

Focusing on the external customer relationship at an annual national meeting

It's always a challenge to create new and exciting themes for annual meetings. Siemens Medical Systems decided to take a novel approach in building a theme around enhancing external customer service levels.

Siemens Medical Systems is a leading United States developer, manufacturer, supplier, and exporter of technologically advanced medical equipment and systems for use in diagnostic imaging, cardiology, oncology, critical care, surgery, anesthesiology, and audiology. It is the American affiliate of Siemens Medical Engineering Group in Erlangen, Germany.

The American operation markets, sells, and provides factory-trained service through a nationwide network of professionals at more than 30 major locations. Service coordination and training activities for all major product lines are located at the company's service center in Cary, North Carolina. The Training & Development Center in Cary provides interpersonal skills and management development training.

Approximately 800 employees from sales, service, logistics, and corporate operations attend the Siemens annual meeting. Each year the meeting planner must orchestrate training activities that meet field as well as corporate needs.

Since the conference already was being held at the *Walt Disney World Contemporary* Resort, Jim West, Director, Management Development & Training, contacted *Disney Institute* about the possibility of building in some of Disney's best practices in quality service and leadership for the meeting.

Says West, "Our location for this meeting presented a unique opportunity to learn first-hand some of Disney's principles for providing outstanding service to Guests that generates strong brand loyalty. Companies

invest many thousands of dollars in our products, and therefore our service to them must be highly responsive and effective," he says.

The three-day *Disney Institute* component of the meeting kicked off with a special guest — a Siemens hospital client who has enjoyed significant success with *Disney Institute* service quality and management programming. This partner spent an afternoon detailing the hospital's transformation to a service-driven operation — where the hospital was at before, why the changes were made, and the successes that resulted from the change in direction. During the next two days, attendees were divided into functional groups to experience tailored group programs on "Management, Disney Style" and "Service, Disney Style."

On the final day, participants were separated into small cross-functional groups for field experiences with a scavenger hunt theme and a series of clues. Participants

had to answer questions at different areas which would get them thinking more about their customers, their jobs, their actions, and the impact they had on customers. Scribes, navigators, leaders,

and other roles were appointed in each group, and the exercise required a team approach in order to answer the questions.

The teams turned in their answers during the next classroom session to demonstrate all of the clues they found. Participants were required to submit what they would do when they got back to their specific job and to make more general service improvement suggestions for the organization to consider. The answers from all of the teams were put into a hat; several teams' names were drawn and awarded prizes. Prizes also were awarded to attendees who made recommendations that were immediately accepted.

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Results

Overall, the meeting achieved several objectives. Since the sessions were quite intensive, starting early and going until late in the evening, people needed a different type of learning activity to change the pace. The field experience/scavenger hunt activity was designed to build a strong customer loyalty experience, but it also served as recreation — people enjoyed the break. The experience also promoted teamwork — one of the main goals for the

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conference. It also helped participants focus more discussion around the external customer.

Says West, “We were aware of *Disney Institute’s* reputation and flexibility for customizing its content for multiple types of audiences. Our meeting participants gained new insights about ideas and approaches undertaken by an entertainment company that they could adapt for their own operations and their individual roles.”