

“Kevin’s terrific book provides concrete and useful tools
for winning the trust and loyalty of your customers.”
—**Stephen M.R. Covey**, bestselling author of *The Speed of Trust*



CUSTOMERS ONLY WANT TWO THINGS

3RD EDITION

**WINNING LOYALTY
IN A
COMPETITIVE WORLD**

KEVIN R. MILLER

FOREWORD BY MIKE OSIKOYA

What Readers Say

“Kevin has provided a superb mix of principles and tools to help us gain and retain customer loyalty—a must-read for anyone who wants to grow their business success through high-trust relationships.”

—**David M. R. Covey**, coauthor of the bestselling book
Trap Tales: Outsmarting the 7 Hidden Obstacles to Success

“Kevin Miller has identified the two basic needs of those we serve and provides solutions for problem solving, creating great experiences and ideas for personal application. The principles resonate quickly with the audience and within minutes the attendees are formulating their own personal plan on how to reach their customers, citizens, or students by creating unique experiences. Even after three decades of retail leadership, I found new ideas on almost every page.”

—**Chuck Richards**, former regional director of operations and director of Walmart Leadership Academy, store manager track

“If you want your business to thrive in today’s competitive environment, you must read *Customers Only Want Two Things* by Kevin Miller. You will learn how to create raving fans out of your customers, so they become a powerful marketing tool that catapults your company’s growth.”

—**Pam Sudlow**, past president, The National Exchange Club; financial advisor, Clayton Fell Advisors, LLC

“Miller coaches us to win in business and in life by cultivating reciprocal, interdependent win-win relationships. You will enjoy reading and studying this entertaining and practical guide. I encourage you to study this book and adopt the mindset, skillset and toolset of visionary service leaders.”

—**Ken Shelton**, author and founder of Executive Excellence

“We in Africa are excited to bring Kevin’s extraordinary ideas and tools to accelerate the success of African businesses like mine across

the continent. Africa is on the verge of making greater and greater contributions in the business world, and winning customer loyalty and staff loyalty lie at the heart of this. This book is filled with practical tips as well as entertaining case studies and examples to follow and learn from. You will like this book!”

—**Seth Ogoe Ayim**, cofounder & CEO of Bountiful Technologies Ltd and VisionBound Africa Ltd

“The concepts in Kevin’s book were invaluable in helping my staff and myself become more focused on what was important to our business. Because of what we learned about the dynamics of winning the loyalty of both staff and customers, we could grow more rapidly than ever before. Interesting and engaging, this book was impossible to put down until the last page. You will find yourself wanting to read it again as soon as you are finished.”

—**Marilyn Mower**, CEO and founder of First Choice Home Health and Hospice, NightAngel Media, and Amara Success, Inc.

“A marvelous book, full of tips and techniques that anyone can use to turn customers into loyal customers who help build a business. Reading through the examples reminds us of how many times we have been disappointed. However, as you read through, you realize just how many brilliant, simple, everyday ideas Kevin is giving us. Managers reading the book will recognize the shortcomings in their service offering because the examples are hard hitting. It’s nice to read a book that describes an issue and gives answers”.

—**Martin Hedley**, managing director, Vision Achievement Limited, United Kingdom

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This book is dedicated to my wife and companion,
Denise, for all she has taught me about excellence,
and the thousands of experiences we have shared
together in customer service around the world.

It is also dedicated to the thousands of super-service heroes
we have met internationally, whose professional excellence and
caring service provided much of the inspiration for this book.

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Contents

Foreword by Mike Osikoya	xiii
Introduction	1
Chapter One: “It Happened at Happy’s”	3
Chapter Two: The Loyalty Factor	7
Chapter Three: The Secret Sauce of Service	27
Chapter Four: #1 Solve My Problem	37
Chapter Five: #2 Leave Me Feeling Great about the Experience!	47
Chapter Six: The Three Keys to Great Customer Service	57
Chapter Seven: Adding Your “Personal Signature”	65
Chapter Eight: Serving the Crusty and the Cranky	71
Chapter Nine: Leadership: The Ultimate Force Multiplier	89
Chapter Ten: It’s a Two-Way Street: Being a Great Customer Helps Too!	115
Chapter Eleven: Conclusion	121
Specialty Chapters	123
Chapter Twelve: Winning Loyalty in Retailing	125
Chapter Thirteen: Winning Loyalty in Education	133
Chapter Fourteen: Winning Loyal Citizens	149

CONTENTS

Chapter Fifteen: Winning Loyalty in Healthcare	157
Chapter Sixteen: Winning Loyalty in Contact Centers	167
Chapter Seventeen: Winning Loyalty in Realty	173
Chapter Eighteen: Winning Loyalty in Hospitality	181
Notes	193
Works Cited and Bibliography	195
The VisionBound Story	199
About the Author	203
About the Illustrator	205

Foreword

Only Two Things

You are about to embark on one of the most important learning events in your life. Especially as they apply to all business and even personal relationships.

Kevin has created a groundbreaking concept about how we can transform satisfied customers and others to LOYAL customers through the two major lanes he will reveal.

My purpose in this forward is to emphasize how we can apply these concepts and tools in our unique settings in Africa and cite some personal examples.

The drive towards quality improvement and creating customer delight eventually leads to customer loyalty and is a never-ending odyssey.

It is well said that “Being on par in terms of price and quality only gets you into the game. Service wins the game.”

We know that most of our 54 African nation cultures place a very strong emphasis on warm personal relationships. Many of my foreign friends are at first surprised then deeply touched at the warmth and personal touches they experience here in Ghana but also elsewhere. It is these experiences that help them feel a deeper sense of loyalty and draw them to return again and again. Let me give you an example of a company that has earned my loyalty:

A commercial bank that earned my loyalty is Sterling Bank Plc. I used the bank's mobile application to affect a money transfer to a customer. Unfortunately, there was a system glitch when part of the money wasn't delivered to the beneficiary. I called the bank to lodge a complaint. Within minutes the amount not delivered was credited back to my account. They called back to apologize for the inconvenience. They even called my customer on my behalf to explain the reason the money didn't arrive on time! That was superlative customer service at its best. They have earned my loyalty by that singular act ever since.

On the other end of the spectrum, I have had experiences where service fell short of my expectations. I vowed NEVER to return to do business or buy there again. Kevin shares such an experience in the start of the book. But here is mine:

Recently, I took my son out on a Friday evening to get some food for dinner at a local restaurant after an exhaustive week. We were both very hungry. I asked the counter attendant to take our orders and asked how long it would take for the orders to be ready. She responded positively that in less than ten minutes the food will be ready. We sat down and patiently waited for our food.

After waiting for one hour and the food wasn't ready. I went to the attendant to find out what was keeping our food for that long. She was busy on the phone either attending to other customers or having a fun chat with a friend. It took the intervention of the restaurant Manager to get our food out of their kitchen after one hour and 10 minutes. Since then, I vowed not to return to that restaurant for any reason again. They have lost a genuine customer because of a bad customer service. Worse yet, I have shared that story with others.

So, if we asked our customers the Ultimate Question as found in Chapter 9, how many would be loyal promoters, how many satisfied passives and how many would be unhappy detractors. I certainly am a detractor with the example I just shared.

Here in Africa a few businesses and retailers have done the kinds of things you will learn in later chapters. You know who your

service heroes are. What Kevin and I want to do in this book and in our workshops is help you create a truly exceptional, extraordinary service culture and experience for your valued customers, so you become a service hero to them!

Leadership is the key to winning staff loyalty. Unhappy, uninspired, unmotivated staff will rarely offer the kind of warm, personal experiences that win the loyalty we seek. That is where our leadership seminars and his forthcoming book, *Leaders Do Five Things: Taking the Helm in a Turbulent World* complement nicely.

Many of the things we can learn in this book also apply in our personal lives with our spouses, children, relatives and community. As Stephen Covey taught, love is a verb. Love the feeling comes from love the verb.

I have been inspired on how to apply many of these concepts in my role as a Reverend Minister at my local church and as well as a Chief Executive Officer of two thriving businesses in Ghana. Mikensy Consulting Limited and Unimas Microfinance Limited.

See which ideas inspire you the most and go forth to win warm loyalty in the hearts and minds of those you interact with and serve.

May God bless all of us in this sacred endeavor.

So, start reading! Start learning more! And start doing!

Mike Osikoya

Introduction



That's the problem with superheroes—they're not around when you need them." That's the line that Lois Lane quipped at Superman just after he rescued her from nearly suffocating as dirt poured into her car at the end of the movie *Superman*.

Perhaps you've wondered the same thing as a customer: standing in a store, needing help, looking for someone—anyone, to rescue you and just give some service. Sure, a super-service-hero would be great, but an ordinary hero would do just fine—someone to skillfully deliver the two simple things any customer needs: (1) *Solve my problem*, and (2) *Leave me feeling great about the experience*. Only by providing both can you win true loyalty. There is a difference between satisfying a customer and winning their loyalty, and that difference can make or break a business. The chapters ahead provide some concepts and concrete tools for providing these two things.

This book has two major objectives. First, to provide a practical, hands-on primer packed with tools to use to transform your customers' experience. These ideas come from research and a lifetime of experiencing customer service while living and traveling around the world. Periodically in the book you will find a Personal Application Scale or activity where you can apply the concepts to your own service system.

The second purpose is to hopefully provide more joy and satisfaction to the workplace. Studies show that 50-70 percent of US workers feel little or no such satisfaction. My hope is that the inspiration and skills shared in this book can lift people's spirits and help them feel the joy of creating positive relationships with customers, co-workers and others in their lives.

I hope this book provides ideas for your personal life as well. In a real sense, our friends and family members are customers too—because they have problems to solve and want to feel great around us.

I have been involved with helping businesses win loyal customers, provide inspiring leadership, and build winning teams for over 30 years. My intent is to impart practical ideas and skills to help achieve new levels of excellence. So, let the adventure begin: turn the page and you are on the way to knowing what it takes to be a true super-service-hero!

Customer satisfaction is worthless. Customer loyalty is priceless. —Jeffrey Gitomer, speaker and author

CHAPTER ONE

“It Happened at Happy’s”

A Customer Service Horror Story

Disclaimers: The name of the restaurant is changed to protect the guilty, and no actual Happy’s employees were harmed in this story.

On a warm summer day in 1996, I went to grab a quick lunch at Happy’s, a fast food outlet in a neighboring city. I walked up to place my order and was greeted with what I call “the rolling-eyed glare” from a 17-year-old. Her attitude was clear, but unspoken—*“This would be a pretty good place to work if these stupid customers didn’t keep coming in the door.”* I think you know the type. I ordered a combo meal, but rather than taking the standard soda, I asked for a chocolate shake. She rolled her eyes again at this new imposition. She made the shake, returned a glazed look, shoved my tray to me, and took my money. There was no thanks or acknowledgement whatsoever.



Pause button: The premise of this book is about winning customer loyalty, not merely providing satisfaction. And loyalty is a very deep emotion, won by actions, not words. What were her actions

conveying to me at this point? Imagine a friend asked me Fred Reichheld's Ultimate Question (see Chapter Two): "*How likely is it you would recommend Happy's to a friend or family member?*" On a scale of zero to ten, Happy's would be lucky if I gave them, or her, a four. But it got worse.

I sat down, took a sip of my shake and about gagged. It was not only melted—it was warm!

I sighed and took the shake back to the girl, who glared again and almost snarled, "What's the problem?" I told her, and she looked at me like she didn't believe me. She then stuck her finger in the shake! She wiped it on her apron, sighed and said, "There must be something wrong with our machine." (I now refer to moments such as these as a "duhhh moment" for the customer!)

She proceeded to totally ignore me as I stood there while she fiddled around with the shake machine. She looked flustered as if she didn't know what to do, and said, "I'll have to talk to my manager." She disappeared, and then returned several minutes later with her manager, a young man who turned out to be equally unconcerned. He said, "What's your problem?" Obviously, the cashier didn't care enough to even pass on my complaint to him. We went through the same process as he fiddled with the machine. In the meantime, what was happening to my burger and fries? Getting soggy and colder by the second—and I knew that!

He finally condescendingly asked, "So what do you want?" I said, "Another drink, I guess," and he said, "Well, you can't have a shake!" This time, I let my frustration show and said, "Well duhh." And guess what? *He* was the one who acted offended, as if I was at fault—a "difficult customer." He glared at me, shoved an empty cup at me and gestured to the drink dispenser. As I walked back to my cold hamburger and limp, greasy fries with a soda I did not want, I was steaming. I turned around and said in a loud voice, "I will *never* eat at Happy's again."

Almost in concert, they both rolled their eyes and offered lop-sided grins as if to say, "So? What's one customer to us?"

And you know what? I've never darkened a Happy's door again, and I never will. If I were dying of hunger, dragging myself down the street, and Happy's was the first restaurant I came to, I'd just keep on crawlin'.

Maybe you're smiling right now, not so much at the story, but remembering a time when something like that happened to you: you walked out of the store or restaurant vowing never to go back again. And you probably haven't. You see, that day Happy's did not lose "just another customer;" they lost the LVC—the Lifetime Value of a Customer. And that's a lot of money! That day, I did not say to myself, "I'll never eat at this particular Happy's again." I said, "I'll never eat at *Happy's* again." It's been over twenty years now, and I have never crossed one of their thresholds again. I've spent hundreds of dollars at fast-food outlets, but Happy's hasn't earned one of them, and they never will. Not only that, but every one of my family members knows they can never spend a dollar at Happy's or I will haunt them!

I am happy to report that they closed that Happy's store and a parking lot took its place.

So, let's finish this off with the Ultimate Question: "*How likely is it I would recommend Happy's to a friend or family member?*" Zero. Not only did they violate my satisfaction, they also lost my loyalty and earned in me what is called a *detractor*—someone determined to get even.

Merely satisfying customers will not be enough to earn their loyalty. Instead, they must experience exceptional service worthy of their repeat business and referral.

Understand the factors that drive this customer revolution. —Rick Tate, Impact Achievement Group

CX: The Customer Experience: CX is a relatively new term used to describe the customer experience, and a simple Google search finds numerous studies and articles about the importance of CX. CX is becoming increasingly important for businesses to succeed or even survive. One study by the Walker research firm predicts that CX will surpass even quality and availability as the most important determinant of business success.¹

Personal Application Scale:

Now it's your turn. Think of a restaurant you recently visited. Write in the name of it below:



Now, as you were leaving, if they had asked you the ultimate question: "How likely is it you would recommend our restaurant to a friend or family member?" Where would you have rated them along the scale below? (Circle one.)

Highly Unlikely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Highly Likely

Why did you give them that score? What did they do well or not well in their CX? Be specific.

An ounce of loyalty is worth a pound of cleverness.
 —Elbert Hubbard, writer and publisher

CHAPTER TWO

The Loyalty Factor

Customer Satisfaction Is Not Good Enough!



I was driving through Albuquerque some years ago and saw a cargo van parked by the side of a road advertising a local dental office. In bright letters on the side of the van it said, “*Customer Satisfaction Is Our Goal.*” I smiled because I wanted to take a magic marker and help them out a bit. I would have crossed out the word *satisfaction* and replaced it with *loyalty*.

As noted in the introduction, there is a big difference between satisfying a customer and winning their loyalty, and that difference can make or break a business.

Jeffrey Gitomer wrote a book with a rather surprising title: *Customer Satisfaction Is Worthless; Customer Loyalty Is Priceless*. He does a superb job in his book explaining why this is true.

Ultimately, most customers have dozens of places to go that can satisfy them. I surely did that day at Happy’s. This is true in almost any business or service. Customers today *expect* to be satisfied. They expect a tasty meal, a comfortable, clean hotel room, and quick service. None of these overly impresses them or earns their loyalty. (I’m not going to run out of a grocery store shouting, “Wow! They have eggs and milk!”)

Winning a customer's undying loyalty is an entirely different matter. So, the first thing to change is your staff's mindset—away from merely *satisfying* a customer to winning their loyalty. And the skillset and toolset for doing this are much different.

The purpose of a business is to create a customer who creates customers. —Shiv Singh, former SVP for Visa

Let's dive deeper by exploring what loyalty is, how it is created through trust, and how to measure it.

What Is Loyalty?

loy·al·ty²

noun

the quality of being loyal to someone or something.

a strong feeling of support or allegiance.

From that dictionary definition, we want customers who have a strong feeling of support and allegiance because they do four basic things.

Loyal Customers Do Four Things

Ultimately, loyalty is an emotion. Think of a business or organization that you feel loyal to. Write the name of it below:

I'll almost bet that you have done at least three of the four things that loyal customers do:

- You **return again and again** to do business with them.
- You **buy more** or use more of their services.
- You have **referred your friends** or others to go there or use them.
- You have **offered suggestions** or feedback to them.

Now think of what they have done differently, above and beyond the call of duty, to win that loyalty.

I am loyal to Costco. I look forward to going there, return again and again, and always buy more things than I planned on. Of course, it doesn't help when they tempt me along the way to sample various delicious foods. I end up buying frozen burritos or other things because I made the mistake of going to Costco hungry! And, when I have offered suggestions to them, they have responded by bringing in products I requested. Costco has won my loyalty and my trust. A friend of mine told me a funny Costco story. He only had one item, an apple pie, when he went through the check-out line. He asked the cashier if he won a prize that day. When she asked why, he said, "I only bought one thing at Costco!" She jokingly said, "Sir, we don't allow that."

Loyalty impacts the bottom line. Consider these statistics:³

- 47 percent of customers would take their business to a competitor within a day of experiencing poor customer service.
- 83 percent of customers say loyalty is a factor of trust.
- Shareholder return is more than four times higher in companies that have high trust and loyalty in customers and staff.

Profit in business comes from repeat customers: customers that boast about your product and service, and that bring friends with them. —W. Edwards Deming, engineer and management consultant

Loyalty Is Founded on Trust

In his book, *The Speed of Trust*, Stephen M.R. Covey states that "nothing is as fast as the speed of trust," and "nothing in business is as important as relationships of trust." He explains that when customers trust, everything moves faster and often cheaper. Transactions speed up and customers trust our advice, systems, and processes. High-trust customers cause fewer issues, complain less, and work *with* us, not *against* us, to help us succeed. They have a vested interest in our success. Covey also says that return on investment

in high-trust companies is more than four times that in low-trust companies. He further explains that we all either pay the cost of low trust, what he calls “trust taxes,” or we enjoy the benefits of high trust, what he calls “trust dividends.”

