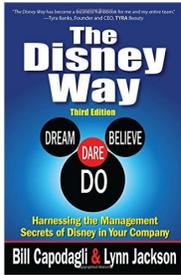




**Ottawa County
Transformation featured in
the book “The Disney Way,”
2016 edition.**



Has your encounter with an Ottawa County employee been magical? Could it be that Ottawa County offices are the happiest places on earth? While that may be an exaggeration, three years ago Ottawa County **did** embark on something **unheard of** in government. They sought to improve citizen service in a big way: “The Disney Way.” Today, the organization is living and growing as a customer-centric establishment.

In November 2013, Ottawa County had just overcome some major challenges and was seeing the light at the end of the Great Recession tunnel. Through strategic planning they developed the Four Cs Strategic Initiative to take the County to the next level: Customer Service; Communication; Cultural Intelligence and Creativity (Innovation and LEAN).

To kick off the initiative to staff, the County secured Bill Capodagli and Lynn Jackson, authors of The Disney Way, who guided them throughout a philosophical revolution. Leaders of the 33 areas of the County were brought together and developed a customer service vision, story and code of con-

duct. This was very much a cultural shift and once they had agreement from the leadership, nearly all of the 1,100 employees were led through an intense program creating a culture committed to outstanding customer service.

Ottawa County Administrator, Al Vanderberg, even spent a week at the Disney University in Orlando, FL. Each day covered a different strategic area such as vision, branding, customer service, employee attraction and management, etc.

“I believe that many government employees think that they do not have customers, they have citizens, rate payers, service users, etc.” says Vanderberg. “Some feel that since government has a monopoly, and in most cases residents do not have another option, the people they serve are not truly customers. At the core of the Ottawa/Disney Way is the belief that we have a phenomenal County which we owe to the fantastic residents that elect our Board, elected officials and judges, who in turn hire the employees whose job is to provide important services to the public.”

Along with the shift in culture and, practical tools have emerged to improve service including customer service awards, customer feedback surveys, signage, online services, leadership development and an employee-to-employee ambassador program. Every employee is encouraged to creatively

solve problems, improve processes and even have some fun at work. The County has dubbed its new ethos the The Ottawa Way.

The reaction has been dramatic, with citizens enthusiastically responding to the change. Comments from residents include:

“He truly cares about not only the public’s safety but also about the business success and reputation.”

“She was very polite and immediately I could tell she was “for me” not against me.”

“He always has valuable information for us and always takes extra time to ensure our questions are all answered. I look forward to our inspections with him.”

“He was extremely kind and helpful and I left smiling, even though I had a \$120 ticket in my hand!”

“He was a great example of how an officer should treat the public. Best encounter I have ever had with a police officer!”

“Even though he issued me a speeding ticket I felt like thanking him by the time we were finished. This is very rare and should be rewarded.”

“We want our customers to have positive experiences accessing Ottawa County services,” adds Shannon Felgner, Communications Manager for Ottawa County. “Whether a citizen is traversing the halls of a building or navigating paperwork, it’s our pleasure to serve.”