationships and get business leads. At one leads group meeting, a lawyer stood up and gave the following "elevator speech" to the group:

"I'm a lawyer, and if you've ever called a lawyer and had them NOT call you back, call me! I'll call you back!"

Fantastic elevator speech! In one sentence, he demonstrated his recognition that one of the biggest problems small business people have with lawyers is trying to get them to return calls. Then he promised to correct that problem if anyone called him. Everyone was very impressed by his personality, message, and promise.

Turns out, a few weeks later I needed some legal advice, so guess who I called? You got it. I called my leads group acquaintance, the lawyer who had made such a great impression on me! How did it turn out?

He never returned my calls!



The truth is that most sales and customer service professionals do not fall down on the first impression. Salespeople go to networking

TURN YOUR WORKPLACE INTO A **WOW**PLACE

events and put on their “game day” face. They are great at talking to people, getting them interested in what they have to offer. They craft “elevator speeches” and fun, memorable “positioning statements” and then, when they’ve hooked someone and gotten them interested in doing business with them, they choke! Because the deal isn’t sealed right there on the spot, they forget how important the follow-up is.

In customer service, we answer the phone and put on our “game day” voice, politely, cheerfully and respectfully, but if we can’t fix their problem immediately on that first call, we also choke! We transfer them, make them repeat their problems and promise calls back, but then never make them, forcing *customers* to call back and start the process over and over again, until it’s finally resolved through their diligent efforts (not ours) or they leave. This, once again, goes back to our need to serve customers at *their* convenience and *our* cost, not only in terms of monetary measures, but time and effort.

There are many reasons why these follow-up failures occur:

- ⊙ We lose or misplace their contact information and can’t call them (sometimes we can’t even remember that someone wanted us to call them).
- ⊙ We don’t have time to call, as day after day after day “gets away from us” because we’re overloaded and can’t keep up.
- ⊙ We pass the information along to a co-worker whom we trust to get back to the person, but they don’t do it, and we never follow up to see if it was done.
- ⊙ We don’t check our e-mail or voicemail for days (or weeks), and let leads go stale and opportunities to serve go past.
- ⊙ We get sick and can’t get back to them because we’re a one-person shop, and we just can’t do anything when we get sick.
- ⊙ In large call centers, customers often can’t call us back personally since the organization is so large. When they do call back,

they have to speak to whomever answers that day, and hope the previous representative made complete notes in the file.

Whatever the reason, does it really matter? Do customers care about our overload, illness, or technological issues? No. In fact, if we can't even take care of them while we're trying to earn their business, they (rightfully) wonder how they'll be treated once we have it! The harm to our reputation and our business caused by falling down on this vitally important **WOW** opportunity is often irreparable.

More importantly, by **WOWing** potential customers on the first contact, we actually set the stage for (and make an "implied promise" of) just as good an experience on the second one – maybe even better! If that "promise" is broken, the potential customer becomes even more disenchanted than if they'd never established a relationship with us. This makes the fall even harder when it happens, as they feel betrayed or misled: *"I expect that from strangers, but I don't expect it from people I've connected with."*

If you're going to take all the time and effort (and often expense) of trying to make **WOW** impressions on people on your first contact with others, make the most of those opportunities! Put backup plans (and people) in place to take over if you're sick, on vacation, or incapacitated; use technology to help you be more organized and productive; use "tickler" systems to help you remember when to follow up, and with whom; make notes so others can handle the situation if necessary, and so you can remember what's been done. All these little steps add up to one big **WOW** experience!

Make the most of every precious opportunity to connect face-to-face, voice-to-voice and heart-to-heart. Just don't "break their hearts" by forgetting to **WOW** them as much on subsequent contact opportunities as you did on the first one!

Always Do the Right Thing, Even if You Think it Doesn't Matter

Wherever they are, whatever they are doing, **WOW**ers are committed to doing things to the best of their ability, and being the best they can be at that moment. They also commit to doing the right thing, even if they think it doesn't really matter at that moment. They do not make excuses because it's not their company, they are not getting paid enough for the job, or they are just marking time (using the job as a stepping stone) until something better comes along. They realize that if they keep their promises and always do everything to the best of their ability, their commitment will make them stand out, help their organization and create better opportunities more quickly for themselves. Because they feel this way, their beliefs and commitment to doing what's right are very obvious in their consistent actions.

Conversely, if people do not behave in this manner, their beliefs and commitment to doing what's right are not obvious.

Case in Point:

I have belonged to several leads groups. In each group, there were invariably people who talked a good game when it came to getting things done, but never followed through by doing any of it, forcing other group members to pick up the slack.

Those who let their responsibilities slide obviously believed that it didn't matter if they followed through or not in these volunteer positions. In fact, they often justified not doing so because "*I got too busy with my regular job,*" or the belief that "*I don't have to pay as much attention or care to volunteer work as I do in my paid job. In fact, the group is lucky I'm doing it at all!*"

But those who had to do extra work, *on top of their own committed tasks*, didn't feel so lucky. And those with a track record of doing such things didn't get many leads, since few group members felt they could be trusted to keep their word, negating the reason they joined the group: to build relationships and get business.



I have an important question for us all to consider: If the only place I meet or ever see you is in these types of situations, and you do not do the right thing there because you think it doesn't matter, how do I know you will (or can) do the right thing when it does matter?

It always matters! Even if your paid job takes precedence (being a business owner, I am well aware of that reality), if you have made a promise you discover you can't keep, do the right thing by making arrangements for someone else to help you (or do it for you).

Contradictions and Inadvertent Messages

The above situation illustrates a common problem: it is often difficult to recognize the contradictions and inadvertent messages we may be sending with our words or body language.

We may never say the words, "*That's not my job,*" but are our actions inadvertently saying them for us?



As illustrated above, there are many ways to find and incorporate the positive nuances in any service situation. If you want to create **WOWs** for customers, take a look at the products and services you provide for them. Then put yourself in their place by using those services (or at least observing them in action) to see where you may be allowing small nuances to undo all the good done by providing them in the first place. Use proactive thinking to envision the way the service will be used and make it the best it can be. Also, become very observant everywhere you go. Examples of the nuances of service are everywhere! Pay attention to them, and then bring them back to your organization to brainstorm how you can apply those lessons there.

Chapter Summary:
How to WOW Through Setting the Stage

1. Two sides of the **WOW**.
2. The difference between a workplace and a **WOWplace**.
3. Three components of creating and delivering the **WOW**.
 - a. Creating the **WOW**.
 - b. Sustaining/maintaining the **WOW**.
 - c. Improving/building upon the **WOW**.
4. The vital importance of consistency in the **WOWplace**.
5. Do you have workers, **WOWers** . . . or **OWers**?
6. Creating the **WOW** is a matter of will.
7. Going from **OW!** To **WOW!**
8. Aim for the **WOW!**
9. Watching for and performing gap analysis must become second nature.
10. The **WOW** is often in the nuance.
 - a. The **WOW** is not always in the answer, but in ownership of the situation.
 - b. Is your phone greeting a **WOW**?
 - c. Find the nuances in your own products by using them.
 - d. You never get a second chance to make a second impression.
 - e. Always do the right thing, even if you think it doesn't matter.
11. Contradictions and inadvertent messages.