Think: How might you be losing business because of poor trust (trust tax)? Where do you have the dividends of high trust? What can you do to earn more benefits from high trust (trust dividends)?



Customers want to trust businesses and products, and trust builds loyalty. Ultimately, most customer trust comes from two major things: *People + Processes/Systems*



Of course, great customer service is often a human interaction experience. I heard Dr. Stephen R. Covey wisely say, “*If you put great people in poor systems, the systems win.*” (Italics added for emphasis.) This is intuitive: just think of a time you have been frustrated as a customer or as a provider by some terrible system. Covey also believed that if you put average people in a great system, they can usually give great service.

Amazon is a prime example of a company that has won superb customer loyalty almost solely with a system. I have spent thousands

of dollars on Amazon and not once interacted directly with a person. The people are there, behind the scenes, ensuring that their great system continues to operate and improve.

The people in my hometown Costco are friendly and helpful every time. But Costco has also created very customer-friendly *systems*. Their return system is simple: they have a record of my purchases as a member, require no receipt or proof of purchase, and rapidly and kindly return my money, do an exchange, or offer me store credit. Compare that with some stores where you practically must have a receipt sealed by a notary within the last two weeks to get a refund!

Let's add a third element to this trust concept and call it the **Three P Model**. Note that I include systems as a part of processes:



The *people* and *processes/systems* parts of the model are the same as in the previous trust model, but we add a third element of products, which is self-explanatory. If a restaurant does not have good-to-great food, having great people and customer-friendly, efficient processes won't keep it in business very long. I saw this happen to a restaurant that opened with great fanfare. It was a multimillion-dollar disaster! It was a spectacular place, with waterfalls, a lake, Mayan cliff divers, animated jungle animals, sound effects, and an attentive staff. The lines to get in the first week were a block long,

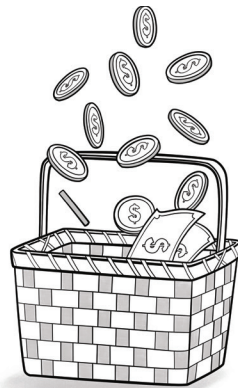
and the waiting time was over two hours. The problem was the food. It was about the worst Mexican food in town. Problems with their processes usually meant it arrived cold. The food was scarcely better than a microwave dinner. I took my family only once, and that was the story with most other people. Within about three years the restaurant closed its doors.

In contrast, some stores and restaurants have great products or food, but the service staff and processes don't measure up. Here's an example of great systems at work. Twenty years ago, I took my car in for a tune-up at a local TuneEx. They were friendly and did a fine job. I was impressed exactly one week later when their receptionist gave me a call to find out if my car was still running well and, if not, to please bring it back. She told me they would check back in three weeks. Indeed, on the month anniversary of my service, they gave me one more call. I went back to see how they do it, and she showed me their system. She had three columns on her screen: today's services, those from a week ago, and those from a month ago. When she is not serving in column 1, she calls people in columns 2 and 3. That's a great system.

Systems allow ordinary people to do extraordinary things. —Michael Gerber, author of *The E Myth*

The Power of Processes and Systems

In his research for his book, *The Speed of Trust*, Stephen M.R. Covey tells a story of a hot dog vendor on the streets of New York City. The vendor saw that it was taking him far too long to make change. Long lines were causing many customers to walk away. So, he came up with a new high-trust system. He put a basket full of change by his register and told his customers, "Make your own change." If they were amazed, he said, "Sure, you know I can trust you." Trusting complete strangers



to make their own change revolutionized his business. He now moves customers through the line twice as fast and many of them leave much larger tips because they like being trusted. He has more than doubled his profits with no extra costs! This story is confirmed in a video used in the *Speed of Trust* course.



Idea: Examine every system that impacts your customers and ask, “Is this making it easy for my customers to do business with me?” If it isn’t, find a way to fix it.

The rule: Make it easy for me to do business with you!

If we keep doing what we’re doing, we’re going to keep getting what we’re getting. —Dr. Stephen R. Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*

Another Example

Disneyland encountered a common problem as exhausted people were leaving the park: visitors couldn’t remember where they had parked their cars. The company devised a system to tell just about anyone where they had parked. Since the parking attendants fill the lot row by row all day long, they electronically note when they start filling a row and when they finish it. If a visitor can’t remember where they parked, the attendant asks “What time did you get here?” Most everyone remembers about when they arrived. The attendant looks on his handheld device and says, “You are parked in Donald Duck 2, and here’s a shuttle that will take you there.” Ingenious.

An important side note: Unfriendly customer systems frustrate service staff. Service staff want to help the customer, but some policy or system makes it impossible. They must apologize to an unhappy customer, which demoralizes and frustrates the server, and adds to the misery of the customer. The company then loses staff and customer loyalty, and the downward spiral continues.

The longer you wait, the harder it is to produce outstanding customer service. —William H. Davidow, philanthropist and author

Why do businesses create frustrating systems that lose the trust of their customers and staff? Normally it is a financial decision. Or they create systems that make it easier for their accountants or other staff. They don't consider the dollar value of winning or losing customer trust. Why does the hot dog vendor worry if someone happens to occasionally cheat him when he has doubled his profits through a customer-friendly system?

Bain & Company, a noted business research institution, released an interesting survey result: 80 percent of CEOs believe their companies deliver superior customer service. But only 8 percent of their customers agree with that!⁴ Companies and leaders can become “legends in their own minds.” So how do we easily, and truly, measure loyalty?

Measuring Loyalty Using the Net Promoter Score

One simple, but effective, answer to measuring loyalty lies in the research Fred Reichheld has provided in his book *The Ultimate Question 2.0*. I will capsulize it here as a foundation concept from my experience.

I detest most customer service surveys. For example, I typically stay in a certain hotel chain over a hundred nights a year. Several days after staying there, I can expect the “survey from hell” to appear in my email box. I remember the first time I took their survey. One of the first questions asked me to select which services I had used in the hotel. I made the mistake of selecting the swimming pool, the fitness center, and the restaurant. Thus, page after page of additional questions appeared. “How was the water temperature in the pool?” “Were clean towels available in the fitness center?” It became “the survey that never died.”



After several minutes of wading my way through, I just deleted the whole thing. And not once have I responded to any of their surveys since then. So, this chain has not gotten the benefit of critical feedback that I might have provided as one of their top-tier award club members.

Companies that administer “death by survey” to their customers end up getting what I call “skewed and screwed data.” The only people that respond to these surveys are probably so upset with some aspect of their experience that they couldn’t wait to blow off steam in the survey. Or, it is a friend or relative that wants to give you a “happy sheet.” Either way the data is skewed. (I suppose there is another kind of respondent: people who love taking surveys or have no life!)

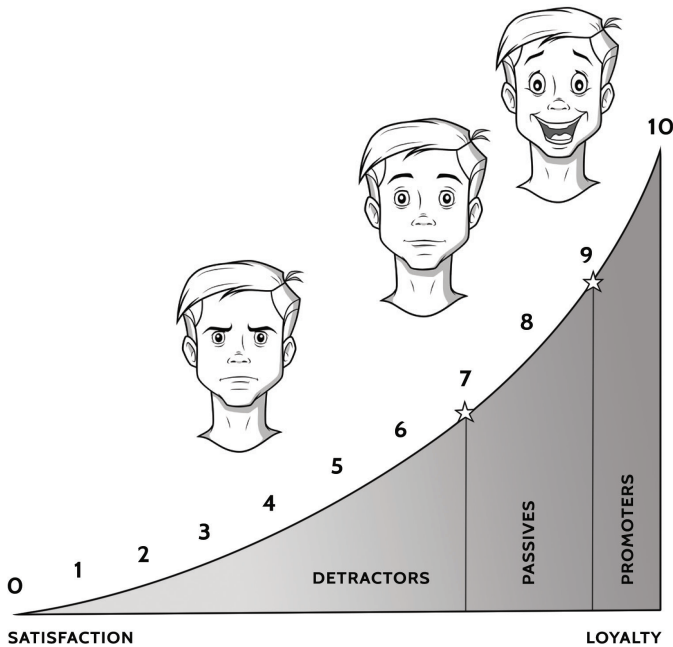
Fred Reichheld created that much simpler question that measures customer loyalty, the Ultimate Question. It can be worded in slightly different ways, but I like the version:

“How likely is it you would recommend our company and its services to a friend or colleague?”

Highly Unlikely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Highly Likely

People quite naturally, but perhaps nearly subconsciously, divide themselves into three groups with this question:

- Those scoring a nine or ten are “**Promoters.**” You have won their loyalty.
- Those scoring a seven or eight are “**Passives.**” They are generally satisfied but can easily be wooed away by competitors.
- Those scoring a six or below are “**Detractors.**” They are clearly unhappy with the relationship and are probably actively working against you in some way. I am a detractor for Happy’s simply because of that one negative experience.



This diagram shows the arc.

There is a simple formula for computing what Reichheld calls the **Net Promoter Score (NPS)**. Take the percentage of promoters (nines and tens) and subtract the percentage of detractors (six or below) and you have your NPS. It is a single digit number, not a percentage figure.

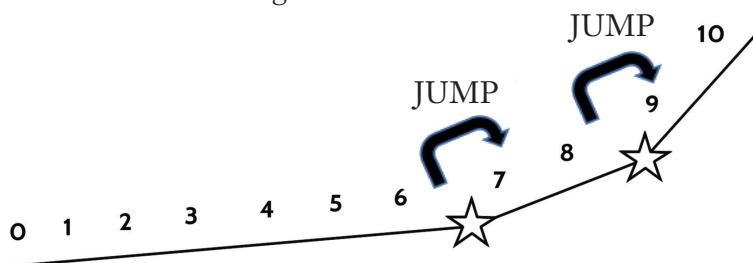
Example: You survey 100 customers, 40 of whom give your business a nine or ten, 30 give it a seven or eight and 30 give it a six or below. 40 percent (promoters) minus 30 percent (detractors) gives you an NPS of ten. It's not ten percent. It's simply the difference between the number of people who detest your business and those who love it! Don't count the sevens and eights because the passives are not helping or hurting. The best NPS possible would be plus 100, with everyone being a nine or ten. The absolute worst would be minus 100, with everyone being a six or below.

In his book, Reichheld charts the companies that have earned the highest NPS he has measured. They include USAA, Amazon, Nordstrom, Trader Joe's, Southwest Airlines and Apple. These have earned NPS scores above seventy. Bain & Company surveys

companies every year using the NPS, and the highest number that any company has scored is 82 (USAA Insurance). SurveyMonkey has performed over 98,000 surveys in the last year that measured the NPS question. Based on their data, the average NPS of a company is 38. A handful of companies score between 60 and 80, while the majority fall below that mark.⁵



What I find interesting is that there are two big emotional/mental jumps that take place along this scale. The first is between six and seven. When someone gives a seven it is basically a “passing grade,” like a C. When they decide to give a six, it is a big message down—you are starting to fail. The second big jump is between eight and nine. People giving an eight are still passing the experience, like a B. But when they give a nine, they have made the “leap to loyalty.” So, the scale could look something like this:



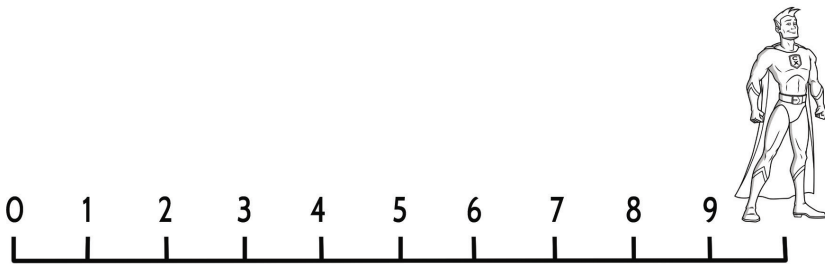
A second simple question Reichheld recommends is: *“What is the primary reason you gave us that score?”*

No more game of “twenty questions”—simply allow the person being surveyed to emotionally respond to the first question, then give them freedom to specifically answer why. Likely, their answer will either be positive or negative in one or more of the three areas: People, Processes/Systems, or Products.

The key is that customers must be asked these questions at the point of impact, just as the person is leaving or has experienced the service. That is when the customers’ ideas and emotions are fresh.

Asking them days or weeks later is almost worthless. Also, if the questions are asked sooner, staff may be able to act immediately on the suggestion. For instance, in a hospital, if the person gives a six and says the waiting room is too cold and the bathroom is dirty, staff can fix those issues in minutes. The likelihood of the visitor or patient caring and remembering those details later is almost nil.

Tip: Use a ten-point scale. Too many companies, including a major airline, use a one to five scale. This does not provide the customer with the granularity they need to express their feelings.



Case Study: Who Defines Great Customer Service?

In 1998, Gordon Bethune, CEO of the former Continental Airlines, coauthored a book called *From Worst to First: Behind the Scenes of Continental's Remarkable Comeback*. The book describes how the airline was almost defunct in 1990, despite a merger with Eastern Airlines. Bethune attributes the turnaround to focusing on “what the person in seat 5C sees.” The company measured what matters most to its customers—clean planes, good food, great service—and they changed their processes. They rebranded the company and embarked on an apology tour. By 1998, they emerged as the *crème de la crème* of the U.S. airline industry with their new planes and new processes. Customer loyalty scores soared, and they became profitable—all through listening to the customer and responding to the customer’s needs. The story of Continental also shows how businesses can regain lost trust and confidence by apologizing and making things right.

Moral: Listen to your customers and act on what you learn!

What about the Staff's Loyalty? Using the ENPS

Interestingly, there is a related tool called the Employee Net Promoter Score or ENPS, also discussed by Reichheld. It asks current staff:

"After your experiences working here, how likely is it you would recommend working for us to a friend, colleague or family member?"

Highly Unlikely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Highly Likely

Compute the ENPS the same way: the percentage of promoters minus the percentage of detractors.

There is an obvious and very strong correlation between the ENPS and the customer NPS. How do businesses expect unhappy, disloyal, disgruntled staff to suddenly provide engaging, caring, and superlative service? If they harbor resentment toward their leaders, working conditions, frustrating processes, and miserable pay and benefits, those feelings will consciously or subconsciously affect their interactions with customers.

It has become easy for me to instantly gauge the loyalty of a business's staff—and indirectly, the quality of its leadership. As I walk around and interact with the staff, I can sense how sincerely they are engaged with the customer. When I find a "bright eye," an employee who seems to love their job, they almost invariably tell me how great their leaders are, especially their first-level leaders. The adage is true: *people rarely leave the company—they leave their managers*. And they either quit and leave, or much worse, they **quit and stay!** They simply emotionally and mentally disengage, becoming "glazed eyes." The body stays because it has the social security number and gets the paycheck, but the heart, mind, and spirit left long ago.

Always treat your people exactly the way
you would like them to treat your finest
customer. —Dr. Stephen R. Covey

Having administered many surveys, I have found that the detractors' answers often boil down to low opinions of leadership, a lack of trust, or poor communication. On the positive side, promoters often cite the opposite—great leadership, as well as a positive working environment, great co-workers, and an inspiring purpose. When I did consulting work for a Fortune 100 client in Silicon Valley, a senior vice president was shocked when he found out from me that the ENPS from 120 of his first- and second-line managers was minus 65. In fact, 75 percent of his managers were detractors and only 10 percent promoters! The reasons were varied, but you can imagine the impact those detractors would have had on the staff they led.

One tool I use as a consultant is to write the Ultimate Question on a dry-erase board and turn the board around. I invite participants to privately walk behind the board sometime and place an X below one of the numbers. I then compute the ENPS and turn the board around. Whenever the number of detractors (0–6) is greater than the number of promoters (9–10) the ENPS score goes negative.

The End Result: The Lifetime Value of a Customer

It's time to underscore a crucial concept. When a company loses a customer, as Happy's did with me that day, it's not just one customer. Studies show that unhappy customers tell up to 11 more people about their story, and each of those 11 can pass the story on to another 5, bumping the number up to 60 or more!

Basically, Happy's lost my family tree that day. I have a family of a wife, four children and six grandchildren, and they all know my story and know how I feel about Happy's. And you never know the impact. I've gone on to be a customer service consultant, so I've probably told thousands of people my Happy's story in my workshops—except I use the real name of the restaurant!

So, what is the lifetime value of a customer (LVC)? It's hundreds



to thousands of dollars, depending on the kind of business. One fast food company estimates it loses over \$30,000 (bottom line profits) when it offends a customer to the point they never come back again. One statistic I heard was if a major ski resort offended just one customer a day to the point they never come back, they could lose up to \$5 million a year!

Now for the Good News!

Whoa! LVC isn't all bad news. The opposite can be true. Super-service-heroes and super-service-systems and great products go together in creating intensely loyal lifetime customers, and it doesn't take huge things to do it.



We will do what we do so well that the people who see it will want to see it again, and bring friends. —Walt Disney, American entrepreneur

Walt Disney set out to create a service system second to none in the theme-park system, and to hire people to make it work. The result is clear when you talk to almost anyone who has been to Disneyland. They comment on the cleanliness, courtesy and the overall service they experienced at “The Happiest Place on Earth.” And they want to go back and bring their friends. I grew up near Disneyland, and that’s how I feel about it.

A workshop participant once told me a “Disney story.” One summer he took his family to Disneyland on a hot August day. Midway through the day, his two-year-old daughter hit her limit. She was hot and tired, and she finally emotionally crashed when she spilled her drink down the front of her sundress. She sat down on a bench outside a Main Street store and sobbed uncontrollably. My friend and his wife were trying to console and comfort her when a young Disneyland employee (or, as the park would call

her, “cast member”) who was walking by on her way to another location stopped mid-stride and said, “Hey, I hear someone who is not HAPPY! We can’t have THAT at Disneyland!” She knelt by the little girl, quickly assessed the situation and said, “Wait just a minute!” She disappeared into a Disney store and came out a moment later with a brand-new pink princess-themed sundress and a wet cloth and with a big smile, she helped clean and dress the delighted child. When all was well, this “super-service-hero” stood up, put her hands on her hips and said, “Now that’s better!” With a big smile, she walked away. And, although there was no charge for the outfit, what did Disneyland earn that day? The father told me, “We LOVE Disneyland!” And, his family stayed many more hours that day spending money. How many people has he told that story to? Won’t he now go back to Disneyland again? That’s LVC. It is also a superb example of a positive CX (Customer Experience).

