

GLOBAL APPEAL

*The coveted **Disney** brand continues to enchant loyal customers around the world.*

EVERY COMPANY'S LOFTY GOAL IS TO develop a universal brand revered by the masses. But this cannot be accomplished without inspiring loyalty. Not all loyalty is alike, though. Customer loyalty simply means the customers stay connected, or keep coming back, but often with resignation rather than enthusiasm. Brand loyalty, on the other hand, requires passion, and that's the kind of loyalty The Walt Disney Company strives to achieve.

"Customer loyalty is about what people do, and brand loyalty is about what people feel," says Bruce Jones, program director for Disney Institute, the professional development arm of The Walt Disney Company. Brand loyalty inspires commitment. No one must return to a Disney theme park, as they might, for example, have to fly a particular airline to fly from Chicago to Los Angeles. On a typical day, two of three guests at a Disney theme park are return visitors. Happy visitors tell friends, including everyone they encounter on social media sites.

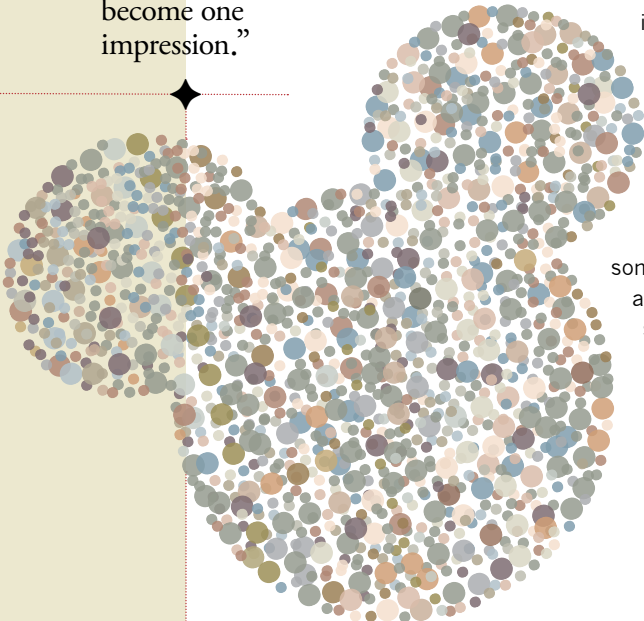
How does Disney inspire brand loyalty? Obviously, the company offers world-class products in everything from theme parks to movies. But sometimes brand loyalty comes down to small gestures that become special memories. Jones cites examples: A child with food

allergies enjoys her first-ever bite of a birthday cake because the chef took the time to create a special recipe that could accommodate her needs. Another child becomes the "junior lobby ambassador" at a Disney hotel, greeting guests, passing out balloons, and receiving an official certificate for his efforts. Or a young guest's rabbit becomes "pet of the day" at Disney's on-site kennel, complete with the temporary name of—you guessed it—Thumper.

Stories like these are told again and again through sites like Facebook and Twitter, which Disney monitors to keep track of its reputation. "A brand is like a pointillist painting," observes Jones, "made up of many individual contacts or customer interactions that blend to become one impression."

Several years ago Minto, an Ottawa-based homebuilder and real estate management company, wanted to change its focus from owning assets to pleasing customers. It needed a culture shift. So it engaged Disney Institute, beginning with an experience for 30 managers at the Walt Disney World Resort in Lake Buena Vista, Fla. What the participants witnessed was Disney staffers constantly performing services that went beyond their ordinary duties, often only in very small ways. The managers brought the lessons back to Ottawa, and Minto is now using small gestures to build its own brand loyalty: A maintenance man holds open a door for a guest; another employee buys a luggage cart for residents' use. And without being requested to do so, a superintendent puts an easy-to-turn faucet on an elderly woman's kitchen sink. As Disney and pointillist painters recognize, the picture of success is composed of thousands of small but well-placed dots. ♥

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