



Burke, Afton Alps, Telluride Win Guest Service Awards

Beaver Creek Honored with its Third Straight.

Up to 100,000 skier visits

**Burke Mountain
Resort, Vt.**



BY TROY HAWKS

After identifying a list of potential obstacles that skiers and riders might encounter during an average day at Burke Mountain, the resort's management team went to work to redirect its resources in order to eliminate the obstacles. The result was the creation of the Bend Over Backwards (BOB) customer service program.

This season Burke greeters were the first people guests encountered when arriving at the resort. Greeters were on hand to help direct guests to the proper department. Burke also implemented a free ski check center, allowing guests to check their skis or snowboard in a secure area before they entered the lodge.



Burke Mountain Director of Service Operations Joe Kasprzak outlines the resort's award-winning guest service campaign.



Part of Burke Mountain Bend Over Backwards campaign was a free ski check center.

In addition, Burke increased its ambassador staff, offered complimentary wireless internet access and boosted its cell phone service capacity. Also, the resort updated its rental department with new software, reducing rental lines and processing by nearly 50 percent.

As Director of Service Operations Joe Kasprzak submits: "The purpose of the BOB program was to develop products and services that made access to the slopes easier. The addition of more ambassadors, better cell service, and free internet access has improved the guest experience, and we have measurable data that shows improved service in rentals, bag check, ski check and lost and found. It's also worth noting that this season we have not had any reports of stolen equipment. We believe that the complimentary ski check and the presence of more ambassadors on the ground have reduced the theft rate from six to 10 pairs on average each season to no thefts this season."

This is Burke Mountain's first Guest Service Award.

"The results are in! Burke's "Bend Over Backwards" Guest Service Program did a great job at encouraging employees to exceed everyday expectations." – Emilie Kelly ♦

100,000 – 250,000 skier visits

Afton Alps Ski Area, Minn.



After reviewing customer feedback, Afton Alps management first decided to put staff on the hill to help educate guests in 1991. The Afton Alps Guest Service Program has since grown to more than 50 people working as mountain hosts.

“The increased staff has given us the ability to respond quicker to our customers’ needs,” submits Manager Amy Reents.

The hosts are required to work a minimum of two four-hour shifts per week. Two hours of each shift is spent on the slopes, and two hours is spent at one of the resort chalets or directing traffic. Hosts are employed weekdays to assist with various school learning programs, during weekday evenings to monitor and assist ski groups and on the weekends to aid guests from first chair to last.

In addition, hosts are tasked with providing information to skiing and riding guests, as well as helping to orientate arriving guests. They also direct guests to the appropriate terrain for their ability level, assist in managing lift line traffic and provide guided tours of the resort. All tolled, this season the mountain host staff logged more than 6,000 hours at the resort.

“The goal of our mountain host program is to maintain an environment that is enjoyable and safe for all skiers and snowboarders as well as to foster a safe, clean, welcoming, helpful, accommodating, friendly, enjoyable environment at Afton Alps,” says Reents.

This is Afton Alps’ first Guest Service Award.

Afton takes on a proven customer service tactic in its Mountain Hosts program. By fully committing to this program, hosts hit touch points throughout the customer experience, from parking to removing debris from the trail. – Evan Reece



More than 50 mountain hosts make up Afton Alps’ Guest Service Program. All tolled the crew logged more than 6,000 hours in 2007/08.

250,000 – 500,000 skier visits

Telluride Ski Resort, Colo.



This season Telluride embarked on a mission to end an ineffective season bonus program and replace it with a culture of ongoing rewards and recognition. As Employee Relations Manager Jason Merritt explains, the program was designed to create a clear, easily understood connection from the company vision, mission and goals, to departmental tactics and ultimately, to the behaviors and actions of employees. The program was funded with \$146,000 for the sole purpose of rewarding and recognizing front line staff and supervisors.

Also key to the program was employee orientation. At Telluride, monthly follow-up orientations engage employees hired during the course of the season. All employees are also issued an employee resource guide, employee handbook, and information on guest service, environmental initiatives and company history.

Also, the resort’s employee council consists of front line staff members who act as delegates for their respective departments and communicate directly with resort CEO Dave Riley. In addition, Dave’s Blog allows locals, second home owners and guests to communicate directly with Riley.

“At Telluride, we feel the creation of employee and guest advocacy is the best way to provide guest service that is unmatched in North America,” submits Merritt. “What better way to achieve this than by creating an environment in which people love to work and by extension, guests love to visit.”

This is Telluride’s first Guest Service Award.

Telluride lets the guests tell us how great the service is, and we see it, experience it and hear it wherever we go – on the mountain and online. The resort does an excellent job of creating a fun spirit of service in each department and staff group, sets attainable objects and rewards everyone – employees and guests alike. – Emilie Kelly

500,000 + skier visits

Beaver Creek Resort, Colo.



This season Beaver Creek launched the Guest Service Ambassador program with the mantra “Do the Unexpected.” The ambassador team is made up of 14 carefully selected members who join more than 150 other guest service staff and volunteers at the resort.

The ambassador team is tasked with ensuring that each guest lives Beaver Creek’s “Not Exactly Roughing It” experience. As part of the

program, daily, detailed documentation tracks each guest encounter made by the ambassadors. Meetings are held twice a day to discuss positive encounters as well as identify areas of improvement. A weekly award is given to the ambassador with the best guest encounter.

One such encounter this season involved a family who had gotten a flat tire on their baby stroller. The ambassador obtained the model number of the stroller and called various local retail stores in search of a replacement tire. The ambassador then drove to a local retailer, picked up and paid for a replacement tire, and left the tire at the hotel concierge desk and informed the guest that a new tire was waiting for them at their hotel.

A key component to Beaver Creek's program are the employee training initiatives and employee rewards programs. New employee orientation sessions are led by resort COO John Garnsey. Meanwhile with the C Note reward program, 50 members of the resort's management team are armed with \$100 to distribute to employees who demonstrate outstanding service. In addition, the Plus One recognition program also rewards \$100 to employees who receive Plus One recognition for providing extraordinary guest service, and two monthly safety awards of \$250 are given to employees who introduce new safety practices into their departments.

This is Beaver Creek's third Guest Service Award with previous wins in 2005/06 and 2006/07.

Great examples of going above and beyond. The Ambassador program enables employees to do just that. Employees are empowered to not only make things right when something goes wrong, but also to go the extra mile. – Kate Thomson ■



Beaver Creek's ambassador team is made up of 14 carefully selected members who join more than 150 other guest service staff.



From left to right: Telluride CEO Dave Riley, Afton Alps Manager Amy Reents, Beaver Creek Guest Services Manager Laura Dziadosz, Burke Mountain Director of Service Operations Joe Kasprzak, ski icon and Guest Emcee Johnny Moseley, Snow Monsters President and NSAA Guest Emcee Jack Turner, SnoCountry Ski Associations' Tom Cottrill and Rob Chandler.