As a side note, empowering that cast member also released her potential that day and beyond. She walked away delighted that she had lived the Disney mission statement, “To create happiness.” It likely affected her attitude the rest of the day.

It’s clear to see the various high-trust systems Disney has in place. Staff are empowered with a certain dollar amount they can use to delight a customer. Disney has an accounting and inventory system that allowed her to give a dress away. And that young woman knew she would not be in trouble even if she was a few minutes late.

Even an average person can do great work
in a great system. But no one can do great
work in lousy systems. —Unknown

Turning Trademarks into Lovemarks

That day, Disney created a transformation: they morphed their Disney trademark into a “lovemark” in my new friend’s mind. Great companies have more than trademarks; they have lovemarks. Harley Davidson. Starbucks Coffee. Disneyland. Apple. Trader Joe’s. Nordstrom. These businesses have become icons in our society. In

fact, some of them have become “tattoo brands,” meaning the customer has the company logo or character tattooed on their body. It is estimated that 18 percent of Harley Davidson owners sport the company trademark as a tattoo.

Other brands have become so established that their product name becomes synonymous with the item itself. For example, customers might ask, “Where’s the Kleenex?” not “Where is the facial tissue?” Or, “Where are the Band-Aids?” But Band-Aid is a Johnson & Johnson *brand*.

In most cases, these companies have earned their lovemark through a “secret sauce” found in the next chapter.

Some now might be thinking, “Well, I don’t work at Disneyland, Kevin! I’m behind the counter at a gas station, or maybe a clerk in a souvenir shop.” It doesn’t matter where you work. If you learn a few tools and skills, you can make almost anyone’s day and earn the kind of loyalty that will bring customers back again and again.

One final thought and an example. When customers encounter several different people in a service chain, “one bad apple can spoil the whole barrel.” I recently purchased a new car from a local dealer. I was and am delighted with the car, so the product earns a nine or ten from me. The young man who sold me the car was an excellent, caring, non-pushy, informative sales person, so I’d give him a nine. I made an appointment to return at 8:00 PM to sign the paperwork. I waited over an hour and a half. I was signing documents and listening to complicated information when I was exhausted, at 9:30 at night. Not only that, but the waiting room did not offer anything entertaining for me to do. At that point, my satisfaction rating had gone down to a six or seven. But the most frustrating and disappointing part of this dealership is their poor excuse for a receptionist. I have been in the dealership several times and usually she is busy texting. Not once has she welcomed me, made eye contact, or even cared in the slightest about me as a customer. So, given all the above, I would probably give the dealership no more than a seven: not good enough when so many competitors abound and there are even two more same-brand dealers within an hour’s drive. By the way, I gave the general manager the feedback and he hired a new receptionist that is much better!

The single most important thing to remember about any enterprise is that there are no results inside its walls.

The result of a business is a loyal customer.

—Dr. Peter F. Drucker, management consultant and author

Personal Applications

Put yourself in the place of a typical customer of your business. Being totally honest, how would you rate your business in the three P's:

People: Friendly, engaging, professional, well-trained, efficient, caring and loyal to the company, working well with other staff



Not So: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Absolutely

Products: Top quality, consistent, up-to-date, what the customer wants, attractive, decently priced

Not So: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Absolutely

Processes: Efficient, customer-friendly, staff-friendly, smooth, understandable, effective, speedy

Not So: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Absolutely

Think! What can do you do in the next month to fix one of the problems keeping you from being a “10” in all three areas? Make a “who, does what, by when, and how do we follow-up” plan and go to work. *Hope is NOT a strategy!*



Now consider your customer service systems—which of them might be frustrating your customer and/or your service staff? (Hint: put

yourself in the shoes of one of your customers.) And to find out what's bothering your customers, try holding some customer focus groups.

What can you do to better solve the customer's problems and leave them feeling great? Discuss this with your team members in a brainstorm session. Consider your products as well.

Honestly put yourself in the place of one of your own customers and ask yourself the Ultimate Question. Circle the number below:

Highly Unlikely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Highly Likely

Now ask yourself the second question: *"What is the primary reason you gave that score?"*

Now honestly answer this ENPS question from your own experience working in your organization:

"After your experiences working here, how likely is it you would recommend working for your company to a friend, colleague, or family member?"

Highly Unlikely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Highly Likely

Now ask yourself the second question: *"What is the primary reason you gave that score?"*



Case Study: Rewards Bring Rewards!

Great companies are capitalizing on creating innovative and attractive awards programs for their most loyal customers. In the United States, millions of people are now enrolled in one or more loyalty programs! It is becoming a game-changer in grocery chains. Per www.trendsource.com,⁶ shoppers now prefer large chain grocers over local chains by a factor of 9:1, in part due to loyalty programs. Kroger and Safeway link physical loyalty cards to customer-created digital profiles that sync across desktop, mobile, and in-store offers. Consumers can search through a database of available coupons and add them directly to their loyalty card for instant savings at the register. As the stores gather more information about individual customers, they start to offer targeted discounts based on shopping history. It's a win-win: customers feel they are getting individualized attention and the stores can limit savings on certain items to only loyal customers likely to appreciate them.

Moral: How does your company reward its most loyal customers? Find creative ways to do it!

CHAPTER THREE

The Secret Sauce of Service

The customer experience is the next competitive battleground. —Jerry Gregoire, CIO, Dell Computers

Superheroes often have their “secret sauce.” For Popeye, it’s spinach; for Spiderman, it’s the bite from a radioactive spider. To be a super-service-hero, there is also a secret service sauce—when it all boils down, customers only want the two things this book is all about: solve my problem and leave me feeling great about the experience.

I share an experience from my teenage years. One day I came out to my car and turned the key and it just clicked. It sounded like a dead battery to me. I looked around and saw an auto parts store across the street. I was a pretty skilled back-yard mechanic, so I popped my hood, took out my battery and lugged it across the street and plopped it on the counter in front of a clerk. First, I needed one big thing: solve my problem.



1. Solve My Problem!

Ultimately, the first ingredient of the secret sauce boils down to this—every customer has a problem. Problems are what create the need for the goods or services. If no one had any problems, there would be no commerce or business or non-profit organizations. Customers might go to a restaurant to solve the “I’m hungry” problem. Others go to Disneyland to solve a need for fun and entertainment. Someone might go to a nightclub or concert to solve the problem of boredom or a need to connect with friends. When we understand this, we’re on our way to success: *solve the customer’s problem, and do it in a way that is informative, caring, thorough, accurate, and professional!*

A fellow consultant, Jim Stuart, used to say in his presentations, “No organization has a right to exist.” It only exists to solve a problem, and if it does not do it well, it will fail.



Now back to my battery story. The problem was not that I needed a new battery—the underlying problem was that my car wouldn’t start. Sure, it could be a dead battery, but it could be one of several other things. I said, “I think I need a new battery,” and the clerk said, “We’ve got lots!” He found me the right battery and sold it to me. I went out, put the battery in, and my car started. I drove away happy—until the next morning when the car wouldn’t start again. The problem wasn’t the battery; it was the charging system. The auto parts store didn’t “solve my problem.”

But here is where the other ingredient of the “secret service sauce” kicks in, and it is the one that makes all the difference in whether people will want to see you again and bring friends. Even if the problem were truly a defunct battery and selling me a new one were the right answer, I still wouldn’t walk out of the store a totally delighted customer—that store still wouldn’t be a “lovemark” in my



mind. And the reason is simple: I could have gotten a battery at a dozen other places. Most cities are full of competitors who offer the same basic products. I'm not going to walk out of a gas station saying, "Wow, they had gas today!" Now if it didn't have gas, that would be something else. I'd be ticked off, shocked, surprised, and irritated. But their having gas didn't impress me—I expected it! The same with the auto parts store that day; if they couldn't solve my problem, I'd be irritated, but simply solving it wouldn't overly impress me or earn my loyalty.

Returning to the Ultimate Question/Net Promoter Score, my premise is that *you will never or rarely get above an eight by solving the customer's problem, simply because they expect you to.* To get to a nine or a ten, you need to add the second ingredient that customers want. For that auto parts store to earn my loyalty, it would need to:

2. Leave Me Feeling Great about the Experience

Ultimately, loyalty is an emotion—a feeling won in the hearts and then the minds of others. When someone leaves feeling great about the service experience, it plants in their heart a nearly unforgettable emotion that lingers far into the future. And this is where many businesses, including schools, break down. They are content with solving the customers' problems and meeting customers' needs. Customers leave *satisfied* but not *loyal*. And they are easily wooed by the competition.

Here we add the second part of the "leave me feeling great" component: **Be uniquely nice to me.** "Unique" means something special, singular, that leaves the customer feeling like they were more than a number or a transaction. Something that bonds them. That is what our young service hero did to my friend and his family that day in Disneyland when she went far and above the call of duty and won undying loyalty.

Several times a year for the past 18 years I have been a guest presenter on many cruise lines, giving cultural, historical, and other enrichment presentations to passengers. Sailing some years ago on an Oceania



ship, my wife and I made friends with a waiter who served us dinner each night. He got to know us by name and discovered that we do not drink alcohol, so by the second night he did not set out wine glasses. His service was superlative. Over a year later, we were sailing on a different ship in the same cruise line. We walked into the dining room the first night and the same waiter saw us and rushed over, saying, “Kevin and Denise, you’re back!” He said to the other staff around him, “They are mine!” He walked us over to his table saying, “And you don’t drink alcohol,” and removed our wine glasses. Over a year and hundreds of guests later, he remembered our names and something unique about us. Oceania won high loyalty from us that day.

This can happen almost anywhere. Recently I was going through the cashier line at a local Costco. A very friendly lady, a cashier’s assistant, said to me, “Lookin’ sharp today!” I thanked her. (It’s been awhile since any nice woman, besides my wife, has told me I look sharp!) Then the cashier, after looking at my Costco card, said, “Hi Kevin, welcome to Costco and thanks for shopping with us!” As I turned to leave, Andrew the bagger said, “Come back soon, Kevin. We appreciate you!” Simple acts, yes, but I left feeling uniquely noticed and important—thanks to Julie and Andrew.

Being on par in terms of price and quality
only gets you into the game. Service wins
the game. —Tony Allesandra, author

Here’s a funny story about what “uniquely nice” is NOT about. A friend of mine was standing in a checkout line listening as a bored, disengaged checker said aloud the letters “H. A. N. D” to each person as they passed through the line. My friend saw the puzzled looks so when he got to the cashier he asked, “Why are you saying “H. A. N. D?” She said, “I don’t know, I was just told to say it,” and she pointed to a post-it note by her register. My friend said, “I think you are supposed to be saying, “Have A Nice Day.” She said, “Oh.” I could just see her manager handing the note to her and telling her to say it. Not the sharpest tool in the shed!

Everyone Is in Customer Service

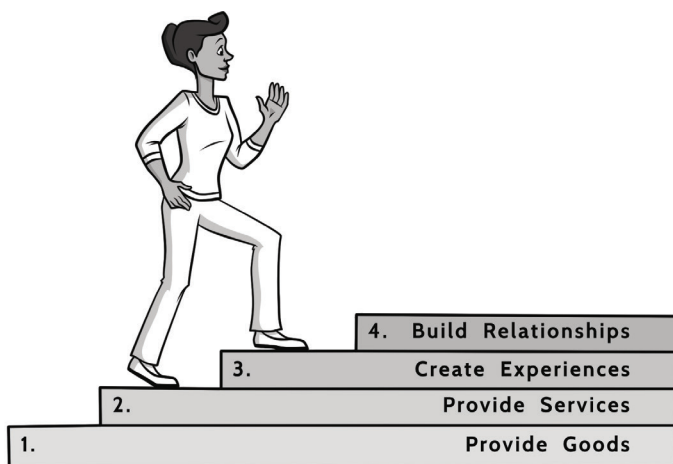
There are two kinds of customers—internal and external. Some staff may not be serving external customers coming into a store or department. Instead, they are serving the internal customer (fellow staff). Those internal customers working in HR, finance, maintenance, or myriad other critical jobs are major drivers of a company's success. They need the exact same two things as any other customer: solve my problem and leave me feeling great about the experience.

If you're not serving the customer, your job is to be serving someone who is.

—Jan Carlzon, Swedish businessman

The Four Levels of the Customer Experience

Four major levels in the customer experience are shown in the model below:



1. Level One: Provide Goods. Most companies and organizations do an adequate job at this level by providing the basic products and goods customers need. Sometimes, this is all we want. For

instance, when I go to a self-service pump at a gas station, all I want is to pump my gas and leave satisfied. If the pump area is spotless and there is cleaning solution in the window-washing bucket, I might even leave feeling loyal enough to continue to use that particular service station.

2. Level Two: Provide Services. At this level, we add some degree of service. If we go into the convenience store at the gas station, I hope for clean restrooms, plus kind and attentive staff. Recently, this did not happen to me on a road trip through a rural area. I got my gas, went into the convenience store to find some road treats, and the cashier looked through me as if I were invisible. She could obviously see me searching but did not do the slightest thing to help me. She took my money, did not smile or say thanks, and off I went. I got the products I needed, but I will not return to that station again.

3. Level Three: Create Experiences. This is where the champions start setting a new standard, like the “Disney Experience,” through extraordinary attention to detail.

Experiences are as distinct from services as services are from goods. A Harley-Davidson vice president said, “What we sell is the ability for a 43-year-old accountant to dress in black leather, ride through small towns and have people be afraid of him.” Harley Davidson does not sell motorcycles—other great manufacturers do that. Harley Davidson sells an *image* and an *experience* that is unique to Harley Davidson, and it has some of the most intensely loyal customers in the world.

Going back to my gas station example, could an inventive station do more to create an experience even for me when I put gas into my own car? I have seen this in my hometown where a certain gas station ensures that they have extra-long windshield squeegees and consistently fresh blue washing solution. Music plays from speakers above the pumps and colorful screens advertise tasty treats within the store. When I print out the receipt, along comes a coupon for a free drink or ice cream cone. The bathrooms and the store inside are sparkling clean. I often return there because of the experience.

4. Level Four: Build Relationships. This is the highest level of the customer experience, where the customer feels bonded to the company because of a unique and personal experience. The relationship can be to a brand, a location, or even to one member of a service staff. The relationship is so strong it has sealed the customer's loyalty to the company or the brand. But customers rarely get to this level without going through the first three. Relationships are built on great experiences and the quality goods and services that serve as their foundation.

For over fifteen years I have been a loyal customer of the UPS Store in my hometown. I have a deep and trusting relationship with them, won through the dozens of positive experiences I have had with them. Their staff knows me and my business needs and responds with alacrity to my often last-minute needs. Robert, the manager, sometimes delivers my printing projects to my front door on his way home. In the rare case that something has not turned out right, they instantly solve the problem, and they are fair and usually below market in their pricing. My point here is that you don't win relationships without a history of positive experiences.

Respect and love are in close interplay when winning world-class loyalty. Respect typically comes from levels one and two—goods and services—and love comes from experiences and relationships. I have both respect and love for my friends at the UPS Store. The respect comes from my admiration of the quality and responsiveness of their work. The love comes from the way they care about me as a person and my business and go the extra mile to be uniquely nice to me.

When the customer comes first, the customer will last. —Robert Half, HR Consultant

Personal Applications

Walk around your entire operation, trying to experience it from the perspective of an actual customer. Ask yourself in each location:



1. Are my problems being solved here? Am I feeling great about the experience? Pay attention to these areas, if they apply:

- a. Restrooms (critical!)
- b. Front door and entry way. What is the message here?
- c. Signs: are they rude or welcoming? Hours clearly posted?
- d. Office areas: neat and clean?
- e. Outside area: trash, etc. People are already forming an initial impression here!

2. What is the overall ambiance and experience you feel, not only from an external customer perspective, but also as a staff member? Is it a welcoming, positive and uplifting place to work?

3. What unique things can you do to make it a special experience to be in your place of business? Think like Disney—in the details. Music? Aromas? Artwork? Plants? Treats and water for people to enjoy? Don't look at these as expenses but rather as investments that bring back a huge ROI (Return on Investment).

Revolve your world around the customer
and more customers will revolve around
you. —Heather Williams, author

In the table below, rate your company or team on how well it does in all four areas:

Provide Goods	No/Low	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	High/Yes
Provide Service	No/Low	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	High/Yes
Create Experiences	No/Low	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	High/Yes
Build Relationships	No/Low	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	High/Yes

Think! What could you do differently to create experiences and build relationships? How can you be more uniquely nice to people, including to your own staff?





Case Study: Thanks for Knowing My Name

As mentioned previously, we sail quite often on cruise lines where I am a guest presenter. One cruise line has a great system for helping staff learn customers' names. Staff members are given touch screen tablets with photos of all customers and they strive to memorize faces and names just as the new passengers arrive on board. It amazes me how often, as we walk through the ship, nearly every staff member makes eye contact, smiles and greets us by name: Recently, it happened in the first five minutes as we boarded. A staff member pressed the elevator button for us and said, "Welcome aboard, Mr. and Mrs. Miller." Impressive!

Moral: Find a way to remember customer's names—especially your most loyal ones.

I slept and dreamed that life was all joy. I awoke and I saw that life is all service. I served and I saw that service is joy. —Kahil Gibran, Lebanese poet

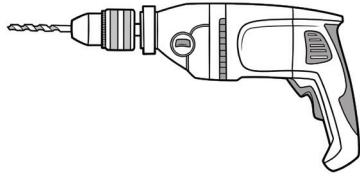
CHAPTER FOUR

#1 Solve My Problem

The Foundational Purpose of All Business

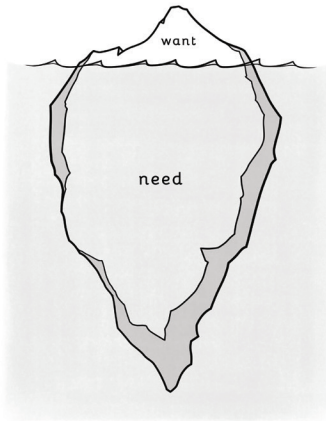
People who buy power drills don't want a quarter-inch drill; they want a quarter-inch hole. —Clayton Christensen, quoting a fellow Harvard business professor

Beneath the interesting idea quoted above lies a critical truth: products and services are usually meant to solve a much deeper purpose or need. Diagnosing that need and providing the right solution lies at the heart of this chapter.



