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Who's YOUR Most Loyal Customer?

I just returned from delivering the Pre-Conference workshop for the Society for Human Resource Management's Strategy Conference in Phoenix. We visited several world-class operations - including the Westin (one of the upscale Starwood hotel brands), Cold Stone Creamery (making ice cream buying a real experience) and the famed Mayo Clinic.

During the visit to the Mayo, several professionals spoke to my group revealing the best practices that have created the Mayo reputation/brand. The Chief Human Resource Officer, the Human Resource Manager, and the Operations Manager all shared amazing information that, according to the attendees, was extremely helpful from an operational standpoint. The interaction that made the most memorable impact was when a "customer" volunteered to share his experience with the group.

This patient just happened to overhear that our group was going to be there and offered to recount how he was treated during his liver transplant...just 5 WEEKS EARLIER. He went on about how the clinical aspects were over his head, but every Mayo employee he worked with took the time to, not only educate him so he could make the best choices - or execute his multiple procedures and surgery impeccably, but that they interacted with him in a way that made him know they CARED.

Tragic that experiencing the "care" in "health care" is so rare these days.

This "customer" went out of his way to prepare, drive out, and stand in front of a group of strangers to brag about an organization he is loyal to.

Impressive. That spoke volumes to everyone in the room. Passionate customers who are justifiably loyal usually have that affect.

Mayo earns that loyalty - and reaps the benefits as well.

The question is: Who is/are YOUR most loyal customers? Are they sacrificing to be an advocate for YOUR company? Have you EARNED that commitment?