



Editorial Perspective:
*3 Ways to WOW Your Members
with a New York State of Mind*



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by Arnie Goldberg

This article originally appeared as a Community Blog post at *CUInsight.com* on April 30, 2015 and is reprinted in its entirety here.

New York City – the Big Apple, the Capital of the World – is my hometown. I grew up in Brooklyn back in the days when every kid was a free-range kid. Before I was out of elementary school, my buddies and I thought nothing of hopping a bus and two subways to head to Radio City Music Hall in Manhattan. There, especially if we could outrun the ushers, we could parlay a dollar into an all-day movie fest that included unlimited popcorn and the Rockettes.

That childhood memory came back to me last week when I joined credit union representatives from all over the country at PSCU's annual MoPRO Conference. Especially in Times Square where we were, everything seemed bigger and busier than ever. But as I watched my colleagues fearlessly heading out to embrace their inner tourists, I realized that credit unions can learn a lot about how to provide seamless, omni-channel WOW member service from the "city that never sleeps." Let's take a look at three things New York City does brilliantly to put visitors at ease and make them feel like they're (almost) in a small town:

Signs of the Times

I might still be wandering the corridors of my hotel if everything hadn't been so well signed. The place had the potential to be ridiculously confusing: There was one lobby on the third floor and another on the fifth, a computer-controlled elevator dispatch system, and just for good measure, a rooftop restaurant with inner and outer rings that rotated at different speeds.

Yet I never got lost once. At every turn, there were clear directions about exactly where to go to reach my desired destination. There were escalators to back up the elevators and stairs to back up the escalators.

Credit unions can learn from this careful attention to user experience by creating clear action paths not only in their branches, but on contact center menus, websites, and mobile apps as well. Product and service usability testing need not be expensive or time-consuming either. So-called "hallway testing," named because it relies on the reactions of five people randomly passing by, can identify the brick walls users run into, their sources of frustration and their wish lists for service enhancements.

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Create a Concierge Mentality

Because New York City recognizes that tourism is one of its major industries, no establishment is without either a trained concierge or at least someone with strong knowledge and hospitality skills. There's even an industry association, the New York City Association of Hotel Concierges, which has sprung up to standardize training and resources. Their mission statement, taken from their website, could serve as a roadmap for the kind of WOW member service credit unions tell us they're trying to achieve.

"The concierge holds the key to the city. We are motivated by a genuine desire to serve and are committed to providing the best possible service to our visitors throughout their stay. From giving simple directions to solving unexpected challenges, we are here to assist in creating lasting memories."

The key to implementing a concierge mentality at your credit union is to focus on welcoming members and prospects, helping them understand and articulate their needs and then working to personalize member experiences that address those needs. What's more, creating a concierge mentality at your credit union doesn't need to be expensive. Simply developing a FAQ section on your website, for example, and making those answers available for ready access by branch personnel, will go a long way to showing members and prospects that your credit union is listening and responding to their needs and concerns.

Value Is in the Eye of the Beholder

Greek philosopher Plato's immortal observation that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" wasn't coined on a visit to New York City but it could have been; after all, when the Dutch purchased Manhattan Island for \$24 worth of trading beads from the Lenape Native Americans, both parties thought they had negotiated the deal of the century.

To this day there is no single New York spirit or point of view but a "state of mind" as individual as the thousands of neighborhoods, tourist attractions and specialty commercial districts available to see and experience. I'm guessing that no two MoPRO Conference attendees crafted the exact same sightseeing and restaurant itinerary during their visit but I'm willing to bet that every one of them came home having experienced their special version of NYC.

Credit unions can harness this emphasis on individualism to create personalized product and service solutions for their members. Whether members' purchase journeys are guided by long-term goals such as retirement or shorter-term needs such as obtaining an auto loan or a credit line increase, each member and each journey needs to be honored as absolutely unique. Credit unions can help their members create personalized rewards programs, website pages and branch experiences that set up and reinforce the value of richly personal experiences for each individual.



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Watch the Numbers Rise as You Head North

As complex and unique as a trip to the Big Apple can be, there's one final lesson that every tourist and credit union can always take to heart: In most areas of the Five Boroughs, the streets are laid out as a numbered grid with the street numbers rising as one heads north. In the end, that may be the best metaphor of all for credit unions: Nothing will WOW your members so much as helping them find their financial "true north" while they watch their portfolio numbers rise as they do.

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