On the ten-point NPS scale, having their problems solved is what customers expect. Meeting that expectation leaves them *satisfied*, but not necessarily *loyal*. It likely leads to a seven or eight along the Net Promoter Score scale (the passive range).

We don't want to push our ideas onto customers, we simply want to make what they want. —Laura Ashley, founder



Think of the well-known iceberg analogy. What the customer says they want is above the water. What lies beneath is the deeper purpose or need. Sometimes customers are so focused on the product they are seeking that they may not even know there may be a better solution. This is where customer service professionals step in: average salespeople sell *products*—great salespeople sell *solutions*.

Returning to the power drill example, suppose the customer is asking for a quarter-inch drill because he or she wants to join two pieces of wood in a cabinet they are repairing. The customer plans to use flat head screws once the holes are drilled. An average sales person would direct them to the right aisle and they would leave satisfied, drill bit in hand.

But a great salesperson might ask, “Tell me about the project you need the drill for.” Understanding the project, he or she might offer a completely different way of joining the pieces without marring the finish with screw holes. Now the customer leaves more than satisfied, perhaps even loyal, because they know the salesperson cared more about them than the sale itself.

When people go to a fast-food restaurant, the need is probably for a quick meal to get them back on their way. They want fast service. But when they take their spouse out to a nice restaurant, the need is much deeper—a time to connect and be romantic. Fast service would not do the job.

Understanding and “reading” the needs of customers is almost an art form, requiring discernment and observation of who they are, even by age group. For example, I have done quite a bit of work as a consultant and trainer for VA hospitals. The underlying needs of veterans vary greatly. Younger veterans who are not yet retired may be in a great hurry to have their medical needs filled and be on their way. But I have seen veterans whose time in the VA hospital is a highlight of their lives that month. They often proudly wear their combat ribbons, unit patches and ball caps. A trip to the VA returns

them to the glory days of long ago when they felt like they belonged and were needed by their comrades and their country. They are more than content to wait however long it takes as they “shoot the breeze” and swap war stories with other veterans around them. I have even seen them hanging around the VA medical center lobby long after they were told they could go. Speeding such patients through would leave them feeling empty and unfulfilled.

The solution is to **diagnose** before you **prescribe**. It requires the skill of empathic listening—listening with the intent to understand, not to reply. Examples of questions that might help are:



- “I see you are interested in running shoes. What kind of running do you do?”
- “It looks like you might be in the middle of a project. Tell me about it.”
- “Before we even start looking at our cars, tell me about your current transportation and how your needs may be changing.”
- “Sounds like you might be booking us for a special occasion. What might it be and maybe we can help.”
- “Looks like maybe your car won’t start. It might not be the battery. Tell me the symptoms and when they started.”

The answers to these questions invite a deeper understanding and the opportunity to offer more precise solutions. It also shows the customer that you are genuinely interested in them and their needs, which begins creating the experience that builds loyalty.

Note the pattern of these questions—they make a short statement, and then ask an open-ended question. The goal is to get the customers talking and keep them talking as you diagnose their needs and build the relationship.

Other effective questions might be:

- What else are you trying to achieve?
- What is your end vision?
- What else have you tried?



- What would “great” look like to you at the end of this project?
- A simple “Tell me more,” is a great addition question and works like a charm to keep people talking.

Danger: Beware of closed questions that shut down a conversation and invite one-word responses such as “yes” or “no.” Asking them, “Are you looking for something in particular?” might bring a curt “no” as a response. But if you said, “It’s nice to have you here. Did curiosity bring you in or something more?”



After my father passed away in 1996, I was cleaning out his garage and found two boxes of *Life* magazines dating 1946–1951. I often use them in my customer service sessions because, in thumbing through them, we can find examples of businesses and products that are still in place after 65 years, as well as some that no longer exist. Ford is still in business; Studebaker is not. Campbell’s soup has hardly changed its label in six decades, but there are soup companies no one now has even heard of. In many cases, those who went out of business failed to adjust to the demands of a changing world. Following new social trends and adjusting your mix of products and services is fundamental to success.

However, even successful companies have made terrible mistakes. The famous story of Henry Ford and the black Model T illustrates this. He made millions of dollars producing the black Model T and felt flush with success. Then customers began asking Ford dealers for new colors. When they told this to Henry, he reportedly snapped back, “Tell the customer they can have any color they want as long as it’s black.” Customers began flocking to buy the snazzy, new, brightly colored competitor cars and Ford lost more than half its market share in a short time.

Another classic story precipitated the nearly overnight crash of the famous Swiss watch industry. Swiss watch makers for centuries rode the success of making the finest intricate gears and levers in their watches. These watches required winding or were, at best,

self-winding. These companies defined their role as making a certain type of watch, failing to fully realize the deeper need of customers. A watch is designed to keep time. People buy watches to keep time, not for the intricacies of their inner workings. It was a Swiss engineer who reportedly experimented by passing a small electric current through a quartz crystal and found the emitted wavelengths could power a watch with extreme accuracy. He presented it to the Swiss experts who looked at it as a mere curiosity. Who wouldn't want one of their beautiful winding watches? *Without patenting it*, Swiss experts put it on display in a time-keeping convention in Zurich in the mid 1960s. And who found it fascinating? The Japanese and Timex!

Soon these and other companies released an explosion of low-cost, attractive timepieces that required nothing more than a battery every year or two. And thousands of Swiss watchmakers were put out of business in a matter of a few years. The problem might be in how they viewed themselves. Rather than thinking, "We are in the business of making gear-driven watches," they should have viewed their mission as being the world's timekeepers and kept an open mind to anything that could do that better.

Remember Jim Stuart's statement, "Your organization does not have a right to exist." Your company exists to solve your customer's problems. If an entity quits doing that, it won't be around for very long. Just ask the Swiss.

Whatever your business is, talk to your customers and provide them with what they want. It makes sense. —Robert Bowman, business leader

More Is Not Always Best

When it comes to solving customer's problems, try to not offer too many choices. Many customers today are so overwhelmed by the sheer volume of choices, they sometimes leave without purchasing anything or solving their problem! Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's restaurants, learned this in his mid-twenties. He had

acquired ownership of a struggling diner, barely making ends meet. He tried to figure out what was wrong. He began to wonder if his menu was long enough. He went in to negotiate for some radio advertising and the station manager told him, “Listen, that fried chicken is the best thing on your menu. Let’s swap some radio time for chicken!” The chicken he referred to was made from a secret blend of herbs and spices sold from the back of a car by a colorful white-bearded man from Kentucky. As he drove back to the restaurant, Dave had what I refer to as a BFO: Blinding Flash of the Obvious. It wasn’t that his menu wasn’t long enough—it was too long! So, he renamed his restaurant, served mostly that special fried chicken, and business took off. The old man, whom we know as Colonel Sanders, cried when Dave handed him a check for all he owed him. Later, Dave remembered this lesson when he opened his own restaurant chain, which he named after his daughter, Wendy. And as for the Colonel, we know the rest of the story: Kentucky Fried Chicken!⁷

Important Note: Even if a business can’t solve the customer’s problem itself, it still has an opportunity to win the relationship and their loyalty. Years ago, my wife found a dress she loved at J.C. Penney. We were heading out on a cruise and it was the perfect color and style, but they did not have it in her size. A delightful clerk set out to find her the dress as if it was the most important task she had all day. She called all the other J. C. Penney stores in the area, to no avail. But she did not stop there. She said, “You know, I think I saw this same dress at Dillard’s the other day—maybe they have it.” She called, the dress was there, and she beamed with delight. “Denise, I found the dress for you at Dillard’s and they are holding it for you. You will be stunning on that cruise!” Denise went to Dillard’s, who got the sale and the transaction. But who won the relationship that day? Denise returned to J. C. Penney often until that clerk no longer worked there. And to this day, she has not forgotten that caring, personal touch.



Case Study: A Lesson from Coca-Cola

Coca-Cola is the most recognized brand in the world. Its bright red logo with the distinctive white lettering can be found in all but two countries on earth. But there is one place where Coca-Cola is found on a blue background. We were in a city on the Amazon River where the guide told us that the citizens are sharply and passionately divided in their loyalty to two soccer teams. One team wears red uniforms and the other blue. Many residents even paint their doors red or blue! He said, “No blue fan would ever dream of holding a red Coke can—so Coca-Cola obligingly made an exception and blue cans can be found in separate sections of the grocery stores!

Moral: Don’t get hung up on tradition like Henry Ford and his black Model T—be willing to change to meet customer’s needs!

Think! What are the deeper needs or problems most or many of your customers have when they come to your business?



Under promise and over deliver.
—Well-known business adage



Some practical suggestions include:

1. Listen carefully to which problem the customers came in to solve. Solve that problem—don’t just sell them a product or service.
2. Know your products and services *extremely* well, as well as your competitors’. State and share facts honestly about you and your competitors, but do *not* bad-mouth competitors.
3. *Stop, Look and Listen!* Listen with your eyes, ears, and heart, and turn your heart toward the customers as you talk to them. Listen to the content and the emotion. Listen until they *feel* understood.

This is much different than listening until *you* understand.

4. Find a way to say “yes” to something—always have an alternative ready, even if it is to refer them to another source.

5. Have answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and train everyone how to answer them. Anticipate the customers’ needs and have oft-requested information items handy.

6. Every day, walk through your operation as if you were your customer, stopping to ask yourself, “Are my problems being solved here and am I feeling great?”

7. Return each voicemail or phone call as soon as you can.

8. *Stop, Look, and Listen* to other employees and treat them like a fine customer.

9. Try to walk the customer to where the item is located, even if it is small.

10. Know the products and services that are out there, and the social trends that are driving them.

11. Watch for special needs: open a door, lift something heavy, offer aid and advice.

12. As a service provider, be completely knowledgeable about the entire operation so you can answer any questions.

13. Ask your customers to give you feedback on how you did your job and how it could be done differently to best meet their needs.

If a customer is disappointed:

- Apologize for the inconvenience.
- Ask if they’d like you to find alternative answers for them.

14. Have phone numbers and addresses of other providers. This impresses customers, showing that you care more about their needs than making a sale.

15. Under-promise and over-deliver. Always follow through on any promise made.

16. If you are in sales, remember to sell solutions, not just products. Understand the problem people are trying to solve before offering solutions.

There are no traffic jams along the extra mile. —Roger Staubach, former quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys

Personal Applications

1. Keep a running list of times when you can't solve a customer's problems. Adjust the mix of products and services.

2. Ask yourself, "What percentage of time do we solve our customers' problems?" "How often do they leave with their problems unsolved?"

3. Administer customer service surveys with your customers.

4. Conduct customer-service focus-group sessions. Invite customers in different demographic groups to attend a focus group in exchange for a reward in goods or services. Ask them to describe the problems they are repeatedly wanting to solve through your services. Sony does an excellent job of this by conducting frequent customer focus groups, and they generously reward participants with free Sony products, so go if you are ever invited!



The Customer is the final inspector.
—Steve Jobs, former CEO of Apple



Case Study: FAQs and CGRs

It helps customers when all service providers know the answers to FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) well enough to give the CGRs (Correctly Given Responses). Chuck Richards, who managed Walmart stores and regions for 28 years, told me personally that for many months the most FAQ in Walmart stores around the United States might surprise you: "Do you have any .22 caliber ammunition?" There was a severe shortage of .22 ammunition when suppliers ran short. Every day, some stores would receive as many as thirty requests on the phone and each time the phone receptionist would transfer the call to the sporting goods department, whose staff spent much time answering the question to the negative. This kept them from doing their other jobs, including helping customers and

selling sporting goods equipment. How simple it would have been for them to inform the phone receptionist each morning what the answer should be? This would have solved the problem for both the customer and the sporting goods department. **Solution: Provide CGRs for the most common FAQs to everyone in the company!**

CHAPTER FIVE

#2 Leave Me Feeling Great about the Experience!

The goal as a company is to have customer service that is not just the best, but legendary.

—Sam Walton, founder of Walmart

We've learned so far that solving the customer's problem is likely only going to satisfy them. The second part of the equation wins their loyalty.



Celebrating a birthday is a special event at Disneyland. When you arrive, hosts give you a big Happy Birthday button and a Sharpie marker to write your name on it. Several years ago, it was my wife's birthday and for the two days we were there she was given the red-carpet treatment. Everywhere she turned, some cast member said, "Happy Birthday, Denise!" She often got her preferred seat on a

ride or a free treat at a restaurant. But her most unforgettable Disney experience happened the last night as we were watching the Disney Christmas Parade. We were standing three rows deep on the side of the street as the last float went by. A bright cheery voice called out

“Happy Birthday, Denise!” Looking around we realized the voice came from Mrs. Claus way on top of her float sixty feet away. I whisked my camera up just in time because it did not stop there. Santa himself, hearing his wife, turned around, found my wife in the crowd and said, “Happy Birthday and Merry Christmas, Denise!” For a moment, Denise turned six again. She jumped up and down and said, “Santa, Santa!” It was magical. And it was a moment she will never forget. And she will forever be loyal to Disneyland!

But it was not magic. I knew that there was no way someone could read a hand-written button in a crowd sixty feet away. The next time I was at Disneyland, I saw how they create the “magic”—there is a spotter walking along the main floats with a wireless microphone. Santa and his wife each have an earpiece. The spotter simply finds the button wearer and says, “Denise, birthday, blue blouse on the right.”

Customer magic does not happen by accident. Disney creates it because they care enough to know that making moments of magic is the Disney experience, and it brings people back again and again. My wife and I have shared this story with thousands of people, and again in this book. This also illustrates the power of having the right people, the right products, and, in this case, the right process that produces the Disney Magic.

If you do build a great experience, customers tell each other about that. Word of mouth is very powerful. —Jeff Bezos, CEO of Amazon

In the previous chapter, we learned that solving the customer’s problem meets expectations and typically earns a seven or eight on the ten-point NPS scale. Winning **loyalty** is what this chapter is all about.

The Little Things Are the Big Things

In winning customer loyalty, the little things are the big things. Your competitors likely have the big things covered. Let me illustrate.



At one time, Ritz-Carlton was the only hotel chain to have won the coveted Malcolm-Baldrige Award for excellence. It did this in large measure by creating a very customized experience. I heard a man once tell how he checked into a Ritz-Carlton hotel on the East Coast. He was a cigar smoker and left a partly smoked expensive cigar on his desk and asked the housekeeper to leave it there for him to enjoy later. When he returned, she had replaced the half-smoked cigar with a brand new one of that same brand. And, noting from his trash can that he read the Wall Street Journal, she had that day's edition by his cigar. Very impressive. But what amazed him was a week later when he checked into a Ritz-Carlton on the West Coast and there, waiting in his room was the same brand of cigar, and a Wall Street Journal. He said, "They own me."

Ritz-Carlton has learned that it is the housekeepers that are in touch with a customer's interests and uniqueness—after all, they clean up after us! Housekeepers enter notes about customers' interests, which goes into a worldwide database. This helps the hotel uniquely craft each customer's experience. But it doesn't take that level of sophistication. I checked into a Hampton Inn in Sheridan, Wyoming, a few years ago and found a handwritten note from my housekeeper welcoming me to the hotel by name, introducing herself and inviting me to let her know personally if she could help me in any way. I kept that note as an example of personalized, unique service that won my loyalty to that hotel, where I stayed many nights in Sheridan after that. I also left her a larger-than-normal tip!

In a Hampton Inn in Leavenworth, Kansas, many of their guests are soldiers. I find it clever that they write on the bananas in the breakfast bar things like "Go Army" and "Thanks for Serving," and "You aPEEL to us." It's those little things that stick in customers' minds—things they did not expect.

My friend, who sells insurance, told me another remarkable example. He once sold a very large insurance policy to a rugged, older rancher in southern Utah. On his way to deliver the policy, he stopped and bought a \$90.00 Leatherman tool and had the man's name engraved on the tool and the leather belt pouch it came in. He placed it on top of the policy as he handed it to the man to sign. Wonderingly, the man opened the tool and put it on his belt. He

barely looked over the policy and signed it in a flash. Since then, the rancher has referred my friend to several of his fellow ranchers and friends in the valley. He introduces my friend by saying, “This is the young feller who gave me my Leatherman.” My friend said, “For a \$90.00 gift, I have made tens of thousands of dollars in commissions.”

It’s the little things that are vital. Little things make the big things happen.
—John Wooden, former UCLA basketball coach



Danger!

Companies must be very careful before they take away a benefit that loyal customers have become used to. I once heard, “A luxury once enjoyed becomes a necessity.” Sometimes I find companies do this on the advice of their CFO to save money and forget to evaluate the impact on loyalty and the Lifetime Value of a Customer (LVC). My wife and I have been top-tier loyalty members of a large hotel chain for over a decade. But within a month it forced a change in its awards credit card provider, then took away a double-point deal it had with a major airline. It lost our loyalty and thousands of future dollars that will now go to their major competitor, who is more than willing to transfer our top-tier membership!

Moral: ALWAYS weigh the impact of every business decision against the cost of losing loyalty. It is rarely worth it.



Case Study: Being Uniquely Nice to Customers Means Knowing their Needs

Nordstrom understands it is not just selling shoes or clothing—each store is selling the service and experience of being at Nordstrom. A friend of mine who is a busy professional woman has a personal shopper at Nordstrom who “knows what’s in my closet better than I do.” Her shopper finds

a great clothing item and calls her to say, “I’ve found a sweater that will go great with that grey skirt!” She runs it out to my friend’s car, hands her the bag and scans her credit card. “It’s like Christmas when I open the bag,” my friend said. The Nordstrom men’s shoe department knows that men typically go to *buy* shoes while women go to *shop* for shoes. Knowing this, they help a male shopper coming in only for dress shoes to also find sandals, running shoes or slippers. They help him mentally review his shoe wardrobe and offer him several other selections on a discount to get his shoe needs met in one visit. Nordstrom also tries to treat every customer the same, regardless of appearance. They know that a nondescript customer buying a clearance item might someday buy a thousand-dollar dress.

