

Arena staff looks for customers' satisfaction

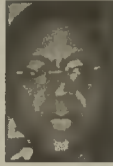
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The WOW program strives to teach employees to deliver stellar customer service, resolve any customer service issues quickly, and keep team members in constant communication.

"The key to success for effective guest service is consistency," said Hendricks. In order to be consistent, employees need to live the culture of the organization, embrace the fact that guests are our number one priority, and have a positive outlook.

We hope that our WOW guest service program will help our employees incorporate that philosophy in their everyday work."

"Charlotte Bobcats majority owner Bob Johnson challenged us to create an emotionally engaging experience at the Charlotte Bobcats Arena, and we are doing that from top to bot-



Johnson

tom," said Barry Silberman, chief operating officer of the arena.

Approximately 500 part-time event employees were hired through a job fair in June. They were required to attend 10 hours of training including an orientation session, WOW customer service training and job-specific training before the arena's grand opener of the Rolling Stone concert.

The program also allows for public and monetary recognition of employees who exem-

plify the WOW philosophy and deliver exceptional guest service.

"Last week we had a holiday party for the event staff to say thank you for what you do for us, said Hendricks. We also now have to invest in them, to show them that we care about them. It's not just you pouring into us, but we have to pour back into them as well. I have to also show them that I care about them, not just professionally but also personally."

"The WOW philosophy will

help assure the delivery of exceptional customer service that will exceed the guest's expectations," said Silberman.

Thomas Tillman has certainly demonstrated that kind of customer service and exceeded the guests' and Hendricks' expectations. On Tillman's day off, he returned a fan's lost items to them to prevent them from going to the lost and found center in the arena.

Hendricks admits there are more superstars who exem-

plify the WOW philosophy like Tillman. She attributes that to the hiring and training process.

"We looked for a very specific kind of individuals throughout the hiring process. The most important factor in hiring our staff was to make sure they had a smile on their face and a friendly, welcoming disposition. The rest of it you can teach," said Hendricks.

Basketball league's troubles shutter 1st-year team

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a \$250,000 to \$300,000 operation.

"But I think those guys with those other teams underestimated what it would take and, ultimately, couldn't afford to make some road trips and things like that. That just wound up killing us. It was a domino

effect."

Hughes said that when opposing teams began canceling games scheduled against the Krunk in Charlotte - which happened on Dec. 20, 27 and 29 - his organization still was responsible for paying Cricket Arena for use of the facility on those days.

And although the Krunk

has suspended operations, Hughes said he still is responsible for paying \$66,000 for the remaining 12 home games. In lieu of games, he said he might try to have some additional concerts at the arena. At the team's first home game, he brought in hip-hop star Mike Jones.

"But it's just too overwhelming financially to try to keep the basketball going this season," Hughes said. "Cricket Arena had concerns about the viability of the league from the start. And now that I look back on it myself, there were some warning signs."

Joe Newman, Chief

Executive Officer of the ABA, did not return phone messages left at the league's Indianapolis headquarters.

Is the Krunk gone from the Queen City for good?

Despite all he's been through, financially and otherwise, Hughes manages to maintain some optimism.

"Either I'm a sentimental

fool or stubborn or both," Hughes said with a laugh. "I know that the heritage in Carolina basketball is a rich one, and I know an ABA team in Charlotte can work."

"I'll definitely be discussing some possibilities in the future."

Chevron fights allegations of rights, environmental abuses

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around the world. Critics claim such abuses are increasing as the global scarcity of petroleum drives oil companies into countries with rich reserves but poor protections for human rights and the environment.

"It's the resource curse," said Steve Kretzmann, executive director of Oil Change International. "Unfortunately, the rule around the world is that where you have oil extraction, you see increasing rates of poverty, human rights abuses and environmental destruction."

In Ecuador, the plaintiffs estimate it will cost \$6 billion to clean up 18.5 billion gallons of oily wastewater that Texaco, which merged with Chevron in 2001, dumped into more than 600 unlined pits and streams between 1972 and 1990.

Chevron is also fighting lawsuits filed in San Francisco by Nigerian villagers who claim the company's subsidiary supported military attacks on protesters in the oil-rich Niger Delta. A federal lawsuit is scheduled to go to trial next fall, and a trial for a state class-action lawsuit is set to start in 2007.

Chevron lawyers deny the plaintiffs' claims in both Chevron and Ecuador and believe they will prevail in court.

Company officials say Chevron has a long record of protecting human rights and the environment, pointing to its annual reports that detail goals and accomplishments in areas such as environmental management, human rights, AIDS, climate change, energy efficiency, health and safety.

