

My Turn

How can Taos achieve world-class hospitality?

JOHN PLUMMER

Last week, in an editorial, *The Taos News* made this suggestion: "We'd love to see someone step up to offer classes on customer service ..." I think that is an excellent idea.

It is not an accident that some organizations, like Disneyland, have gained a reputation for exceptional hospitality. Every employee, full or part-time, has undergone an extensive training program emphasizing customer service. I have in the past quietly suggested a program of this sort. Perhaps too quietly, for it never has gotten off the ground. Perhaps a broader exposure will build a little fire under this program.

I suggest a program we might call *Friendly Taos*. It might go like this.

- First, the program needs to be designed. A curriculum will be needed. What material should be included? How will this material be organized into sessions? How many sessions will be needed? Will the program need to be tailored for restaurants, galleries, and/or general merchants? Perhaps some of the larger organizations, like El Monte Sagrado or the Taos Inn, might lead this effort, with participation from smaller merchants and restaurants.
- The delivery program will need to be developed. Who will do the training? Where will training sessions be held? How often will the training program be offered? What is a realistic class size for each session? Perhaps UNM-Taos might lead this effort, and receive well deserved recognition (and a cut of the tuition fees?) in return.
- The program will need to be sold to the community. Participating members need to be signed up. Perhaps the Taos Project, or one or more of the support agencies mentioned in *The Taos News* editorial, might help with this effort.
- Each member should agree to have all full- and part-time employees participate in the training program, with full pay for hours spent in training. Each member should receive a decal or plaque suitable for display that might say something like "Come on in! We are Members of Friendly Taos." Each member should also notice a nice increase in their daily book as a result.
- A monitoring program will also be needed. Someone should organize a group of shoppers, who would visit member stores anonymously, providing a grade and a commentary on the service they received to be shared with the proprietor. The Taos County Chamber of Commerce might lead this effort.

There is obviously much to be done before an effective campaign can be developed and implemented. I mention specific organizations to indicate the scope of support and participation that will be needed.

Most important, I want to emphasize, as *The Taos News* cartoon does so well, that achieving the goal of world class hospitality in Taos will require much more effort and organization than simply exhorting the store owners to be more polite and, oh yes, they might stay open later as well.

John Plummer is a frequent traveler who appreciates good service.