

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN BUTLERS, LLC



BRAND BUTLER Amplified

Brand New and a Thousand Years in the Making

Hats off to the trend watchers at *trendwatching.com* for recognizing an emerging trend way back in 2007 (and coining BRAND BUTLERS to describe the trend, where service is the best form of sales); and for highlighting BRAND BUTLERS in their April 2010 issue as *the* corporate trend to note in 2010.

“With consumers increasingly looking for control, for convenience, for assistance, and yes, to be cared for (both offline and online), brands need to shift their product development and advertising prowess to brand-consistent services (and an accompanying *butlering mindset*) that *assist* consumers in making the most of their daily lives. For brands, this means that there are now endless creative and cost-effective ways to deliver on this need for assistance, for *butlers*....

“It has never been more important to turn your brand into a service. Jaded, time-poor, pragmatic consumers yearn for service and care.... Basically, if you're going to embrace one big consumer trend this year, please let it be BRAND BUTLERS... we believe that now is the time to go all out on ‘serving is the new selling.’”

Trendwatching.com, April 2010

Since its founding in 2004, the standard-setting body for butlers, the *International Institute of Modern Butlers* <www.modernbutlers.com/> has reached beyond the narrow confines of its own profession, and even its cousin, the hospitality industry, with a persistent drum beat: the need to export the mindset of the butler to *all* service industries (in effect, any business or organization, large or small), wherever one person provides another with a product or service, as the biggest-return strategy for improving the service experience and loyalty of clients, guests, customers, patients, etc.

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Looking for Brand Consistency

When *trendwatching.com* talks of “butler mindset,” one may wonder exactly what that is, over and above finding ways to assist the client or customer. If one simply create apps, and policies and procedures for employees to implement (such as Adidas’ Tokyo store where customers can use showers, locker rooms, attend workshops, and even design their own shoes or rent running gear), then one may well still be falling short, because the butler mindset is not an app or a procedure, but a mindset! A mindset can design something to reflect that mindset, but it requires a mind to have a mindset, and that, in Adidas’ case, would be not just the designer of the service offered, but also the front-line employees providing the service.

In other words, the app developers need to understand and adopt the mindset, in order to then create the apps; and beyond that, customer service employees in each company need to understand and adopt the mindset in order to apply the procedures that have been conceived with the butler mindset in mind, and so bring about brand consistency. Which is to say, the trend does not just impact product development and advertising, but also the actual service provided when it is face-to-face.

Otherwise, launching BRAND BUTLERS as a strategy in a company may well result in confused ideas and products at the front end, perhaps based on a conceived irrelevance of stuffy old-style butlers, and of service at the back end for lack of extending the BRAND BUTLER concept through to customer service and therefore a lack of brand consistency that jaded customers will reject as *care without soul or passion*.

The challenge in achieving this brand consistency is translating the butler mindset into drills, role-playing, and one-on-one procedures that bring about changed mindsets and smooth communication skills in employees. Up to now, this training has been available only through the Institute in private estates and five-star hotels around the world. It is now available on a customized basis, to the corporate and non-profit sectors.

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Until then, we hope the following, as a partial list, is of use in understanding the butler mindset, and we are happy to clarify any questions concerning the mindset when emailed to stevenferry@modernbutlers.com

The Mindset of a Butler As Adapted to the Corporate World

For most consumers and clients today, butlers are amusing mannequins on the TV or film screen, sometimes starchy, sometimes scathingly sarcastic, but forever symbolizing the discrete pleasures available to those consumers who have arrived.

In truth, a butler is a frame of mind rather than a status or a series of duties. It is a mindset that anyone can adopt in any situation in life to very satisfying results, because it is founded on the truths that it is better to serve than be served, and that life can be rational and serene when one assumes responsibility for all things.

In almost every person, there is a penguin-suited figure dying to emerge and bring order and happiness to the lives of those around him or her. Anyone can learn and apply the butler mindset at home, in business, or anywhere else.

In the private estate, the butler exists to smooth the lives of his or her employer and/or family by taking over many (household and personal) functions they would otherwise have to perform themselves, thus freeing their time for more worthwhile (to them) pursuits. It is easy to see how this purpose and principle can be extended to the world of service in general, and to make things as easy, convenient and pleasurable as possible for customers, clients, etc.

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But a butler is more than an extra pair of arms and legs. He commits himself to his employers and cares enough to exceed their expectations and create extra-special moments. Good service is only the starting point: it is the creativity in bringing about the moments of (can we say “exquisite”?) pleasure and happiness that is the butler’s true mission, or the mission of any service professional adopting the butler mindset.

Here are key points that, together, add up to the butler mindset.