Moral: Think like your customers, anticipate their different needs, and be ready to offer them what they need.

You’ll never have a product or price advantage again.
They can be easily duplicated, but a strong customer
service culture can’t be copied.

—Jerry Fritz, speaker and service consultant

Understanding the unique nature of customers helps you craft their experience. At a conference, a presenter showed us the results of a survey among women and men, which asked them to rank what is most important to them in choosing to return to a store. On average, women ranked “cleanliness of the bathroom” as number one. (Men ranked it six—maybe we have lower standards for that sort of thing!) When I consult for retailers I often say at the very start, “Take me to your women’s restroom. If it is not the shiniest, cleanest and most welcoming room in the store, they are already losing customers and sales. Are there fresh flowers in a vase on the counter? Is it sparkling clean and does it smell inviting? Is there a comfortable chair in which to rest or nurse? It’s all in the details.

Recently, I was advising a manager of a large retailer and I asked him to think like a woman for a moment. What does a woman do

with her purse in the bathroom while she is in the stall? She doesn't want to put it on a faraway sink, and never on a stall floor, and it is awkward on her lap. If it is hanging on the back of the stall door, it is too far away for her to reach it if she needs it. So, I recommended they install a hook on the side of each stall four feet from the ground with a nice sign, "To hang your purse, with our compliments." Many women have positively commented on this simple detail. Not appealing to women is a big mistake. According to an article on www.genderleadershipgroup.com, statistics show that women influence 7 trillion dollars and 83 percent of all consumer spending in the United States.

Here are two examples on the opposite sides of the scale.

Ten years ago, I was in London in December, shopping in a world-famous department store. I found some enticing Christmas ornaments and stood in a long line to pay for them. As I was walking out, I found the same ornaments in a larger set on sale. I stood in the long line again and asked if I could exchange them. I had the bag, the ornaments, and the receipt, and it was the same clerk I had bought them from ten minutes previously. She looked at me with a blank stare as if I was asking the impossible. I explained it again. She said, "I have to get approval." She disappeared and I felt self-conscious holding up the line again. But glancing around, I saw that the other customers, most likely British, were resigned to this sort of thing as if it was the standard. She returned with a sour-faced manager. I explained it all again, showed the manager the items, receipt and the bag. She finally dourly said, "It is approved." She even had a special gold key around her neck, which she inserted into the register, thus allowing the clerk to finish the transaction. To me that gold key has come to represent all the policies, procedures, and micromanaging shackles that disempower staff, frustrate customers and are just plain idiotic.

In the very same trip, I accidentally sat on my new Brookstone noise-cancelling headphones on the plane and broke them. When I got off the plane in the United States, I saw a Brookstone store in the airport. I showed the broken headphones to the clerk and he happily went and got a brand-new set. He did not ask for a receipt, nor did he have to go find a "golden-keyed" manager. He even replaced the

batteries and gave me an extra cloth bag to put them in. I was out of there in less than five minutes. And the loyalty Brookstone won that day has brought me back again and again.

Referring to our previous model, customer loyalty and trust are won by great people PLUS great systems and processes that release their potential and energy to serve.



Case Study: No One Is Immune from Screw-ups!

Many might remember the disaster Coca-Cola had when it changed its time-honored formula and launched “New Coke” in April of 1985. They said it was a deliberate attempt to reach a new market with a new taste, but it was a disastrous failure. They then offered Coke Classic in the original format. They tried rebranding New Coke to Coke II, then totally abandoned it in July 2002. It serves as a cautionary tale against tampering with a well-established and successful brand.

A less well-known Coca-Cola story is the introduction of OK Soda as one of its off-shoot brands. In 1993, Coca-Cola decided to capture the Generation X market by creating a new product that was un-slick, cynical and anti-corporate. The result of that effort was OK Soda. They also hoped to capitalize on the most recognized symbol in the world: the OK symbol of thumb and forefinger. However, it turns out that people didn’t want to drink soda that is just “OK,” and Coke abandoned the brand two years later. The same company made a similar mistake introducing a “new Coke” in 1985: consumers revolted, and the company was left with 30 million dollars’ worth of unusable drink concentrate.

Moral: There is an old saying, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” Conversely, there is an interesting book titled *If It Ain’t Broke, Break It (Or Your Competitors Will for You)*. So, be bold, but be careful to look at every angle before launching big changes in tried-and-true products.

Perhaps no greater quote could be found to close this chapter than one attributed to the incomparable Maya Angelou, who passed away in 2014:

They may not remember what you said, but they
will always remember how you made them feel.

—Maya Angelou, poet and social activist

Years ago, my wife cross-stitched this saying as a theme for our parenting. I remember it now when my six grandchildren race into our home to greet us. I know that they will never remember what their grandpa said, but they will never forget how I made them feel. And this is true with all the people in our lives, as well as with our customers.

Every great business is built on
friendship. —J. C. Penney



Some practical suggestions:

1. Smile and greet both internal and external customers within ten seconds or within three rings of the telephone.
2. Use the customer's name (twice in each transaction, if possible), and remember names. It is a simple thing to ask them for their name and then use it.
3. When possible and appropriate, find out something about them personally—where they live, about their family, and try to remember these details for the next time you meet. (You might keep a card or electronic record on special repeat customers.)
4. Smile and make eye contact when you are talking to a customer. *Stop, Look and Listen!*
5. Be interested in them, not interesting yourself.
6. Compliment them on their choice of purchase or something unique about them.
7. Offer them something free as they leave: a treat, a coupon, almost anything will do.
8. Notice and pay attention to children. It is the way to their parents' hearts, too.
9. Be particularly kind and respectful to seniors. Show them that courtesy is not a lost art.

10. Get quick “spot feedback” with one or two questions. Use questions like:

- a. Did we meet your expectations?
- b. Can you suggest that we provide anything else?
- c. What might we do differently? (Say “differently,” not “better,” and you get more responses.)

11. Escort them to the door or even to their car. Offer to carry things for them.

12. Warmly invite the customer to return and use your services again.

If you don’t genuinely like your customers, chances are they won’t buy. —Thomas Watson, former CEO of IBM

Personal Applications

Think of a company or product you are intensely loyal to. Write the name below and briefly describe what they have done to win that loyalty:



Now think of some ways you could win more loyalty by being uniquely nice to your customers. And don’t stop at the business line—what about your family members, who are also customers of yours in a very real way?

From the customer’s point of view, if they can see it, walk on it, hold it, hear it, step in it, smell it, carry it, step over it, touch it, use it, even taste it, if they can feel it or sense it, it’s customer service.—SuperAmerica Food/Gasoline Retailer



Case Study: Many Points of Impact Include Fireflies!

An interesting story illustrates the passion that Walt Disney had for attention to detail. When he was about to open the Pirates of the Caribbean ride, he felt something was missing. He rode the ride again and again and brought staff along to help him find the missing detail. They all agreed it looked right, smelled right, felt right and sounded right. Frustrated, he asked, “What’s missing?” A young man who had been sweeping streets said in a southern drawl, “Well, Mr. Disney, I grew up in the South and on a summer night like this there would have to be lightning bugs!” Fireflies? “That’s it,” cried Disney, who had live fireflies flown in for opening week until his engineers could solve how to reproduce them mechanically. And he gave the young man a generous bonus.

The difference in Disney is the attention to detail, from real grass to authentic costumes. Disneyland researched how long guests will carry a piece of trash before dropping it and placed trash cans about every twenty paces in every direction, so guests are encouraged to clean up after themselves. You will hear Tinker Bell’s jingle instead of a traditional bar-code scanner beep. And if it’s your first time at Disneyland, you are given a special button and extra special treatment.

All of this is not magic, but it does make Disneyland a magical experience: The Happiest Place on Earth.

Moral: How do you create “magic moments” in the points of impact at your business?

If you work just for money, you’ll never make it, but if you love what you’re doing and you always put the customer first, success will be yours.

—Ray Krock, founder of McDonald’s Corporation

CHAPTER SIX

The Three Keys to Great Customer Service

I always wondered why somebody didn't do something about that. Then I realized I was somebody. —Lily Tomlin, actor/comedian

To this point, we have learned about how loyalty is won through solving customers' problems and leaving them feeling great. In this chapter, I'll explain three important keys to winning more customer loyalty.

First Key: Attitude

Southwest Airlines is the one airline that consistently wins more customer loyalty than most U.S. airlines. It is the only airline that ranks high in the Net Promoter Score (NPS) index list by Fred Reichheld. One reason is simple—their HR director says, “We hire for attitude and train for skill.” Even when it comes to hiring pilots, their goal is not to hire only for technical expertise, but also for a friendly, fun attitude.



You are serving a customer, not a life sentence. Learn how to enjoy your work. —Laurie McIntosh, author

I have found that no amount of customer service training can overcome someone with a bad attitude, and people with a great service-minded, friendly attitude quite naturally pick up on skills. As I once heard, “Your attitude decides your altitude.” I consulted for a store manager who told me that he hired for three F’s: Fast, Fun, and Friendly. He said, “If someone is fast, fun and friendly I can train them in almost any skill in the store. In fact, it is often better that they have little retailing experience because I can shape them to what we want in this store.”

In our customer loyalty workshop, we often show a superb video called *How to Connect in Business in Ninety Seconds or Less*, starring the author Nicholas Boothman, a licensed master practitioner of neuro-linguistic programming. He cites “choosing the right attitude” as the first step in creating a great customer experience. He points out that we can each choose our own attitudes like we choose the clothes we wear each morning. We can choose attitudes that repel others or attract others.

He cites the four that repel as:

- Bored
- Resentful
- Hostile
- Arrogant

As customers, we have all experienced being greeted by attitudes such as these. In my Happy’s story, the young clerk exemplified all four!

He cites the four attractive attitudes as:

- **Welcoming,**
- **Curious,**
- **Empathetic,**
- **Resourceful**

Attitude	Sounds Like
Welcoming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We're glad you came in! • It's a delight to see you again, Mr. Smith. • Make yourself comfortable. Would you like a bottle of water?
Curious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sounds like an interesting project. Tell me a little more. • I'm curious how you found us (or what brought you in)? • What issues are you currently having with the [car] you now own?
Empathetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That must have been extremely frustrating. • I think I'd feel the same way if it happened to me. • How did that make you feel?
Resourceful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm sure we can solve this together. • We have several great options. Let's find the one that fits you best. • I'm looking forward to finding the right answer for you.

Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference. —Sir Winston Churchill

But attitude can take you only so far without the second key.

Second Key: Skills

If you try to motivate someone without training them,
you only frustrate them.

—Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric

These first two keys are interconnected. When someone has the right attitude it's far more likely they will seek out and use new skills.



As a facilitator, I can scan a group and quickly tell which participants are likely to use the new skills I am teaching, just by the attitude they have. On the other hand, we can also see how giving people new skills often changes their attitude. Think of a child who has a negative attitude toward sports, such as baseball. But when they enroll in a sports program and learn skills, suddenly these fun skills might change their outlook.

This underscores the importance of constantly learning new customer service and leadership skills. Refresh yourself and your team with new ideas and skills. The fact that you are reading this book shows you are eager to learn and practice such new skills.

Third Key: Processes and Systems

Eighty percent of customers' frustrations come from bad systems, not bad people.

—John Goodman, business consultant

Companies can hire people with great attitudes and power-pack them with all the cool skills in the world, but if they run into archaic, customer unfriendly systems, it's like putting a racehorse in a tiny stall. They can't do their jobs well, customers are upset and frustrated, and the game is lost. Not only that, but companies may lose top talent. Staff hate to be the ones that give customers bad news like, "I'm sorry, but we can't return that without a sales receipt," or "Our policy won't let me do that." Remember, as Stephen R. Covey said, "If you put great people into poor systems, the systems win."



Costco is an example of a company that has made it easy for customers to do business with them. And their systems—such as a

seamless, easy return policy and system—enable their staff to provide great service. That is one of the reasons Costco has the highest rated employee engagement and satisfaction score among major retailers, and a resulting high customer satisfaction index.

Companies need to constantly adjust their systems to find new and better ways to do business. In the last decade, Walmart decimated their former closest competitors, such as K-Mart and Sears, only to find itself face-to-face with its worst nightmare: Amazon. Amazon has found and almost perfected the system of online retailing. I think my wife and I did 90 percent of last year's Christmas shopping at Amazon, and I may have gone to Walmart twice for inexpensive items. With an easy-to-use search engine and "One Click Shopping," customers find what they want, usually at lower prices, and it's on their doorstep in 48 hours. A friend of mine in Las Vegas said, "two hours now for us." Now Walmart and other retailers are playing catch-up with similar online shopping systems to include in-store pick-up and even home delivery—through which they hope to attract more impulse buying.

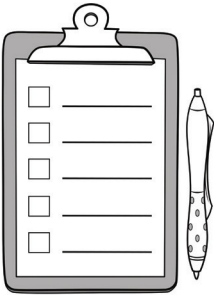
Walmart stepped up the game with a new program that has won the loyalty of many customers, including a good friend who is the young mother of three busy young girls. She told me that she dreaded shopping with the children, dragging them into Walmart and arguing with them over buying this or that. But now she can shop Walmart online, even for groceries, and arrange a short time window to drive up to the store. She has the option to check in online, call or text when she is on her way and a Walmart employee brings her purchases out to her car and loads them in when she arrives. On a recent pickup run, the employee pulled a cloth out of his back pocket and cleaned off the handle of her mini-van, then thanked her for shopping at Walmart! Even Amazon can't do that! She told me that this new system alone has made her totally loyal to Walmart in her hometown. Incidentally, now other stores are duplicating this service, and our local grocer will even deliver items to your door.

Now businesses who are competitors are often working together in strange partnerships. A friend of mine showed me a photo he took of a Walmart truck delivering products to an Amazon fulfillment center. This is yet another example of Walmart thinking win-win.

There are many ways to come up with new systems:

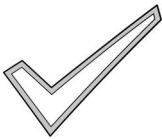
Ask your customers:

- Use a simple Ultimate Question/Net Promoter Score card system. This is a simple card with two questions: The Net Promoter Score Question, a zero to ten scale beneath it, followed by “Why did you give us that score?”



- Frequently ask customers, “What can we do differently to make it easier to shop here?” (Again, use the word “differently,” not “better,” and you will get more useful responses.)

- Use simple, short customer service surveys.
- Hold customer focus groups. Invite customers to be in a focus group in exchange for a free lunch or other reward.
- Do best-practices research: find out what top companies do and duplicate or improve on them. R&D, which, in this case, stands for Rip-off and Duplicate (if it is legal)!



Personal Attitude Check: Do a self-examination and see where you might fit along this attitude scale. How about your team?

Never Seldom Sometimes Usually												
Bored	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Welcoming
Resentful	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Resourceful
Hostile	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Empathetic
Arrogant	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Curious

Think! What can you do to be more welcoming, resourceful, empathetic, and curious?



Here is a simple but powerful tool. Always give people more than they expect. —Nelson Boswell, author



Case Study: Don't Sell Goods, Build Relationships

Several companies have made their mark by providing superlative environments in which customers can relax. Apple Stores are one—places where customers can relax, test out and play with Apple products and enjoy the ambiance. Starbucks has taken this concept to a global level. One senior Starbucks executive said, “We have discovered a third place. A place that is not home or work. It is a place our customers come for refuge.” Starbucks does not sell the cheapest products, but it offers a welcoming, comforting environment where customers can relax and meet their friends and clients or just hang out. Starbucks goes to great length to standardize this among its stores. I have been in Starbucks in countries across the world and know exactly what the experience will be. Many times, my clients will say, “Let’s meet at Starbucks on the corner of (such and such).” Plus, there is something about the smell of freshly roasted coffee and fresh pastries that seems to help the warmth of the conversation!

Moral: Create an environment that welcomes, warms and invites your customers to linger a little longer.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Adding Your “Personal Signature”

There is only one boss. The customer. And he can fire everybody in the company from the chairman on down, simply by spending his money somewhere else. —Sam Walton, founder of Walmart

We have discovered some tips and ideas on how to provide the kind of personalized service that solves the customer’s problem and leaves them feeling great. The most important thing for all staff is to personalize service by doing things they are most comfortable with, while also learning and applying new skills.

This illustrates the importance of putting your own “personal signature” on your work in customer service. In the book *Heart at Work*, a contributor named Barbara Glanz tells the story of



Johnny, a bagger in a grocery store who also had Down syndrome. Johnny heard Barbara talk about adding a personal signature on his work, so every evening he and his father would find a “thought for the day” and print it out on strips of paper. If he couldn’t find a thought he liked, he “made one up.” With a flourish, he would drop the thought into each customer’s grocery bags. Soon the line at his check-out stand was twice as long as the others. The manager went

crazy, calling for new lines to open, but the customers said, “No, we want to be in Johnny’s line. We want the thought for the day!” Some said they now stop in every day rather than once a week, just to get his thought. Johnny became the most important staff member in that store! Interestingly, his example inspired other staff members. The butcher loves Snoopy, so he puts a Snoopy sticker on every item he packages. The florist pins flowers on little girls and older ladies. Everyone is having fun, and so are the customers.⁸

It helps a ton when you learn people’s names and don’t butcher them when trying to pronounce them.
—Jerry Yang, co-founder and former CEO of Yahoo, Inc.



Case Study: Be Authentically You

My wife and I are constantly amazed by the personalized and authentic service we receive on Seabourn Cruise Line. It is almost impossible to pass by a staff member without a cheery greeting. Sometimes they also recognize something unique about us or comment on one of the presentations we give on the ship. They also compliment us on our dress or other details they know about us, and always in a sincere and authentic way. This personalized service has won them recognition as the small to medium size cruise line of the year multiple years in a row from major travel sources.

Moral: Get to know your valued and loyal customers and treat them in unique and special ways.

Start by Knowing Yourself: Each one of us is a distinct and unique creation. We have different physical, mental, emotional and spiritual makeups. Your service feels natural and authentic when you serve others through your strengths. Perhaps you have taken personality surveys such as DiSC™ or Myers-Briggs™ or a temperament profile like the 4 Lenses™. These can help you understand yourself and create your own service style.



We have a tool called the **200 Talents** that you can access in the tools section on our website www.visionbound.com. It lists 200 ways someone can be talented. Circle your talents and you will discover you have many you may never have honed. Then ask yourself how you could use those talents in the way you serve others. If you are a manager, invite your staff to take the talent survey and capitalize on it by utilizing staff members in their unique talents and strengths.

