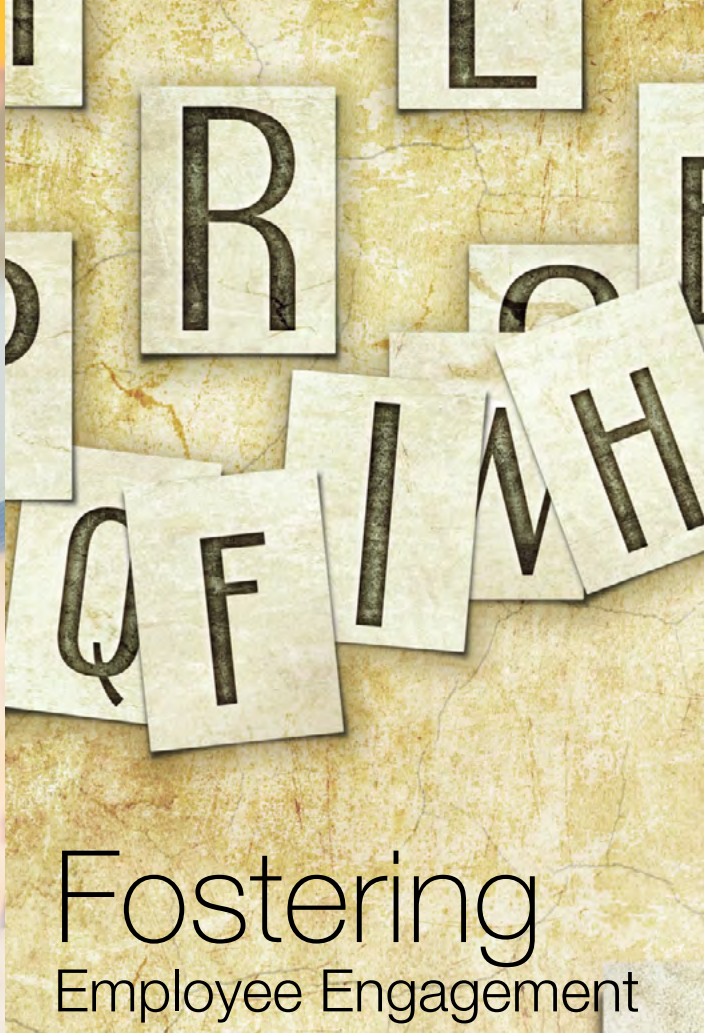




Delivering
Bottom-Line Impact



Fostering
Employee Engagement



Elevating
The Customer Experience

Meet Our 2014 Customer Champions

1to1 Media
**customer
champions**
CELEBRATING 10 YEARS 2004-2014



1to1 Media Customer Champion: Defined

Behind every successful enterprisewide customer strategy is an individual who tirelessly evangelizes the customer cause, who reminds employees that customers *are* the business, who understands how to transform loyalty into profit, and whose efforts both command attention and garner real results.

I am a Customer Champion.

1to1 Media
**customer
champions**

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS 2004-2014



THE COLLABORATIVE CHAMELEON

Where do great ideas come from in your organization?

“Everywhere. While traveling around to our various restaurants, I speak with hundreds of team members. I have a notebook filled with great ideas that came from our team members in every position within the restaurant. We are already working on many of them to get them implemented—things as simple as how our uniforms feel to team members. The key to environment and culture as an organization is that we all listen to everyone. It doesn’t matter who you are. If you have a great idea, you’re going to be heard, and it will be thoughtfully considered, with many of them implemented.”

Mike Lester, The Melting Pot

Empowering Employees to Go Beyond Customer Expectations

2014 Customer Champion Mike Lester, president of The Melting Pot, inspires employees to pursue the ‘Perfect Night Out’ standard by serving customers on an individualized level in any capacity possible.—By Anna Papachristos

Before any organization can truly develop its customer-centric core, leaders must understand that no two customer experiences are alike. Mike Lester, president of [The Melting Pot](#), recognizes that perfection remains subjective and that success means reading each individual guest’s behavioral cues to provide an experience that’s tailored to their preferences.

Lester’s first initiative was to establish the ‘Perfect Night Out’ standard of service, which aims to create a flawless guest experience for all patrons of the restaurant chain. Lester understands that, while some guests may prefer to enjoy their meals at leisure, others want to eat without an excessive wait. Thus, with the ‘Perfect Night Out’ standard in mind, Lester encourages all employees to detect such signs and adjust their service to accommodate the desired experience. Lester hopes to break free from The Melting Pot’s stereotype as an elegant, “special occasions only” restaurant by creating these varied experiences to encourage retention, return, and referral.

‘Perfect Night Out’ isn’t just about providing delicious food and an appropriate atmosphere, however. The initiative also empowers employees to go above and beyond expectations by putting guests’ best interests first and delivering service in any way necessary. For example, one cold winter night, a couple left the restaurant only to find their car battery had died, so they went back inside to use the phone and call AAA. Instead of allowing the guests to call AAA, team members took matters into their own hands, pulled out some jumper cables, and started the car themselves.

Lester and his team even created an awards program to recognize teams from franchise locations that deliver phenomenal service and exceed guest expectations. Known as Pot on Wheels, the awards program was inspired by one occasion when team members brought the fondue experience to the guest’s hospital room for her and her family to enjoy after she’d gone into labor during her dessert. These employees live Lester’s phi-

losophy, bringing his vision to light by focusing solely on guest satisfaction.

“Our employees have the hospitality gene—they care deeply about others,” Lester highlights. “All we have to do is get out of their way. For example, there was one family that, though they weren’t from this one specific area, had vacationed there for years. [The Melting Pot in that town] was their daughter’s favorite restaurant but, unfortunately, she passed away three weeks prior to the vacation in a tragic car accident. The family decided to make the annual trip anyway even though they were in mourning. They came into the restaurant and one of the team members recognized them from previous years, at which point the family informed them of their loss. To lift their spirits, the team took care of their entire meal. They didn’t need to ask permission. They just did it, and that’s what ‘Perfect Night Out’ is all about.”

Under Lester’s guidance, The Melting Pot also introduced new menus based on guest feedback. While the menu was originally developed to reflect team members’ preferences, Lester and his team discovered that these choices didn’t always resonate with guests. As a result, the restaurant has been able to add and remove items, improve existing dishes, and adjust how items are grouped within the dining experience. Each individual restaurant also has the opportunity to offer localized menus, which reflect the various tastes and preferences of guests in their given area.

Lester also encourages employees to look beyond monetary metrics, such as average spend per guest, for this focus detracts from their ability to deliver the ‘Perfect Night Out’ as promised. For Lester and all employees of The Melting Pot, customer centricity means providing service that reaches beyond revenue to develop consistent, positive brand experiences. The company measures success qualitatively, not quantitatively, emphasizing the importance of guest perception and overall happiness, for those who are pleased are more likely to return and recommend, thereby benefiting all those involved.