



### John Quincy Adams

 JOHN C. DONAHUE, MAY 20, 2015

### What You Think Will Become Your Reality

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# MORE LESSONS FOR BUSINESS FROM WALT DISNEY AND DISNEY U

 JOHN C. DONAHUE - APRIL 15, 2013

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“What would Walt do?”

For decades, that was the magic, pixie-dust question that permeated the Disney empire of animated cartoons, films, toys and theme parks.

As the creator and visionary behind the brand, Walt Disney worked hard to ensure that Disneyland’s guests felt ensconced in the “Happiest Place on Earth.”

But it didn’t happen at the touch of a fairy godmother’s wand.

Behind the fantasy world, Disney laid out a serious training program for ensuring upbeat, friendly, customer-focused employees who could “create happiness” on the job.

That training program, started in early 1955 as Disneyland was hiring for its Anaheim, Calif., opening, eventually became officially known as “Disney University.”

Today, it’s offered to Disney employees worldwide, as well as to outside companies through the Disney Institute in Florida.

But that training also is spread by former Disney executives such as Doug Lipp, a Fair Oaks, Calif.-based business consultant. He travels the globe conducting Disney-style leadership and customer-service training for CEOs and employees of Fortune 500 firms, universities and hospitals.

In his new book, “**Disney U**,” Lipp details Disney University’s secrets to its success. What’s made Disney’s management style so envied around the world?

“It’s a balance of head and heart. It’s a balance of rides that don’t break down and Snow White never has a bad day,” Lipp said.

In other words, the details of running a theme park — or any business — need to be in place, along with engaged employees whose positive outlook extends to all customer interaction.

While Walt Disney had exacting standards for everything from cleanliness to friendliness, there was an underlying belief that if employees were happy, it would spill over to their customers.

In Lipp’s book, he details many of the initiatives that “Disney U” embraces. Here’s a sample:

- **Walk the park:** Disney was known for strolling the grounds to talk with employees.

On one occasion, he showed up at the Fantasyland gondola ride, where an 18-year-old ride operator was loading passengers. Disney had a single question: "How would you improve this ride?"

The startled worker answered candidly: The gondola rooftops were too low and guests frequently hit their heads. Based on that chat, the gondola ceiling heights got changed, Lipp said, and the worker got promoted.

Too many corporate CEOs, Lipp said, forget they need to get out of their offices and walk their workplaces, interacting with employees and customers.

- **Keep it human:** Customers aren't "attendance numbers" or "per capita units."

Lipp said he makes the same point, whether he's talking with McDonald's franchise owners or doctors' groups. "We get so focused on processing hamburgers or processing patients, we forget we're dealing with humans."

- **Every job matters:** From the scuba diver who scrubs the underwater submarine rides at night to the custodian who sweeps Main Street at 3 a.m., Disney believed everyone's job was equally important.

Lipp recounts how executives became aware that workplace resentments were developing among employees in different job categories. "The maintenance crews viewed the ride operators as 'button pushers'; the ride operators saw maintenance as 'bolt-tighteners.' They didn't understand each others' jobs."

***I would love to know your thoughts about this, please leave me a comment and let me know what would YOU do??***

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