The Hot Tip Deck Tool

In our *Customers Only Want Two Things: Winning Customer Loyalty workshop*, we provide each participant with a deck of 33 **Hot Tip Cards**. These are small colored cards, each containing one idea or tip that can be used to provide memorable service and win loyalty. We have various versions of the decks for hospitality, realty, call centers, healthcare, citizens, and education, including for elementary-aged children and youth.

On the back of each card is a grid of twenty-one boxes. The challenge is to try to do an action twenty-one times, until it becomes a habit.

In the workshop, we have participants divide the cards into three stacks: those they rarely do, those they sometimes do, and those they often already do. We then have them pull out three cards that most appeal to them to start with. We have everyone hold up the top card. In a room of twenty or thirty people, the cards are almost always different. Sometimes there will be one or two people with the same card, but the variety is always amazing. It proves an important point. People like autonomy and ownership, and people are different in what appeals to them and what they think are great ideas for them.

I can usually tell when a staff has been given something like “The Four Points of Service” and told to always do those four things. If they do them at all, it sounds insincere and robotic, “Welcome to _____, how may I help you.” And it’s the same everywhere in the store. One chain I visited even has several large footprints

painted on the floor in the staff area, each with the words of one of the scripted service steps painted on it. But in walking around the store, I did not find one employee ever using those steps, no matter how many times they had walked over them! I'd rather find people being nice to children that day (card #9), making friends with one new coworker (card #22), or even just picking up trash outside (card #13). If they chose it, they are more likely to be committed to doing it, and managers can have a morning huddle for team members to report what they are doing and how it is going.

Several clients have organized "Twenty-One Clubs" or similar programs to recognize, encourage and reward people for using the Hot Tip cards. As Dr. Stephen R. Covey said, "Organizations don't behave. People behave."

Our experience is that this simple tool is changing cultures. In 2016, a nurse came up to me in a hospital in New Mexico, where all the staff had received the cards and training. She told me that in four months she had done all 33 cards twenty-one times and showed me her marked and tattered cards. She said that not only was she a better nurse, but she was now a better mother. She said, "When my children come in the door after school I Stop, Look and Listen." (Card #7) "With my friends, patients and coworkers I strive to be interested in them, and less interesting myself." (Card #27) And, "I started to give more compliments to others. I started giving my husband compliments. At first, he looked at me as if to say, 'Where is my real wife and where did you hide her body?' but soon he began responding by complimenting me. We compliment each other every day." (Card #10)

She had never thought of her children and family members as customers before, but realized they are if we define a customer as someone important to you, who has problems you need to solve and who wants to feel great about being around you.

A good compliment lasts me two weeks.

—Mark Twain, American author



Case Study: MyPillow Provides Its Customers a Soft Landing

Mike Lindell was a serious crack addict, but he had an idea: create a new, comfortable pillow.

However, his addictions kept him from being successful until others challenged him in 2008 to break the crack habit and push his marvelous pillows into the market. My wife and I met Mike's son at a fair booth and bought the MyPillow products, enticed in part by Mike's story and clever advertising. Mike promised 100 percent satisfaction and a ten-year warranty. Three years later one of the pillows got torn by our washing machine and the other pillow was slightly stained in the same wash cycle. So, we put their promise to the test. We quickly received not only two replacement pillows, but two nice pillowcases. We rest our heads gently, knowing we found a company that keeps its promises.

Moral: Make sure your company keeps its promises and you will earn loyalty!

Hot Tip Cards

Below is a list of some of the 33 items found in the business Hot Tip Deck. Read through the list and put a circle around the numbers of three ideas that most appeal to you and try to do them 21 times!



Card #1: Smile and greet every customer you encounter anywhere!

Card #2: Greet every customer within ten seconds of their entering.

Card #3: Walk a customer to the door as they are leaving.

Card #4: Use the person's name twice in each transaction or visit.

Card #8: Stop, Look, and Listen to your coworkers today.

Card #9: Treat children kindly: go out of your way to notice them and ask questions about them.

Card #12: Go out of your way in a special manner for at least one customer today.

Card #14: Say nothing negative about a coworker or customer all day, all week!

Card #30: PPA all day: (Project a Positive Attitude) in all your interactions with everyone around you.

If you change the path, you change people's behavior.
—Chip and Dan Heath, authors



Case Study: The Best Processes Delight Customers

In the 1940s, drive-ins were the predominant style of roadside diners. Most were tacky, dirty hangouts for bikers and teenagers, not someplace you would want to take your family. However, two brothers from Southern California had a different vision. They wanted to create a welcoming, clean and efficient place that people would love to visit and bring their families. They shut down their old drive-in, totally revamped the menu and found new processes focused on their best-selling products—fries, shakes and hamburgers. They even went out on a tennis court and used chalk to create an exact replica of the restaurant to design a system that would get food to customers in twenty seconds instead of twenty minutes. Their restaurants were sparkling clean and the staff well-groomed and professional. The brothers? Richard and Maurice McDonald.

Moral: Challenge every process and find new and better ones that entice and delight your guests.

Serving the Crusty and the Cranky

Working with Difficult Customers

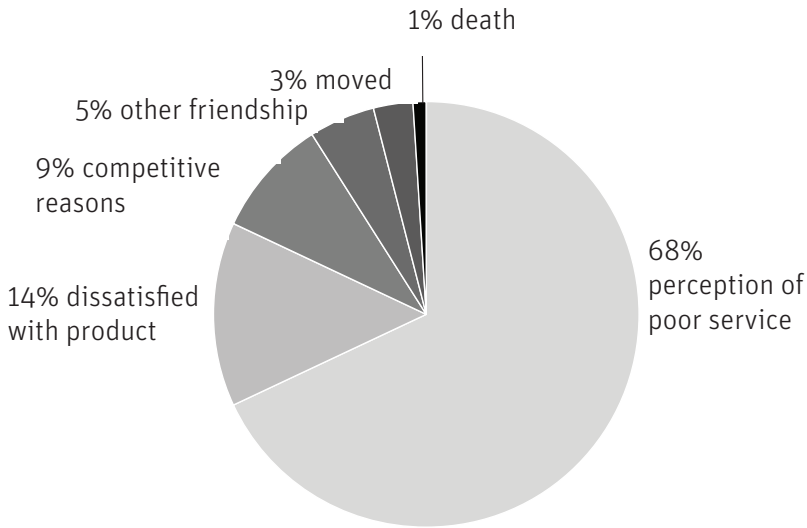
Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning. —Bill Gates, co-founder of Microsoft

Nothing puts service skills to the test more than dealing with difficult customers. Usually, they come emotionally charged—angry, hostile, disappointed, disruptive, accusatory and often downright rude. Their emotions and resulting behaviors can easily trigger the “fight, flight, or freeze” response in staff, none of which solves the problem and often escalates it. Like the Bible states, it is easy to love those who love us, but to serve and love those who despitefully treat us puts our service skills to the test.



First, we will explore why we lose customers. Then I'll introduce the three roots of difficult behavior, the three levels of difficult guests, and finally some skills for dealing with two of the most common difficult personality types.

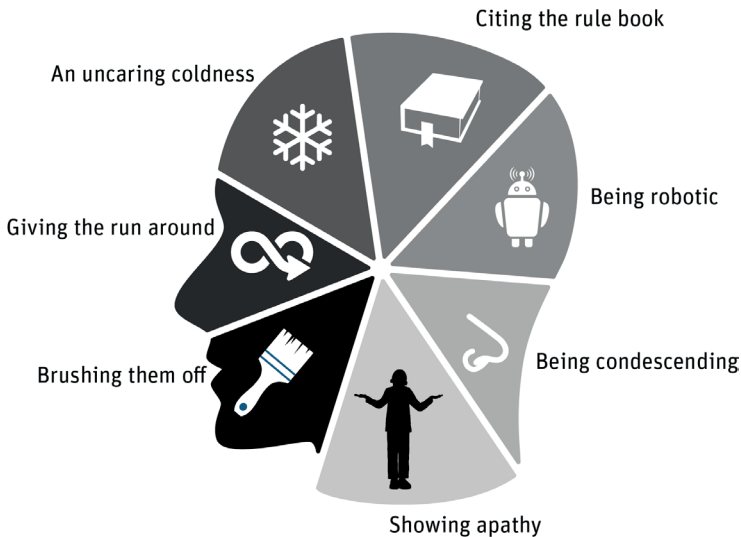
We lose customers for a variety of reasons, as shown in this diagram. Some have reasons beyond our control—they die! Others move. But the largest cut is in a customer's negative perception of the service they received. Remember that perception is reality to



people. We may think we are the best thing since sliced bread, but our customers think we are toast!

Truly listening to our unhappy or irate customers serves us in two ways. First, we understand what it is that they are disappointed in, whether it is our products, our services or both. Also, it helps us keep our own emotions in check, so we don't become part of the problem.

This model illustrates what research shows to be main customer complaints. Notice that none of them have as much to do with solving problems as they do with how people are treated. Coldness, apathy and hiding behind policies and rules are sure-fire ways to lose loyalty.



Every Complaint Is a Gift

Face it: no one likes to hear a litany of complaints, even if they are well grounded. We need to change our mindset about complaints and see them as a great opportunity. The book *A Complaint Is a Gift* by Janelle Barlow explains why every complaint should be treated as a gift. For every person that complains there are as many as 26 who had the same problem and simply walked away. They didn't complain to us, but they probably complained to others, and the problem only escalates. It is estimated that a complainer tells between five and eleven other people, who then tell another five or more.



If you make customers unhappy in the physical world, they might each tell six friends. If you make customers unhappy on the Internet, they can each tell six thousand friends. —Jeff Bezos, founder and CEO of Amazon

It's Worth It to Try: It takes effort to recover a difficult customer, but the payoff is usually worth it. Studies show that, of our difficult customers who have a complaint or issue:

- 90-96 percent are never heard from again.
- For every complaint, there are 26 customers with the same problem.
- Complainers are more likely to do business again than non-complainers.

- 54 percent of complainers do business again if the problem is resolved.
- 95 percent will do business again if the issue is resolved quickly!

What are customers' biggest complaints? Research has found the following to be the major complaints of customers:⁹

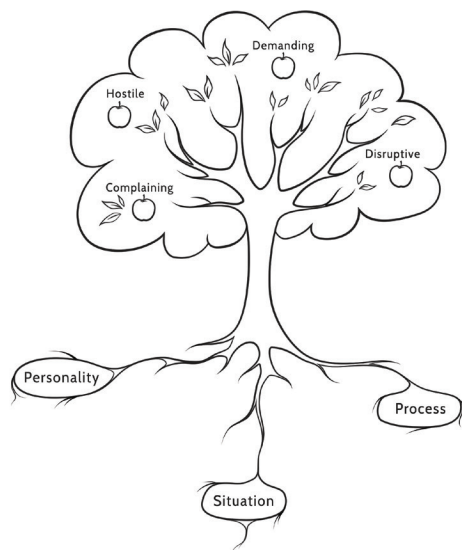
- Waiting in line
- Negative interactions
- Billing issues
- E-commerce problems (a growing issue every year)
- Refunds
- Passing the buck
- Making excuses
- Ignoring the customer
- Blaming the customer

The adage, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” can apply here, especially in the number one complaint—time spent waiting in line or in waiting rooms. Paco Underhill, in his book *Why We Buy*, explains it is possible to bend people’s perception of time. Ten minutes can seem like an hour or an hour can seem like ten minutes. He found that time spent *after* a customer is warmly greeted seems to pass more quickly for them. Provide customers entertaining things to read or watch. If possible, have a way for them to monitor on a screen or board how long the waiting time will be. Provide distractions for their children.

The Root Causes of Difficult Customer Behavior

It helps to understand some root causes of difficult behavior in customers. Years ago, I created the following diagram that has helped me diagnose these root causes. In this picture, you see a simple diagram of a tree. In the fruits of the tree are a few of the behaviors we might label as “difficult.” There could be many more. There are

three main roots leading up into the trunk, and eventually producing the “fruit.” These roots are *Personality*, *Situation*, and *Processes*. Each of these, or a combination of them, can lead to the disruptive behavior. Let’s explore each:



Personality: In his book, *Coping with Difficult People*, Dr. Richard Bramson has researched difficult behavior and found that about ten percent of a given population has what he terms a “difficult personality.” He has identified seven distinct types of difficult people, ranging from hostile aggressive people to chronic complainers, from super-agreeables to indecisives. These are chronically difficult people, whose personalities have been shaped and somewhat hardened over time. In his book, Bramson has a chapter or two devoted to how to deal with these difficult personalities. But he clearly says it’s not easy to change them: their behaviors are a result of a long and hardened pattern of thinking and behaving.



1. Above all, remember that nothing you do with difficult personalities is likely to “fix” them. So, don’t take it personally. I hand a Q-tip out to class participants to remind them of an acronym: **Quit Taking It Personally!**

2. It helps to think, “Well, that’s one of the ten-percenters,” so you can keep it in perspective.

3. Do your best to solve their problem and move them along so they don’t cause even more disruption.

4. Use the “dry erase” principle and mentally and emotionally

wipe the encounter clean once it is over, so it does not affect how you interact with your coworkers and other customers.

Situation: In this case, it's not dealing with a difficult personality. Rather, it is a situation in their life—likely rather temporary, that is making them difficult to deal with. It may be directly caused by a mistake or issue in the product or service provided. But it may be a series of situations in their life, and their encounter with you is the proverbial straw that breaks the camel's back. It may be a situation that can be fixed for them, and when it's solved, they return to a normal behavior range. There may be underlying situations in their life that little can be done about. They might be physically ill or have just received some terrible news. They might have just gotten an expensive traffic ticket five minutes before coming in. You might even be what we learned in the Army is a “target of opportunity”—just someone they can vent to.



1. Try not to take it personally, even if you are a target of their venting. Switch out of your “lizard brain” and into your “angel brain” by seeking to deeply understand their issue. The lizard brain is that “fight or flight” brainstem response common to almost all creatures. The angel brain is that higher-order-thinking neocortex region where our values and choices are at play.

2. Ask insightful, validating and sincere questions to get informed about the situation.

3. Work with them to solve the situation, but remember that not all of it may be in your circle of influence. You probably can't help them with the traffic ticket or their illness, but you can kindly validate it then turn your attention to what you can do to solve the service or product issue at hand.

4. Typically, when the situation at hand is solved or somewhat solved, their behavior may return to a degree of normalcy.

Process: This root is somewhat like the situation root, but now it has a more direct cause—something in your processes or systems is the real issue. The customer may not be a difficult personality, and

there are no huge situations in their life, but they have run into some process or service that has triggered their emotions and behavior. An example might be a return or exchange policy. In my experience at the department store in London, the store policy made it impossible for a sales clerk to handle a very simple product exchange without a supervisor's approval. I left fuming and embarrassed for holding up the line. Compare that to the simple exchange policy at Costco or Brookstone. The bottom line here is:



1. Fix processes! None of these are cut in stone unless they are based in a legal or regulatory issue. (For instance, it is illegal to share personal medical information about a patient without expressed permission.) In most cases, creative thinkers can find new and better policies and procedures that solve the customer's problem. A case in point is the example I previously shared of Disney figuring out a way to tell customers where they parked. Incidentally, studies show that over sixty percent of the ideas that revolutionize businesses come from employees who have been there less than six months or a year. They are not part of the old guard: they see things through fresh eyes and ask "why?"

2. Listen to customer issues and complaints to see if there is a pattern of repeated encounters with any policies, processes, and procedures. Remember, up to 26 other people may have had the same problem but did not say anything. Complaints give an opportunity to fix things.

3. Hold staff and customer focus groups to dig into deeper solutions. People will often think very creatively in a safe, open, brainstorming focus group.

We explained the three-root model and can understand that all disruptive, difficult behavior has deeper roots. Understanding this can give you a paradigm of kindness and charity and a sincere desire to help. Often, that is all the person needs. Now we will move on to the three levels of difficult guests.

The customer's perception is your reality.
—Kate Zabriskie, speaker and author

Three Levels of Difficult Guests

Another way to look at difficult customers comes from a superb, award-winning video called *The Difficult Guest*.¹⁰ The video program addresses three levels of difficult guests: **The Distracted Guest**, the **Disappointed Guest**, and the **Disruptive Guest**. It proposes a simple model for working with some difficult customers with the acronym LAST: Listen, Apologize, Solve, and Thank



1. The Distracted Guest is simply one that has not been properly welcomed into a service world. They arrive distracted. Most adults experience this to one degree or another. We arrive distracted by our children, work concerns, or many other issues. These distractions can leave us unfocused and sometimes irritable. The best thing to do is handle their distractions and ensure they are welcomed.

Some ideas include:



1. A nice “landing zone.” In his great book, the *Science of Shopping*, Paco Underhill notes that every store or company where customers enter needs to have a “landing zone” that helps the person transition. The larger the store, the larger the landing zone, but even small stores can have one at or near the front door. It’s a place where welcome signs are posted, and a comfortable, non-invasive spirit welcomes the customer. One famous big-box store tries to do this, sometimes more successfully than others, with their famous “Greeter” who is supposed to kindly welcome shoppers and give them a shopping cart. Sometimes I find them as friendly as a crocodile with a toothache. So, if you have a greeter, ensure he or she is a “people person.”

2. If a person arrives distracted by his or her children, help them with their distraction. One health clinic I visited had a nice play area with a TV playing the movie *Finding Nemo* over and over, a real aquarium with a clown fish and angel fish swimming around, and a table with coloring pages. The clinic also offered fresh magazines and a nice flat-screen TV for the parents to watch.

3. Often, it is sufficient to just greet the person with a friendly smile within ten seconds of their entering. If there is a receptionist, consider making an engraved sign “Director of First Impressions” and affix it to where they see it as they serve the customer.

