

Guest Experience Quality Standards

“The heart of the modern museum is its visitors.” (p. 185) John H. Falk, 2009

The Power of Guests

Our guests and the experience that they have at the Zoo is at the heart of our relationship with the community, members, volunteers, and donors. A positive visitor experience determines the success of our organization and our mission. Some stats to consider:

- 33% of Americans say they'll consider switching companies after just a single instance of poor experience.
- Americans tell an average of 15 people about a poor service experience, versus the 11 they'll tell about a good experience.
- 7 out of 10 U.S. consumers say they've spent more money to do business with a company that delivers great service.
- U.S. consumers are willing to spend 17% more to do business with companies that deliver excellent service, up from 14% in 2014.
- 51% of consumers will not use a company again after a single bad customer service experience.
- Just as friendly employees are most important in determining net promoter/detractor scores, employees who are indifferent or even rude have the most negative impact on their experiences.

It is important to note here that, despite our best efforts to control the visitor's experience, the reality is that situational factors (e.g. litter, crowds) that are under our control, are not necessarily the factors most important to our guests. Visitors' perceptions of the experience and how they align with their expectations is a far greater influencer when it comes to visitor satisfaction. This means that each visitor must be given as much individual attention and visit customization as possible. The best way to do this is through one-on-one interactions with staff and volunteers.

In order to maintain a high quality visitor experience, consider the four quality standards below. These are designed to start you on the path towards creating authentic, quality customer relationships that will increase your mission impact and overall success.

Quality Standard #1: Safety and Prevention

Although we often take them for granted, Maslow's hierarchy must be met before our visitors can reach the point of self-actualization and meaning making. This means the safety and comfort of our guests is paramount for more than just liability reasons. That said, it is impossible to prevent all issues that may arise around guest safety and well-being. The Zoo's Public Safety Department and Safety Committee strives to predict, prevent, and address as many safety and emergency concerns as possible. By asking yourself the following questions, you can help the organization to meet our safety goals.

Questions for creating a safe environment:

- Am I familiar with our Emergency Preparedness binder and know what to do in an emergency? Fire? Earthquake? Injured guest? Code Red?
- Do I know where the list of key emergency contacts are including phone trees? Do I know who I'm supposed to call on the phone tree in the event of an emergency?
- Do I know where the nearest fire extinguisher is?
- Do I have a way to communicate when I'm out on grounds? Is my phone/radio charged?
- Have I noticed any major tripping hazards? Railings or steps that need repair? Unsafe distance between guests and animal habitats?
- What's the weather? Is it particularly hot (fire weather, possible heat related illnesses)? Wet and cold (slipping hazards, possible flooding)? Windy (possible gondola closure, falling branches)?
- Is there enough lighting if I or visitors will be on grounds after dark? Are there security cameras in the parking lots or other potentially dangerous areas?
- Do I know where the first aid kits and AEDs are?
- Are guests getting lost and confused when navigating the grounds? Do I know all the exit routes to help in case we need to evacuate?
- Am I familiar with the safe buildings and emergency boxes in case we need to shelter in place?
- Am I reporting incidents I witness using the Incident Report form so Public Safety can address these issues?

Quality Standard #2: Straightforwardness and Simplicity

"Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler." Albert Einstein

Simplicity and transparency is everything, both in design and in our interactions. Making things as intuitive and straightforward as possible not only reduces maintenance issues due to misuse,

but also gives the visitor a more pleasant experience. Simplicity does not equate to ‘dumbing it down’, but it’s making it accessible.

Guidelines to ease visitor understanding:

- Intuitive and clear wayfinding tools including parking signage and path design.
- Easy access to a staff member via phone or email.
- Mobile responsive website with quick access to essential information (hours, address, phone number). Ideal, mobile app with blue dot map technology and information on nearest points of interest including restrooms, snack stands, and entrance/exits.
- Logical and efficient point of sale and registration –in-person, over the phone, and online.
- Scannable membership cards and automatically populated information for online purchases.
- Restrooms near entrance, major attractions, children’s play areas, cafés, and picnic areas.
- Accurate and consistent answers to questions.
- Explain the reasons behind policies and decisions.
- Regular and transparent all staff, volunteer, member, and general public communication and dissemination of information. Consistency in those communications particularly around contentious issues (e.g. death of an animal).

Quality Standard #3: Approachability and Sincere Human Relationships

“When customers share their story, they’re not just sharing pain points. They’re actually teaching you how to make your product, service, and business better.” Kristin Smaby

The Zoo strives for authentic, sincere, welcoming invitations to experience our grounds, animals, and community. All staff and volunteers must work together to create this positive visitor experience. Think of the worst experience you’ve had with customer service or interaction with staff at another organization. Was it because of poor customer service?

Guidelines for creating a welcoming environment:

- Smile and greet guests whenever eye contact is made.
- Remove sunglasses when talking one on one with a visitor.
- Indicate using an upward facing open hand instead of pointing.
- Offer help when people look confused (e.g. examining a map).
- When something goes wrong, make sure the upset guest feels H-E-A-R-D
 - Hear – I hear that you are having trouble with _____
 - Empathize – I understand, that can be very troublesome
 - Apologize – I’m sorry this has happened

- Resolve – Please, let me help you fix it
- Diagnose – Why did this happen? How can we prevent this from happening again?
- Thank volunteers for being volunteers, members for being members, donors for their support, and guests for visiting.
- Say I don't know if you don't know and always help the visitor find the answer.
- Accept, document, and report guest feedback. Incite change where appropriate.
- Always wear your nametag and, if you have one, your passion button (ask me about___).

Quality Standard #4: Style and Appearance

To create a consistent feel and create continuity for the visitor, the Zoo must maintain a consistent appearance. From signage to uniforms to media, we should work creatively within our style guide making sure that inconsistencies are purposeful and not off brand.

Guidelines to help create a professional, cohesive look:

- Pick up trash when you see it.
- Report and fix infrastructure that is damaged or unsightly.
- Keep a clean, organized work space.
- Cultivate and maintain beautiful grounds using sustainable, eco-friendly techniques to the best of our ability.
- Clean and maintain interpretive and wayfinding signage. Update regularly.
- Volunteers and staff wear uniforms when working outside, with the public, and during events. Otherwise, wear clothing appropriate for your work and always wear a nametag. Ask yourself, would my grandmother mind if I wore this to dinner?
- One time volunteers wear 'I volunteered' stickers.
- Follow media style guide and make sure all communications, flyers, emails, presentations, etc. are Zoo branded. Creative changes should be purposeful and approved by marketing.

References

- American Express (2017). "Customer Service Barometer".
- Falk, J. H. (2009). *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast press, Inc.
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- PGAV Destination (2018). "2018 Voice of the Visitor: Annual Outlook on Attractions Industry". *Destinology*. 15(02).
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