

## **Does Your Nonprofit Create a First-Rate Customer Experience?** **By: Hardy Smith**

Stress and frustration are the daily norm as the throng of frenzied travelers hurries through the huge concourses of Atlanta's Hartsfield Jackson Airport.

In the midst of all this there is a delightful food court oasis that offers relief and a first-rate airport food court experience. Customers entering the service line at Paschal's find a soothing contrast to the not-so-fun commercial travel experience they are most likely having.

A smiling welcome greets everyone. Employees who take seriously the job of meeting the demands of their nonstop business are actually having fun.

The traditional southern food that Paschal's is famous for is truly a treat that their many repeat customers eagerly anticipate. Production and cooking for the thousands of meals served each day is done with amazing consistency.

Delivering quality products and services is obviously a company value at Paschal's. They know that food isn't all they serve. They pay attention to friendliness, efficiency, cleanliness, and more.

The environment inside the Paschal's food court section actually seems to have a positive influence on their patron's behavior. Both servers and customers maintain their cool when the service line slows because someone can't make a quick choice. Everyone appreciates the decision making difficulty because choosing means some other favorite item has been left off an already full plate.

Each person exiting the service line gets an enthusiastic "thank you and enjoy the rest of your day." Start to finish, the staff communicates genuine customer appreciation.

Nonprofits are facing increasingly difficult circumstances influencing their ability to achieve their mission. All can benefit from several important lessons identified during my observation of Paschal's and my follow up conversation with regional manager Roger Hill.

According to Hill, "One of our strategic goals is to satisfy every customer every time." Paschal's doesn't just talk the talk, they walk the walk.

He shared, “We encourage everyone to have fun while they are working but it goes deeper than that. We try to understand each employee and show interest in their personal growth and development.”

“As a result we are able to retain our staff and that longevity helps produce positive on-the-job attitudes,” he added. “We have learned when our employees feel our concern for them, they have a different focus. Even though they may be having an outside problem, when they get to work, they want to do a good job.”

Too many nonprofits are so focused on doing good that they forget to pay attention to the good business practices that can make a positive difference for achieving their mission.

Those who benefit from your services, attend your events, sponsor your programs and donate to your cause are all customers. Take time to undertake an honest evaluation of your customer service with these questions:

- How would you rate your interaction with the public you serve? What improvements need to be made?
- What type of experience do you create for those receiving your services, participating in one of your events, or making a donor commitment?
- Do you set a high standard for service delivery and meet or exceed that expectation on a consistent basis?
- Do you produce a top quality product that your customers look forward to receiving?
- Are you reinforcing your customer service by ensuring your customers feel appreciated?
- Are you providing support and positive motivation for employees working in today’s stressful and pressure filled environment by showing appreciation and authentic concern for them?

Think about the example offered by Paschal's. They create an outstanding model for service delivery and customer experience.

The nonprofit marketplace is certainly growing more competitive and customers of all types are becoming increasingly more discerning. When the people you serve are considering their options, is your nonprofit doing what it takes to be their first choice?

**(As a nonprofit consultant and speaker, Hardy Smith has a proven ability for helping organizations achieve high performance success. To learn more about Hardy or to sign up for his free Tips for Nonprofit Success newsletter, please visit [www.hardysmith.com](http://www.hardysmith.com) )**