4. Soft music, particularly baroque music, can calm and welcome customers, as can nice aromas or a free treat. The Lind Institute in San Francisco has done some interesting studies on the effect of baroque music and sells CDs mixed with the right selection of tracks.¹¹

Statistics suggest that when customers complain, business owners and managers ought to get excited about it. The complaining customer represents a huge opportunity for more business. —Zig Ziglar, author



2. The Disappointed Guest is someone who arrives disappointed. They may be disappointed with a product, some service or some other aspect of a business. Depending on how severely disappointed they are, their range of behaviors can vary from a little irritation to explosive anger. Their personality type or interpersonal style will also affect this. In this case, the **LAST** model comes into play:

Listen: Listen deeply and carefully to what the customer is saying. Don't interrupt. Find out what exactly disappointed them. Listening does two things: First, it's critical to understand what it is they are saying so you can hopefully fix it,



and second, it gives time to suppress your fight or flight response, gather your thoughts, and work from your “angel brain.”

Autobiographical listening occurs when someone listens from their own frame of reference. They then tend to probe, interpret, evaluate or advise too quickly. **Empathic listening** is listening to understand from the other person’s frame of reference. When someone’s emotion is high, it is usually not enough to just listen until you understand—you must listen until they *feel* understood. If you do it skillfully it does not take as much time as you think; but the person needs your complete, undistracted attention. Often, once they truly feel understood, their emotion subsides and they are ready to problem solve, or perhaps all they needed was to be understood.

The two words “silent” and “listen” contain the same letters arranged differently so in whatever relationship you may be in, the best way to listen is to remain silent. —Robert Herjevec, television personality

A few tips for listening include:

- Open body language. Don’t fold arms or tense up.
- Smile and nod encouragement, but not in a condescending or fake way.
- Don’t interrupt or start questioning them too soon. Let them tell their story until they begin to emotionally run down.
- To get more information you might simply say, “Please tell me more.” This simple phrase can work wonders to keep people talking without steering them away.
- When they seem satisfied you have listened well, repeat back to them what you heard them say. This feedback closes the loop and prepares you for the next step.
- You can even pause to say, “Do you feel understood?” Or, “Is there anything you need to add for me to understand the issue?”

Enter the conversation already taking place in your customer's mind. —Robert Collier, author

Apologize: In this case, an apology is not about who is right or who is wrong. After all, the issue may be entirely the customer's fault. Rather, your apology is an honest expression that you are personally sorry this happened to your customer and that they were inconvenienced in any way. Few things diffuse a customer's emotions more than a sincere apology. Here are some helpful phrases:



- “I am so sorry this happened. I can see why you are upset. I would be also.”
- “Wow, I am sorry this was such a hassle for you. Let’s figure out a way to fix this.”
- “That must have been very upsetting. I’m sure we can find a way to solve this.”
- “If you’re unhappy, we’re unhappy. What will make this right for you?”

With the first two steps behind us, it’s time to move on to the third and most important step:



Solve: Remember, until a person feels listened to and validated, and their emotions have settled down, they are in no mood to think about solutions. The emotional part of their being is inflamed, and the logical part needed for problem-solving is pushed to the background. You can usually tell if they are ready for you to help with the solution when they

calm down, smile, and start engaging with you, not pushing against you. They might even apologize themselves for being so angry or upset. Then you are ready to work together to find a solution that satisfies them.

Some tips include:

- Ask them for the solution that would satisfy them. This may seem dangerous to you because you worry they will ask for the “sun, moon and stars,” but research says that over 70 percent of the time what they ask for is within your ability to provide. They might ask for an exchange or a refund or a different solution. You can then smile and say, “Yes, we’d be happy to do that.”
- If they suggest something that is beyond your scope to provide, simply say, “I can see why that would be ideal for you, and now let me tell you what we *can* do.” Then, if possible, offer them two choices. “We can refund your money or find a replacement—which would you prefer?” By offering the customer two can-do solutions, they again feel respected and feel some ownership in the situation.
- Whatever you do, try to avoid the word *no*, or at least offer a “soft no” by emphasizing what you *can* do, not what you *can’t* do.
- Try never to cite policy. No customer is happy with the word “policy” because no one likes to feel less important than a policy. They almost automatically will respond with “that’s a stupid policy,” or “make an exception for me.” When you get repeated issues with a policy, see if it can be changed. Some policies are legally mandated, but others are simply archaic customer-unfriendly holdovers created years ago that could be changed.

Customers don’t expect you to be perfect. They do expect you to fix things when they go wrong.
—Donald Porter, former VP of British Airways

Thank: The final step is a sincere thank-you to the customer for bringing up the issue and working through it with you. Again, for every

complaint there may be twenty or more customers who had the same problem but did not say anything—they just left vowing to tell others and not come back themselves.



For this reason alone, the complaining customer deserves your thanks. Do keep in mind:

- Try to give the person a “bounce-back”—something free, a discount coupon, or a discount on their future bills. Be as generous as you can, but even a small treat or coupon can make a difference.
- A hand-written note a few days later is a powerful way to say “thanks” again.

Some useful thank-you phrases might be:

- “We greatly appreciate your bringing this issue up with us so we could resolve it. If customers don’t tell us their problems, we can’t make our team better.”
- “Thank you, and I hope we have restored your confidence and trust so we can continue to serve you in the future.”

Right or wrong, the customer is always right.
—Marshall Field, entrepreneur and founder

3. The Disruptive Guest: The third type of difficult guest is the hardest. They are no longer just distracted or disappointed, they become downright disruptive. Disruptive behaviors can show up as loud anger, rudeness to staff, management or other customers, and other forms. They might just “lose it” and get out of control. In this case, the LAST model may still work: Listen, Apologize, Solve, and Thank. But because their emotions and behavior are somewhat out of their control, LAST



may not work as quickly, or even at all, at least until they are back to a degree of normalcy.

Here are a few tips:

- It might be good to get them away from other customers and staff. Invite them to a back office or out of earshot. Sometimes just the physical movement calms them down.
- You may need to get a manager to help. Sometimes talking to another person, especially one that has perceived authority, will calm and focus them. But don't just hand them off. Try to be there to explain the situation and show them you still care about helping.
- Let them emotionally run down. Let them rant and rave. Don't interrupt or make excuses or pass the blame back to them or your system or others. Say validating things such as, "I can see why you are so upset; I might be also if it happened to me." Nod encouragement and keep open body language. Don't get defensive, even though they may be very personal and hurtful in their insults.
- Once you see that their emotions have vented and they start being more normal and rational, be ready to offer help. Like with disappointed guests, first ask them what solution they would like, and hopefully you can do that. If not, don't say "no" to it; just offer a couple of choices you CAN do for them and ask them which sounds best. Get them involved in the problem-solving.
- Thank them and be kind and validating, because they might be rather embarrassed themselves and profusely apologize. Just smile and let them know you were glad that it worked out.

An important note on staff empowerment: These steps work very well if staff members are empowered with the authority and resources to make a customer happy without having to get their manager's approval. Set a generous dollar limit or other limits and trust staff to do the rest. Train them in the kinds of responses that they are empowered to give. The story of the young woman at Disneyland who gave my friend's daughter a free princess dress is a perfect example. Even the housekeepers at Ritz-Carlton are empowered to gift a customer a free night's stay or other bounce-back

without management approval. Very rarely is this privilege abused because staff members like being trusted.

Skills for working with specific types of difficult people:



1. The Complainer: There are two types of complainers: the chronic, complaining personality and someone who has a situational, specific complaint. Any otherwise reasonable customer can have a valid complaint. Listen, apologize, solve, and thank usually works well with them.

However, there are a few folks who complain about almost everything. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the chronic complainer is one of the seven types of difficult personalities Dr. Bramson addresses. They complain about things almost everywhere they are—at home, at church, in the supermarket, or on the street.

Here are some suggestions for dealing with a complainer:



1. Ask them very specifically what they would like to see done about their issue. If they are chronic complainers, don't be surprised if they have no solution to offer. Their job is to complain, not solve things.

2. Give them an assignment such as asking them to write down their complaint in detail so you can address it. They may decide it's not worth it and move on to complain to someone else. (Not a great solution, but at least they are not complaining to you.)

3. Don't let the chronic complainer trigger you. Understand that their behavior stems from a deeper unmet need or pattern of life experiences. A biblical New Testament scripture teaches that "Charity never faileth."¹² In this case, charity means deep love and care. Try to respond with charitable kindness.

4. Remember that their behavior may have little to do with

you or the situation at hand. Don't take it personally. If they have a chronic complaining personality, they will find something to complain about in your service, no matter what you do or have done.

5. Redirect their energy, when possible, into a positive action. If they are a chronic complainer, try to get them to take an action to solve their complaint. Give them a piece of paper and ask them to write down their complaint and issue so you can understand it better. Sometimes, they will just walk away. Ask them, "What specifically would you like to see done about this?"

6. In your mind, you might say, "Well, that was one of the ten-percenters." And remember, if you are in customer service you **WILL** encounter them. The percentage may be much higher when you are in police work or working in a customer relations/complaint department. A dentist friend of mine has taught his staff to think or say, "I'd love to meet her at her best." Few people are at their best when they come to the dentist, where it might be painful, scary and expensive.



2. The Hostile Aggressive: These people are particularly difficult because they can be rude, loud, pushy and demanding. Dr. Bramson recommends:

- Stand your ground in a kind but firm manner. Stand up to them, but don't argue about who is right or who is wrong. They often respect someone who is not a pushover.
- Don't let them interrupt. Say, "Mr. Smith, you interrupted me—I was about to say ____." Don't say, "Don't interrupt me," because those are fighting words.
- Don't humiliate them or embarrass them, especially in front of their friends or other bystanders. If you do, they will plot to get even.

Tips for working with hostile aggressive people:



- Be ready to be a friend. Often, they are ready to be a friend if they see you are poised and confident. And, while they make terrible enemies, they can be great friends if you win their respect.
- If the emotion runs too high and you are



Case Study: Stairway to Heaven

A touching story is related by Joana Slan in a story called “Climbing the Stairway to Heaven,” in the book *Chicken Soup for the Soul at Work*. She was working in her husband’s music store and a very difficult customer became upset when she did not have the song “Stairway to Heaven” in stock. She first made the matter worse by saying no store has every piece of music ever written, which made him angrier. Finally, he waved a piece of paper in her face, and she saw it was a program for a memorial service. He said, “You wouldn’t understand. You don’t care about my boy dying, about him crashing his Camaro into that old tree. And he was 18, only 18, and he’s gone.” She then had a paradigm shift. With that insight, she did it just right when she said, “I can’t understand your loss. But we buried my four-year-old nephew last month and I know how bad that hurts.” With this show of empathy, the anger slid from the man’s face, and he pulled out a worn billfold. “Would you like to see a picture of our boy?” This story illustrates that every “difficult” person has some hidden pain or unmet need. And no one of us can ever feel exactly like another person or fully understand how they are feeling or why. We *can* empathize and do our best to validate and care for them.

CHAPTER NINE

Leadership: The Ultimate Force Multiplier

Leadership Is Everyone's Job!

The task of leadership is not to put greatness into people, but to elicit it. The greatness is already there. —John Buchanan, American politician

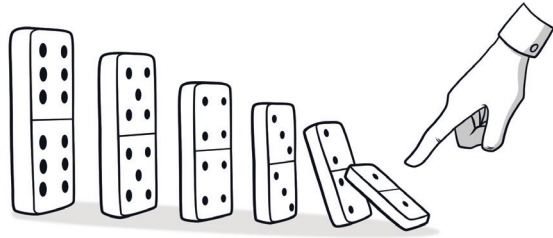
“Leadership is the greatest force multiplier on the battlefield.” I first heard this statement as a young Army lieutenant in Officer Basic Training, spoken by a hardened, experienced combat-veteran Master Sergeant. A force multiplier is anything added to a force or system that multiplies its power or effectiveness. After over thirty years of developing military, corporate, and academic leaders, I am now more convinced of his words than ever. Not only is leadership a “force multiplier,” it is THE greatest force multiplier that can be applied to any organization or system.

This is historically obvious on the battlefields of war. The leadership of Robert E. Lee and Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson was a force multiplier for an undermanned, inexperienced, and under-equipped Confederate army in the first 18 months of the American Civil War. If the Union army had been blessed with this caliber of leaders, the war would have probably ended in six months. George Washington, George S. Patton, Napoleon, Alexander the Great—all were force

multipliers on the battlefield. But, in a very real sense, we are all engaged on battlefields of our own as we tackle the tests of leading ourselves, our families, and our service organizations against a formidable array of challenges.

I can assure you that leadership is also the greatest force multiplier needed in building a world-class customer service program.

This falling domino graphic provides an illustration. A YouTube video shows someone pushing a very small, light domino which hits



one slightly larger and heavier. The tumbling occurs until a huge domino weighing over a hundred pounds and standing three feet high falls over. Leadership provides the initial motivation and energy that can multiply through the organization. Sometimes leaders block the process with micromanagement or other restraints and the synergy stops cold.

Here is a remarkable “hero story” shared by Valerie Oberle, vice president of Disney University’s guest programs. She has told the story to audiences and shared it in the book *Chicken Soup for the Soul at Work*.

It seems a lady guest was checking out of Disney World’s Polynesian Village Resort in Florida. She’d had a great time but told the front-desk hostess she was heartbroken over losing some rolls of film, most particularly the shots of the Polynesian Luau. The hostess asked her to leave a couple rolls of fresh film. Two weeks later, this guest received a package in the mail containing new photos of Disney World, including the parade, and shots of the entire cast of the luau, personally autographed by the performers! These photos had been taken by the front-desk hostess, after work, on her own time. Valerie saw the thank-you letter this guest wrote to Disney, in which she said that never in her life had she received such compassionate service from any business.¹³

I was astonished by this story. That a front-desk hostess, serving

hundreds of people a day, would care enough to go that extra mile for one, is almost mind-boggling. Valerie said, “Heroic service does not come from policy manuals. It comes from people who care—and from a culture that encourages and models that attitude.”

A gulf of difference exists between the “zeros” at Happy’s that day and the “hero” at Disney World. Obviously, much can be attributed to the character of the individuals involved. However, I also attribute much of it to the force multiplier of leadership that created the culture and spirit that Valerie referred to.

Is Your Service Program a Hero or a Zero?

In my seminars, I sometimes stretch a ten-foot piece of paper across a wall and write “zero” at one end and “hero” at the other, with a one-to-ten scale between. I ask participants to place a check mark along the scale as if they were one of their company’s customers asked the Ultimate Question, “*How likely is it you would recommend our business to a friend or family member?*” I usually see votes across the paper, with the most grouped in the 6-7 range. But is this all customers deserve? Is 70 percent good enough to be “world class?”

Will 70 percent keep customers coming back again and again? Let us apply the force multiplier of leadership to cross this gulf.

And don’t forget the ENPS question: “*How likely is it you would recommend working for us to a friend or family member?*” If a team has a low ENPS, don’t expect staff to provide much better service to customers or even to each other. Managers are the single most important factor in creating this loyalty. Renowned author Marcus Buckingham said, “People don’t quit companies. They quit managers.”



The Six Force Multipliers of Customer Service Leadership

I propose there are at least six “force multipliers” that leaders can apply as they build a world-class customer service program. At

the end of the chapter, you can use some questions to evaluate your own program.

Number One: The Power of a Compelling Vision



President Ronald Reagan once said, “To grasp and hold a vision, to fix it in your senses, that is the very essence, I believe, of successful leadership.” Great organizations, be it families, businesses or nations, are focused on a compelling vision, a vision that ignites and unifies the hearts and minds of all engaged in it—a vision that excites positive emotion when you read it and makes you want to live it.

Before manufacturing his first Model T, Henry Ford began with the end in mind with a clear, concise vision: “I will build a car for the great multitude. It will be large enough for the family, but small enough for the individual to run and care for. It will be constructed of the best materials, by the best men to be hired, after the simplest designs that modern engineering can devise. But it will be so low in price that no man making a good salary will be unable to own one and enjoy with his family the blessing of hours of pleasure in God’s great open spaces.”

Henry Ford’s vision statement contains elements of an effective corporate vision and mission statements: it is concise, clear, compelling and measurable. It engages the hearts of those who read it. It provides a crystal-clear picture of what the end must be. Most of all, it drove everything that Ford did in the early days. When the current process of building cars was too expensive to realize his vision, Henry challenged the process and refined the assembly line system to the point that a Model T sold for less than 300 dollars. That is the power of a vision.

Dr. Stephen R. Covey said, “Leadership is the creation of a culture or a relationship surrounding a common vision.” I propose that the original vision of Walt Disney, even though he is long dead, created the culture that helped inspire the front desk hostess to be such a hero that day. As I quoted before, Walt Disney said, “We will do what we do so well, that the people who see it will want to see it again and bring friends.” With over 157 million visitors to all of its parks each year, Disney has succeeded.

Great leaders unite their teams in a process called “co-missioning.” Great visions and missions are best created when as many people as possible are involved in their inception. This process can also be called “pathfinding,” which, more simply stated, is *linking what the folks out there are passionate to get with what your organization and people are passionate to give*. Disney applies the power of pathfinding in one of its basic mission statements, “*We create happiness by providing the finest in entertainment to people of all ages everywhere.*” In just fifteen words, Disney creates a compelling vision that not only tells “what” they do, but more importantly, “why.” They link what they are passionate to give—fine entertainment—with what their customers are passionate to get—happiness.

I have worked with dozens of organizations to help them create mission and vision statements that resonate like Disney’s. Usually, mission statements are cumbersome, wordy, uninspiring, and completely forgettable. They are “framed whatever,” stuck on a wall somewhere gathering dust. I will share a couple of examples of how a mission statement can evolve.

I was working with a movie theater to help them create a compelling and exciting mission. Their previous mission statement was a “framed whatever” that read something like this:

“Our mission is to provide our customers with a positive movie-going experience by providing them with a clean theater, top quality new-release movies and, . . .” blah, blah, blah. (You’ve heard this stuff before, right?)

After a little work, they came up with one that was quite a bit better—at least shorter!

“We guarantee top quality movie-going experiences to our valued customers by providing superb recent-release movie entertainment in an uplifting, positive environment in the cleanest theater in the valley.”

But it still does not connect what they are passionate to give with what customers are passionate to get. It is missing the critical “why” piece. We went back to work and created the final version:

“We provide refreshment for the soul by providing a complete movie experience in the finest theater in the Valley.”

We do this through:

- *Maintaining the cleanest theater in the region*

- *Treating every customer “like family”*
- *Our friendly, family atmosphere*
- *Smiling at and personally greeting every patron*
- *Offering unique services*
- *Remembering that the little things are the big things*

One can see and feel the difference. The final statement captures the deeper purpose of their mission and provides some specific ways to do it. By using the bullets beneath, they did not jumble up the main statement and kept it at 19 words. My challenge for an organization is to create, in 20 words or less, a compelling mission that uplifts, excites and unites every stakeholder who reads it.

