

How To Create A Culture Of Teamwork And Trust



A Japanese proverb says, “Even monkeys fall from trees.” You’ve probably heard the American equivalent, “We all make mistakes.” Losses occur and bad decisions are made — nobody is perfect.

Instead of dwelling on these slip-ups, however, we need to spend more time thinking about how we will recover and learn from them. Doug Lipp, former head of the employee training team at Disney, gave an inspiring keynote address with plenty of insightful advice.

“Every example of success or failure I share with you today can be had by any organization of any size, whether it’s two or 20,000 people,” he said.

“When you’ve fallen from your metaphorical tree, are you busy blaming the branch or are you taking ownership for things you can improve upon?”

Never Settle

Walt Disney never settled for anything less than the best. Even then, there was always room for improvement. Lipp told the story of how the famous attraction “Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln” was a failure at the start.

Originally designed to be shown off at the 1964 World’s Fair in New York City, the animatronic Lincoln was supposed to begin his speech sitting down, and then stand midway through. When the design team told Disney it was “good enough” for him to remain seated, he replied, “Good enough is not good enough. The best is never the best.” He cancelled the appearance until the team could get it to work properly.

No matter what type of company you are running, this philosophy should be the foundation of all you do. The constant pursuit of perfection and a willingness to take risks are traits that will inspire you and your employees to be engaged in the same manner. Nobody wants to work for, or with, a dysfunctional organization. By spreading a clear organizational culture, you’ll work smoothly and efficiently.

What Comes First?

As a company, what are your priorities? Do you make it simple for customers to use your service and for employees to understand the type of service you want to provide? As Lipp puts it, “It’s not about the cost of the ticket, it’s about the experience.”

Let’s face it: chauffeured vehicle service isn’t cheap. Much like tickets to Disneyland, people often save up to be able to use transportation services to attend events like prom, bachelor/bachelorette parties, and weddings. To compete successfully, you have to think about what sets you apart from other businesses that provide the same services.

The Disney Company’s four keys to success are safety, courtesy, show, and capacity. They have their priorities lined up in order of importance. As a transportation company, if you provide safe service, courteous chauffeurs, and smiling employees, then capacity in the form of loyal customers will soon follow.



All Business Is Show Business

“How expensive is a smile?” This is a question Disney once posed to a group of tired, bored teenagers operating the Jungle Cruise ride. As an employer, Disney did everything he could to make sure his employees reflected the magic that was such a large part of the theme park. The more engaged your employees, the more it will show to potential customers. You have to stand out from the thousands of other limousine providers out there, and there are ways to do so that cost nothing, regardless of staff size or budget.

Lipp provided another metaphor that works with any business: “Good show onstage, bad show offstage.” In other words, if you or an employee is having a bad day, it’s fine to express it “behind the scenes.” But when it’s show time, you have to be ready to walk out and greet a customer with your biggest, brightest smile and a pleasant attitude. What if, for example, children came up to a woman dressed as Snow White and she snapped at them? Bad show onstage can make customers never want to use your services again.

You will have days where things don’t go according to the script. Believe it or not, there are times when this has happened at Disney theme parks. Yet they have reached their 60th anniversary. This “diamond” celebration is fitting — for what makes a diamond? “Time, heat and pressure,” as Lipp correctly observed. As a company, they have learned to adapt when problems occur and remain calm. By giving a child a free second bag of popcorn if they drop theirs or another balloon if they let go by accident, they create happy customers who will likely rave about the service rather than the rides when they get home.

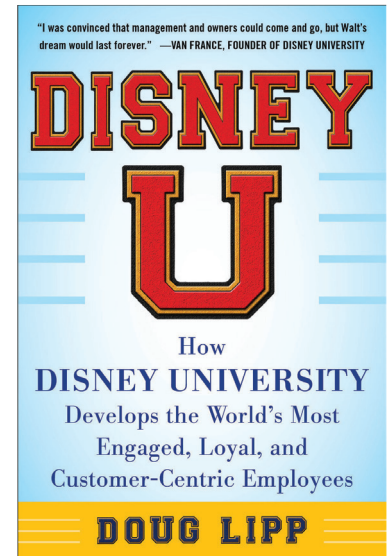
Walk the Talk

Being “the boss” does not excuse you from being part of your company’s culture. Disney spoke with his employees and got to know them on a personal level. He also walked the park to pick up trash. No task was ever “below him” just because of who he was within the company hierarchy. You must create an atmosphere of engagement and trust.

Core values and a powerful mission statement can create a bond of commonality among chauffeurs, dispatchers, and mechanics. “You have to capture their heads and their hearts,” Lipp said. Allow your employees to be themselves and ask them what you can do to be a better leader.

Lipp concluded his speech with an important word of caution: Companies only succeed when they have a solid balance between dreamers and doers. Who in your business is the risk-taker visionary? In contrast, who is the logical implementer? In case of an emergency, who is being groomed to fill both sets of shoes? You must think ahead and, like Disney, have “one foot in the past and one foot in the future.”

Most importantly, who serves as your Jiminy Cricket? We all need mentors who guide us down the proper path and tell us the truth when it’s hard to hear. They should also challenge us to take risks when appropriate and help us understand change is good and necessary. In the words of Lipp’s own mentor, Van France, “Budgets may be tight, but creativity is always free.”



7 Steps For Leadership And Service Magic

Simplify The Complex — embrace safety, courtesy, show, and capacity (efficiency)

Plus The Show — it’s the little things that will set you apart

Good Show, Bad Show — know the difference between the two and act accordingly

Popcorn Empowerment — empower employees to become problem solvers

Walk The Park — if Disney did it, so can you!

Dreamers And Doers — have a balanced team and a succession plan

Change Or Perish — step out of your comfort zone and try something new