

# INNOVATION

## The Magic Behind Disney's Sales Success



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**Y**ou know what the nice thing about the truth is? It doesn't change. What's true today was true yesterday, and it will be true tomorrow and next year as well. It's like math:  $2 + 2 = 4$ . You will always get 4 no matter what you're adding and no matter where you add it—in this country or in outer space.

Mickey Mouse and Disney's successful ventures are known worldwide. Matt Groening, creator of *The Simpsons*, said "I went to Bali, and I was in a small village, and somebody who was with me showed a woman a little figurine of Bart and asked, 'Do you know who this is?' And she said, 'Mickey Mouse.'" That's just how strong the Disney brand is.

Maurice Sendak, author of *Where the Wild Things Are*, said, "Oh, I adored Mickey Mouse when I was a child. He was the emblem of happiness and funniness. You went to the movies [back] then. You saw two movies and a short. When Mickey Mouse came on the screen and there was his big head, my sister said she had to hold onto me. I went berserk."

Even Walt Disney himself admitted, "I love Mickey Mouse more than any woman I have ever known." Mickey Mouse is an icon and represents the childhood of many who have grown up in the past half-century, but behind the fuzzy, sentimental memories, there's a model of sales success and customer service that, as professional adults, we can appreciate just as much as we do Saturday mornings watching *Winnie the Pooh*.

Disney's sales success comes primarily from innovation. By constantly innovating and pushing the envelope, Disney has become a globally recognized powerhouse of mouse. They are always looking for ways to improve customer service and experience, and these creative business endeavors have driven sales success and growth. This sales success comes from not only providing exceptional customer service to existing customers but also by attracting new customers year in and year out to their amusement parks, movies, retail stores, etc.

### Sell More Stuff

There you have it. Disney's sales success is primarily due to the fact that they sell more stuff. Of course, if that was all there is to it, there would be no need for business schools, seminars, etc. Disney's sales success comes from the fact that they provide a stellar customer experience to their existing customers rather than simply focusing on going out to attract new ones. Their customer service focuses on the bird in the hand. By providing magical customer service to existing customers, they're able to leverage every opportunity to up-sell and cross-sell to people already buying into the company.

### Keep Improving

Again, it sounds easy, but so does drawing three circles and turning it into an empire. Innovation is never easy, especially when it comes to customer service and meeting demand. Not only does Disney release a new movie every year or so, they offer new television shows, theme park attractions, video games, and live theatrical performances, all

under the umbrella of “diversified family entertainment.” You have to always be providing new or improved offerings to reach the level of sales success that Disney experiences.

### **Make It Easy to Do Business**

If you go to a Disney theme park, you’ll receive a MagicBand. This radio frequency bracelet allows you to gain entrance into the hotels and attractions, pay for food at restaurants, and buy merchandise, all by scanning your MagicBand over a touch point. Forget your conscience; let your carpus be your guide! Now, customers no longer need to carry cash or credit cards around Disney parks, which makes the buying experience way easier and more secure. This concept could translate into the buying experience your customers have on your website; consider how easy it is for them to enter their information and purchase your product or service. Customer service comes down to convenience—the more convenient, the better sales success you’ll experience.

### **Stay In Touch With Customers**

It’s almost impossible to go a day without seeing something Disney has had its oversized-glove in. Their marketing machine pulls customers back into the magical experience over and over again, keeping the company top of mind year-round. Disney is constantly seeking to



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pull you back into the next experience time and again. It’s important to always try to understand your customers’ ongoing and changing needs and do everything you can to provide good customer service in order to meet those needs. Schedule regular customer service calls to check in and see how things are going, and stay in touch to provide value-added products and services to further meet their changing needs. Don’t sell your customers and then disappear.

By identifying what customers want, you can create repeat business because you’ll have anticipated new opportunities. Sales success takes planning and preparation.

### **Collect and Utilize Customer Data**

Disney tracks the time of day and seasonal park attendance levels down to the minute. They’re constantly testing

and tracking promotions, merchandizing techniques, and results. They use that data to create the most ideal customer experience. For example, Disney offers special resort rates during the seasons when attendance to the park is low to even out the fluctuations during the off times. The goal is to use this data to create better customer service and experiences.

### **Expand Your Market**

As Groening’s anecdote about Bali suggests, the Disney brand is known all across the world. A park that opened in Florida and California now has ventures in Tokyo, Paris, and Hong Kong. You can try to cast a wider net to expand your market and meet your customers’ needs. There are always new markets to conquer, even while maintaining your own specialty. Always keep innovating.

Sales success like Disney’s doesn’t happen without innovation. Remember Oswald the Lucky Rabbit? Probably not—that was Walt’s first idea. When Universal retained the rights to Oswald, Walt came up with a mouse—Mortimer. But that moniker didn’t last long, and Mortimer became the jolly rodent we all love as Mickey. That’s the long and short of it. Disney’s sales success today owes a lot to customer service, but without innovation, those customers would be lining up at Os-world or some other less successful, unheard of theme park. **N**

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