1. *Trustworthiness* is a fundamental: a customer relies on honesty and reliability when he approaches a service professional. He wants to know his best interests are driving the service provider’s actions, not some hidden agenda or self-serving goal. And in some contexts, the customer does not want his possessions disappearing, funds being diverted, or work left undone.
2. The customer or client does not want to be talked about behind his back or slandered to employees or fellow clients, nor to see his name in print so loyalty is another key ingredient.
3. The customer or client does not wish to be upstaged by the service professional, or big emergencies made out of small ones. So the employee is always in the background, smoothing things over and seeking to make his client’s life as pleasurable as possible. To “butle” successfully, one has to be willing to cause things quietly and let the client take the credit; or conversely, take the blame in public for a client’s goof without becoming defensive. One is, in essence, an actor on the stage playing a part to perfection. As long as one keeps that in mind, the occasional indignities become part of the script and not a life-or-death matter.
4. The client would like to feel that his service provider really cares for his welfare (and that of his family or company). He wants his service professional to be helpful and willing a *can-do* type who wants things to work out and who always delivers on promises made.

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5. The service professional has to have some social graces – tactful when confronted with tricky situations and able to handle them very smoothly so that clients and customers are not made to feel uncomfortable or ill served. He knows and follows the accepted manners and customs, punctilious even (showing great attention to detail and correct behavior); he keeps track of likes and dislikes of repeat clients and obliges them accordingly; he treats each person individually and with equal dignity, no matter how bizarre they may appear or unpleasant they may be.
6. Six hundred years ago, the “age of discretion,” (the time when a person was able to discern that there were other players in life who needed to be included in any decisions made) was set at fourteen years old. This status meant a person was able to keep his or her own counsel and remain quiet about something until the right time and place to divulge the knowledge presented itself, rather than flying off the handle. Sir Winston Churchill’s advice to diplomats has some applicability: “A diplomat is a man who thinks twice before saying nothing.” Discretion is not something one sees in many teens or even adults today, but it is a valuable requirement for any service professional to make possible a long-term relationship with a client.
7. In time, a service professional may become the person the client always goes to, but only as long as he does not cross that invisible line that separates those who serve from those served. Caring toward a client is felt and shown, but always with a certain measure of decorum (dignity). Familiarity breeds contempt in the long run, so a service professional maintains a professional demeanor at all times. It is a matter of actually caring, while maintaining a certain friendly formality in his actions: being chummy and being impersonal are two extremes, neither of which is productive.

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8. By keeping track of a customer's penchants and moods, the service professional can predict or anticipate and provide the item or the environment that the client needs or will want before being asked for it. The provider's attitude is: "I will do whatever I can to make my client comfortable and happy."

It's a game he plays and the rewards are pleasing to both himself and the client. In essence, the providing of service is a given within the butler mindset. It is the starting point, not the finish line. What marks real value in the service professional is that extra perceptiveness, inventiveness and caring that allow him or her to create those extra special moments for client, customer, patient (and even boss, employer, family member, other employees and vendors, etc.).

9. A fundamental distinction is that a good butler serves, but is not servile (fawning, brown-nosing, trying too hard to please). He is there to provide a service that he enjoys. He is willing to accept criticism, and if not justified, to let it ride, or correct it where and when appropriate. But he no longer owes his continued existence to his employer or his clients and so can walk tall, if discreetly!
10. Whereas he is flexible about the amount of time he works in order to provide the service expected, he is most punctual when it comes to timing, never being late.
11. With regard to employees in his care, the service professional is also friendly without being too familiar. He is firm about the amount and quality of work done. He cares as well for these team members that their lives are running well, remembering birthdays and the like.
12. He is a good organizer, who can manage many people and activities according to a schedule, while keeping up with all the paperwork.

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13. The service professional pays great attention to detail so as to achieve high standards and so essentially communicates an aesthetic (beautiful) message to his customers. For instance, in a restaurant situation, breakfast could be some greasy eggs served on a cracked, cold plate by an unshaven, unkempt waiter with a cigarette stub sticking from his lips and a body odor more in place at a zoo.

Or it could be a plate of perfectly poached eggs, bacon, mushrooms and grilled tomatoes as the third course in a breakfast that is served on a sunlit balcony by a waiter in morning coat and pinstripes. He offers more hot coffee and the morning's newspapers and all the while, music is playing softly in the background.

This is the level of creativity the good service professional seeks to provide, obviously within the given budget: the making of beautiful moments to put people at their ease and increase their pleasure.

14. At the same time, the service professional has to deal effectively with the raw emotions of imperious clients and discourteous customers, angry bosses, indignant team members, rebellious family members, shifty contractors and the best-laid plans falling apart at the last moment all the while maintaining his composure, his desire to provide the best possible service, and ensuring events turn out satisfactorily.
15. And at the end of the day, the good service professional still has the energy and humility to ask, "Was there anything I could have improved about my service today?"

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There is a bit of the butler in everyone – the honesty, the creativity, the caring, the social graces, the phlegmatic (calm disposition); it is rare to find someone with all these qualities who is able to keep them turned on day in, day out, despite all the reasons not to. All of which reinforces the value of the butler mindset in its various manifestations.

The butler mindset includes a high understanding of the client, a high degree of liking (even for unlikable clients), and a superior ability to communicate. It is a tried and proven path to the superior solicitous (showing interest or concern), service that *trendwatching.com* has highlighted as being the missing ingredient, or the next big breakthrough, in servicing customers, consumers, et al.

Steven Ferry

Chairman

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