"Wherever we operate, we

strive to be a good example through our employment policies, our support for universal human rights as well as obeying domestic and host country laws," said Maria Pica, Chevron's corporate responsibility manager.

Investors don't appear to be worried. Like the rest of the oil industry, Chevron has reported robust profits from soaring worldwide demand.

Fadel Gheit, a senior energy analyst at Oppenheimer & Co., believes the company will likely win both cases, and if they are forced to compensate victims, the payments won't be big enough to affect the bottom line.

"It's nothing but background noise," Gheit said.

But critics say the company's troubles in Nigeria and Ecuador are part of a deeper problem.

"Both ultimately arise out of the corporation's disregard for basic human rights and environmental protection," said Marco Simons, legal director of EarthRights International. "It is part of a pattern that's pervasive in the oil industry."

Simons and other industry critics say the extraction of oil doesn't create many jobs or distribute wealth but props up repressive regimes, leading to widespread social unrest and ecological damage in oil-rich regions.

Chevron is hardly the only petroleum company fighting lawsuits alleging abuse. Talisman Energy Inc., for example, is being sued in U.S. courts by Sudanese villagers who allege the Canadian oil company provided money, vehicles and logistics to Sudanese soldiers who sought to depopulate 142 villages near oil fields from 1999 to 2002. Company lawyers have denied the alle-

gations.

As abuse reports have risen, so has the ability of victims to hold corporations accountable. Thanks to the Internet and an increasingly global network of activists, victims are drawing more attention to their plight, and more lawyers are taking on cases.

In an undisclosed settlement in 2005, El Segundo-based Unocal agreed to compensate 15 Myanmar villagers who held the company liable for forced labor, murder and rape allegedly carried out by government soldiers during construction of the \$1.2 billion Yadana pipeline.

Chevron, which acquired Unocal in August, now faces criticism for doing business in the Southeast Asian nation formerly known as Burma, where the U.S. government has banned new investment due to human rights concerns.

"Our position is that no one should be investing in Burma right now," said EarthRights' Simons. "It's impossible to do business in Burma without being complicit in serious human rights abuses."

Chevron officials would not comment on the Myanmar operations because the company is still evaluating its new assets, according to spokesman Jeff Moore.

The Nigerian plaintiffs accuse Chevron's subsidiary of supporting attacks by Nigerian soldiers that destroyed homes and killed or injured dozens of people. A federal judge ruled in 2004 that Chevron could be held responsible if Chevron Nigeria was involved.

The lawsuits, which seek unspecified damages, claim the subsidiary provided helicopters, boats and planes to Nigerian soldiers who fired at

South Carolina rings in the new year by discarding minibottles

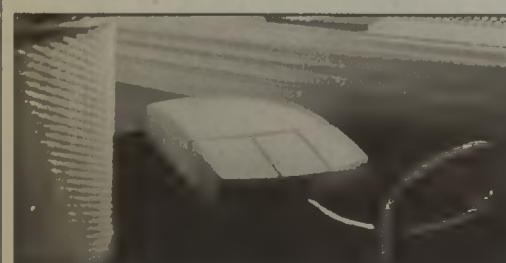
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Sports Bar & Grill in Columbia. The staff was free pouring while guests were still kissing, hugging and toasting over champagne

early Sunday.

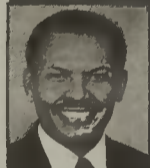
While the new liquor law took effect just after midnight, a calendar quirk wouldn't let many bars in the state take advantage. Sunday alcohol sales are

banned in most of South Carolina outside of the Columbia area and the coast, meaning last call at most bars had to come before 2005's end.



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What Will The Future Bring?

As we come into a new year, many of us see it as an opportunity to start all over again. There were some dreams we had for ourselves in 2005, but for various reasons, we may not have reached those goals.

Some people in looking back over their failure of achieving their dreams will have many explanations for the lack of achieving their dreams. Some will say that others stood in their way and actually actively opposed their success. This could be true. Others may say that they did not have the resources they needed to finance their dreams. This could also be true. Others may point out that their friends and family did not provide them the support they needed. This, too could be true.

Indeed, any of us could point to any number of circumstances and situations that we could say stood in the way of our success. However, regardless of what the situations may have been,

ultimately it was left up to us to decide how we would respond to these obstacles.

Regardless of the barriers we may encounter in life, it is always up to us to decide how we will respond to them. Our choice is where our power lies in determining our future.

It will be no different in 2006. How far we travel along the road to success ultimately depends on us and our attitude to all that we encounter. What the future will bring will be determined by our own choices. When everything else is taken away from us, there is always one freedom that remains: That one freedom is your ability to choose your own future.

What will the future bring for you in 2006?

You decide! You have the power.

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