

## editor's note



### I JUST RETURNED FROM AN ABSOLUTELY

fabulous vacation—and it wasn't just that the January sunshine in Arizona completely trumps the snow in Chicago.

The vacation started, as so many do, at the airport. The flight was typical and we ended the first leg of our journey at Enterprise Car Rental, which had the lowest fees of any rental company I could find online. As we approached the rental booth, two employees came up to us and asked if we would like some water. The day was already warm and as we nodded our appreciation, they presented us (gratis) with five bottles of icy cold water. One of the men looked at our contract and then escorted us to the car area. Given the amount of driving we anticipated and the number of passengers (somehow three kids take up more room than any number of adults), I had requested a minivan. Amazingly, we were

given our choice of three—a Sienna, a Grand Caravan and a Town and Country.

What a wonderful experience! The low-cost provider didn't simply provide the minimum required; rather, they provided an exceptional level of customer service. (Ask yourself what reaction a customer or client has when they first interact with your business. Do you provide a level of service so superior that they not only want to use your services again, but they also tell everyone they know about you?)

As great as the trip began, it only got better. Our hotel was beautiful, our drive to Sedona spectacular. But the highlight—for me and my entire family—was a visit to Canyon Creek Ranch. Our guide, Joe, was the perfect host. He made us feel comfortable on our horses, entertained with his tails and explanations of the trails and scenery, and taught us skills ranging from roping to shooting (though we were all extremely nervous to put a loaded gun in the hand of our rambunctious nine-year-old). Looking back at the experience, it was hard to figure out what made it so perfect. The ride wasn't much different than one my wife and I had taken in Colorado a few years earlier. The difference, I think, was the employees. Whether we were asking about helmets for our kids or laughing at my attempts at axe throwing, everyone made us feel welcome and comfortable.

In contrast, I knew my vacation was over as soon as I got home. While my wife and I started unpacking, one of the kids turned on the TV. It didn't work. I called Comcast and couldn't get a live person but did reach their automated system. And fairly quickly, I resolved the problem. Within 20 minutes, TV and internet service was restored. But I wanted to know why the problem had occurred and I couldn't get an answer. While Comcast resolved the problem, they left me irritated and considering alternatives to their service. Yes, they were competent. But they were not enjoyable to deal with.

If you read anything by Malcolm Gladwell or his ilk and think about their message of what makes a great company great, it really boils down to the corporate culture and the employees. And it all deals with how the company relates to its customers and clients.

What experience do your clients have when they work with your company? How do your customers view your company? Are you Joe...or are you Comcast?

(By the way, if you haven't registered yet for this year's NASCC: The Steel Conference, what are you waiting for? The registration fee goes up each week! So visit [www.aisc.org/nascc](http://www.aisc.org/nascc) and register today.)

**SCOTT MELNICK**  
EDITOR

**MSC**  
MODERN STEEL CONSTRUCTION

#### Editorial Offices

1 E. Wacker Dr., Suite 700  
Chicago, IL 60601  
312.670.2400 tel  
312.896.9022 fax

#### Editorial Contacts

EDITOR & PUBLISHER  
Scott L. Melnick  
312.670.8314  
melnick@modernsteel.com

#### SENIOR EDITOR

Thomas L. Klemens, P.E.  
312.670.8316  
klemens@modernsteel.com

#### ASSISTANT EDITOR

Tasha Weiss  
312.670.5439  
weiss@modernsteel.com

#### DIRECTOR OF PUBLISHING

Areti Carter  
312.670.5427  
aretic@modernsteel.com

#### GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Kristin Egan  
312.670.8313  
egan@modernsteel.com

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#### Advertising Contact

Account Manager  
Louis Gurthel  
231.228.2274 tel  
231.228.7759 fax  
gurthel@modernsteel.com

For advertising information, contact Louis Gurthel or visit [www.modernsteel.com](http://www.modernsteel.com)

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