My second example is even more insightful. I was working with a financial-planning and financial-services company in California. Their mission statement was a mumbo-jumbo lengthy mess of financial jargon about a half page long. I kept drilling them to understand exactly what they offered their customers. Why do people hunger for financial services such as retirement planning, saving for college, and insurance? In the end, we created a six-word statement that says it all:

We let you sleep at night.

This statement is more of a vision statement because it doesn't say anything about what they do. However, it was a great marketing slogan. In fact, they made billboards that just shone with those six words and their company name. To translate it into a mission statement, they might do this:

We let you sleep at night by solving your financial concerns.

Our mission statement about treating people with respect and dignity is not just words but a creed we live by every day. You can't expect your employees to exceed the expectations of your customers if you don't exceed the employees' expectations of management.
—Howard Schultz, executive Chairman of Starbucks

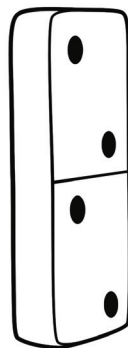
Number Two: The Power of Engagement

The most compelling and exciting mission statement in the world won't have much impact unless it is drilled deeply into the culture and the hearts, minds and actions of a team. Staff at all levels must be empowered and resourced to bring it to life. Otherwise, the mission statement is only worth the paper it's printed on.

When I visit organizations, I have a fun little game I play. Hiding a full squirt gun behind my back, I ask the question: "Do you have a company mission statement?" Usually, everyone proudly nods. I then pull the squirt gun out, point it at the CEO or top manager, and ask, "What is it?" They usually gasp, struggle, cough out a word or two, and get shot with water. I then move down the line and at the end, everyone is sprayed. Sadly, I did this with a team one year after I had led them through the process of creating a very good mission statement. I ended up spraying every chagrined person except one—the secretary who had typed it enough times that she had memorized it!

I am certain this would not generally happen at a world-class organization like Disneyland or Disney World. They instill in every employee the underlying vision, values, and mission of Disney. I heard once that Disney leaders were shocked to discover that the average 17-year-old job applicant at Disneyland did not even know that there was once a real person named Walt Disney, and they knew nothing about him, his dream or what he created. After all, they were born long after the TV show *Disney's Wonderful World of Color*, hosted by Walt himself, was off the air. This inspired Disney to create its famous orientation program where each employee learns about the history of Disney's dream, and what the real values and purposes of Disney are. They are then "put in costume" and sent out to serve, even if it is as a street sweeper on Main Street. They know their mission is to make people happy, not simply sweep streets.

Another great example is the Ritz-Carlton hotel chain, which has repeatedly won honors as the top luxury class leader in its field. It created a vision/slogan for all employees:



We are ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen.

And their Ritz-Carlton credo:

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel is a place where genuine care and comfort of our guests is our highest mission. We pledge to provide the finest personal service and facilities for our guests who will always enjoy a warm, relaxed, yet refined experience.

They then proceed to instill this slogan and credo deep into every employee by repeatedly training them on their steps of service. Everyone carries a trifold card that contains the slogan, the credo, and their steps of service.

My last example inspired my wife and me in a recent trip to Colonial Williamsburg. Its stated mission is to *Feed the human spirit by sharing America's enduring story*. As we walked its historic streets and interacted with the many colonial-costumed staff, we felt our spirits were deeply fed and instilled with a deeper love for America's truly enduring history.

So, once you have a vision (Force Multiplier #1) how do you engage everyone to bring it to pass (Force Multiplier #2)? I have some suggestions:

First: Communicate it and communicate it some more! Have everyone memorize it.

1. Print it on the back of business cards—and give every single employee business cards. It helps them feel that they belong! Hint: just use perforated laser business cards and print out cards as needed. Or use a low-cost fast response printing company.

2. Put it on the header or footer of all internal memos, documents and meeting agendas so it can be referred to in all deliberations.

3. Refer to the vision or mission frequently as a guide for making decisions.

4. Create a symbol to represent the mission.

5. Role-play how to “live” the mission. My daughter worked for a fast food place that had the staff team up to create a skit, a song and a “battle-cry” around it. She hasn’t forgotten the statement!

Second: Empower and resource people to be able to instantly live the mission. We learned previously that when we put high potential people in poor, misaligned systems, the systems usually win. Many, if not most, organizations are misaligned. They may talk big about customer service, but then they disempower the first-line employees to where they cannot possibly walk the talk. This institutionalized mistrust and disempowerment hurts, disillusiones and disheartens people.

For example, the young girl serving me in my “zero” Happy’s story evidently did not have enough authority or training to be able to instantly solve my problem with a new drink, fresh, hot food, and a “bounce back” coupon inviting me to return for a free meal. She had to go to her manager to get his or her approval for an action that cost almost nothing.

Compare this to the Ritz-Carlton, which gives every single employee a very generous dollar value that they can use to instantly satisfy a customer without any management approval. They can waive a room fee, give free meals or desserts or a variety of bounce-backs. This tells the employee, “We trust you and give you ownership over the customer experience. Do what you must do within this dollar limit, using your best judgment. Make it happen!” Even if an occasional misjudgment or misuse occurs, the Ritz-Carlton knows the payback in terms of employee empowerment and ownership and customer satisfaction is well worth it. And it is: the Ritz-Carlton consistently enjoys a very high customer satisfaction mark and low customer complaint ratios.

Here are a few suggestions:

1. Establish a dollar range mentioned in the example above.
2. Train employees on how to satisfy a customer problem. Remember, if you try to motivate people without training them, you only frustrate them!
3. Establish a set of clear standards and guidance.
4. Create a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) with their Correctly Given Responses (CGRs) and thoroughly train every employee in how to use them.

Whether you are big or small, you cannot give good customer service if your employees don't feel good about coming to work.

—Martin Oliver, MD Kwik-Fit Financial Services

Third: Recognize and reward examples of living the mission.

The adage, “You get what you reward,” rings true in the service environment. Leaders can get in the habit of watching for instances where employees live the mission and deliver what it promises. To do this, they may have to symbolically grow two new eyeballs that only see the good things. (Their old eyeballs are too well-trained to see only the problems!) Try to catch employees doing things right and instantly recognize them. These recognitions need not be expensive. Simple gestures of specific, timely thanks, and small things like candy or movie passes will often do the trick.

When we want someone to do better, why do we make them feel worse? —Anonymous

In working with organizations, I find that most of them have some ineffective “Employee of the Month” or similar “reward” system as about their only carrot. These programs have proven to have little or no value whatsoever in motivating a change in behavior. In study after study, the things employees state they want the most at work are (1) recognition for work well done, and (2) feeling a part of things—especially when decisions will affect how they work.

In an instance at the Mirage Hotel in Las Vegas, inspired leaders reduced the annual turnover of the hotel's housekeeping staff from 200 percent to about 17 percent over a two-year period by constantly recognizing work well done with simple engraved poker chips that could be redeemed for gifts at the gift store. If someone did something extraordinary, the manager might award a blue chip. Red or white chips recognized something a little less. These chips had more intrinsic than extrinsic value; in fact, the employees rarely

redeemed them. One manager heard a “jingle-jingle” coming down the hall. One housekeeper had drilled small holes in the chips she had received and hung them on suction hooks on the side of her cleaning cart!

Fourth: Do more LBWA (Leadership by Wandering Around).

This is one of the most powerful tools I know of to become a more influential, engaged leader. It’s so easy to get so caught up in the “whirlwind” of the job that leaders get stuck behind their desks or off and running to meetings. Set aside a good half hour each day to LBWA. Simply walk around visiting people and engaging with them on a personal basis. Never use this time to correct or find fault. Praise them for work they are doing or past performance. Learn about their families, hobbies and interests and share yours with them. At times, you can ask some questions more related to work.

A few good LBWA questions are:

1. How are you doing?
2. What are you learning?
3. What does the team need to learn?
4. What can I do differently to help you do your job better?



5. Is there something frustrating you about your job that I should be aware of?

6. What is something we can do differently as a team to better serve our customers?



Case Study: “The Bull in the China Shop Effect,” by Beau Sorensen

Bullish managers are sometimes successful in getting things done—but their style can damage trust with customers and coworkers. One night, we were eating at our favorite local pizzeria when we saw the owner berate one of the cooks. He did it in the back, but due to the configuration of the restaurant, we could hear the whole kerfuffle as it was occurring.

Prior to this instance, we regularly ate there around two or three times per month. After we saw how the owner treated his employees, we suddenly lost interest in eating there. The impact of that one interaction certainly changed our purchasing habits—and based on the reactions of other patrons who were there at the same time as we were, it likely changed the habits of other guests.

Moral: Treat your staff and fellow workers with kindness and respect if you want them to treat your customers well. You never know who might be listening!

Spread love everywhere you go. Let no one ever come to you without leaving happier.

—Mother Teresa, Roman Catholic nun and missionary



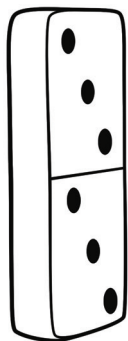
1. Involve customers in recognizing great service. One hotel gives each customer a “gold coin” to award an employee who does a particularly good job.

2. Have a peer-recognition program where peers can “catch” a fellow employee doing something well, submit a “gotcha card,” and then be recognized themselves for doing so.

3. Create a unique “pass-along” award that can travel from employee to employee as they catch each other performing great service. I recently visited a university bookstore which created a “SPAM Award.” (Super Positive Attitude Master) They mounted a can of Spam on a trophy, created a SPAM T-shirt, and passed the trophy around to recognize great acts of service. Fantastic.

4. Read the book *A Thousand and One Ways to Reward Employees* by Bob Nelson for dozens of low-cost, innovative ways to reward others. Another great book is *The 24 Carrot Manager* by Adrian Gostick.

When we treat people as objects, we dehumanize them. —Brené Brown, author and researcher



Number Three: The Power of Onboarding the Right People

It's crucial to make the "right hires." Almost every leader has made the mistake of hiring the wrong person, personality wise, into a service position. Southwest Airlines, which is famous for its friendly, energetic staff, has a simple credo—*Hire for personality and train for skill*. Personality is a major factor for its pilots, too. I remember getting into some turbulence on a Southwest Airlines flight and hearing the captain suddenly singing a modification of the Gilligan's Island song over the intercom. "The weather started getting rough, Flight 605 was tossed, if not for the courage of the fearless crew (he named himself and his co-pilot) . . ." Everyone on the plane laughed and the fears were eased.

As mentioned previously, one Target store manager told me he hired for the 3 Fs: Fast, Fun and Friendly. He learned if people were fast, fun and friendly, he could train them in virtually any retailing skill.

If the first two force multipliers are done well, finding and retaining good staff will be a lot easier. The Mirage Hotel has a long waiting list of people wanting to be on their housekeeping team because friends tell friends what it's like to work in such a positive environment. Disney has no shortage of applicants who want to work for a place that "makes people happy."

Nevertheless, there must be a good hiring process that separates out the likely top performers and delivers people with the right mix of personality, skill, and trainability to create a world-class service team. And it *must* involve behavior-based interviewing. Be sure to use a battery of interview questions that will reveal a person's personality style, conflict and communication styles, and overall demeanor toward customer service.



Here are some suggested interview questions:

1. Describe a time to me when you had to deal with a difficult customer (or fellow student, teammate). How did you work with this person and what was the outcome?

2. Describe a time when you had a disagreement with a coworker (teammate, family member) and what you did to resolve the disagreement. How did it turn out?

3. Share with me your personal customer service philosophy. How do you intend to personally live it if you work for us?

4. Give me an example of when you went the extra mile in satisfying a customer. What did you do?

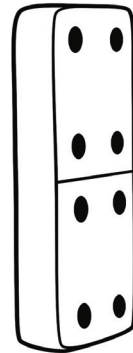
5. Tell me about a time when you chose to set aside a company policy to meet the needs of a customer. How did it turn out?

6. Please read our mission statement and tell me in your own words what it means to you and how you would personally apply it on the job if we hire you.

Note that these kinds of “behavior-based” questions leave no room for simple “yes” or “no” answers. They will give a much better feel for how a candidate will perform under pressure by giving insights into their personality and values. Remember, “an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure.” Any leader who has had to go through the process of firing an employee knows this is true.

Number Four: The Power of Treating Folks Right

There is a reality—internal customers (staff) will rarely treat the external customer better than they are being treated by the company (or by each other)! I once watched a store manager belittle and berate a downcast young employee for leaving some part of his job undone. The outright cruelty, the abuse of positional power, literally poisoned the air in the room. When I went up to the employee a few minutes later to be served, the “glazed eye” look, the sullen resentment, was still radiant. I saw other customers who felt it as well. What a tragic and tremendous cost to this company! The way employees feel about working will in great measure ultimately impact the experience their customers have.



The best way to help employees reach their greatest potential is

to leverage their unique strengths, not emphasize their weaknesses. Most employees are doing the right things 95 percent of the time yet are only harangued over the five percent they do wrong. Consider this for your company: “Would I really like to work here if I was a box-boy or a cashier? What does it feel like to be 17 years old in this store? Am I valued, wanted, and treated like a pearl of great price, or like a “throw away commodity”? An interesting thought. The TV program *Undercover Boss* revealed many insights to CEOs who went undercover to work at the lowest level in their companies.



1. As a leader, fiercely protect employees from your own weaknesses and from the weaknesses of their fellow employees.
2. Insist on, and personally model, that all people are treated with respect and dignity and courtesy.
3. Nip back-biting, belittling and insulting behaviors in the bud, instantly and sometimes publicly to show that such things are non-negotiable.
4. At the same time, reward instances when you see employees and managers treating each other well.
5. Publish a “Team Members Bill of Rights” and see that it is always enforced, such as “The right to be respected,” “The right to try and fail,” “The right to state your opinion and be valued for doing so.”
6. With everyone’s input, create a Code of Conduct that defines how team members treat each other and the customer. For example, “We don’t gossip or repeat gossip.” “We come to work on time and ready to work.” “We start and end meetings on time.” When someone forgets or violates a rule, a simple, “Hey, stick to the Code,” will often do the trick. Contact me if you would like a list of ideas for your Code of Conduct.

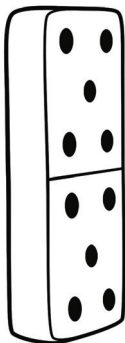


Case Study: Thinking Win-Win with Your Staff Pays Off

The success of In-N-Out Burger is based in great measure on how abundant and generous it is with its staff. A restaurant manager in California can earn over three times what competitor restaurant managers make in a year by staying with the company and moving up, without any prior experience or even a college degree! Their salary is triple the industry average and more than the average lawyer or high-tech manager in that state. Employees start earning more than thirteen dollars an hour and receive paid vacations, 401(k) plans and vision coverage for even part timers. A Glassdoor ranking of the best places to work in 2018 placed the chain in the number four spot, beating out Google and Microsoft. It was the only restaurant chain in the top fifty.¹⁴ But it is not an act of charity. The high pay and generous benefits earn loyalty, resulting in higher productivity and better quality and service. The chain is growing and expanding in the West and plans to move East. Another study shows that 90 percent of In-N-Out Burger employees would recommend working there to a friend, and the company enjoys a much lower turnover rate. This is a far cry from other companies whose “burn and churn” cost-cutting mentality toward staff hurts their profitability.

Moral: Treat your people well, be generous in benefits and compensation, and see what their loyalty does to your bottom line.

Number Five: The Power of Building Service Teams



Daniel Webster said, *“Men can do jointly what they cannot do singly and the union of hearts and minds, the concentration of power, becomes almost omnipotent.”*

Great leaders learn to synergize the unique strengths of individuals into powerful teams, so critical in building a service organization. Quite often we tend to create what I call “functional silos” in our organization: the cashier silo, the stockage silo, the meat-department silo, the management silo. People

work in their silos, oblivious to and uncaring about the work done in other silos. This generates the “not my job syndrome,” the “go ask that guy over there syndrome,” and the “someone should take care of that customer syndrome,” all of which sicken any service system.

I heard Stephen R. Covey relate a situation he witnessed in a Ritz-Carlton hotel. A woman was struggling with her luggage at the door because no bellhop was present. A maintenance man was high on a ladder replacing a light bulb in the ceiling. He witnessed the situation, climbed down from his ladder, and carried the woman’s luggage through check-in and on to the elevator. Stephen was so impressed he approached the man, who simply repeated the Ritz-Carlton slogan: “I’m a gentleman, serving a lady,” and returned to his work. There was no silo there: only a team effort to satisfy the customer.

There is a big difference between work-groups and true teams. Work-groups consist of individuals who are assigned to occupy a similar time and place. Teams are an energetic group of people who are committed to achieving common objectives, who work well together and enjoy doing so, and who produce high quality results in a united effort. Work-groups simply happen, whereas teams are consciously, deliberately and constantly built.

Customer service is not a department;
it’s everyone’s job. —Anonymous

The smallest details can rule in customer service. A customer can have great service all through the store, but be treated rudely by the cashier, and all may be lost. And, some research shows it takes as many as 12 positive experiences to overcome one extremely negative one, if there is even a chance to recover from it. So, great service is delivered by teams who can cross-function for each other and know enough about each other’s work to serve in at least the basic ways.

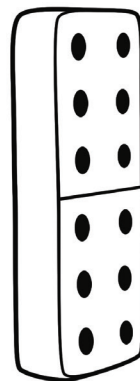


1. Promote feelings of achievement and contribution by recognizing the value of the team's work and focusing everyone on the mission. The ABC Rule is Achievement, Belongingness and Contribution.
2. Promote feelings of belongingness in the team. Encourage the creation of warm connections among team members.
3. Create opportunities for individuals and teams to feel the joy of making real contributions.
4. Deemphasize positions, power and hierarchies. Create self-directed work-teams, but don't fall into the rut of some leaders who carry this too far and abandon their teams.
5. Celebrate team accomplishments, not just individual achievements. Remember you get what you reward, so if you want teamwork, reward teamwork! A friend of mine who manages a fast-food restaurant promised his employees that if they could, as a team, have perfect closings for thirty days running he would rent a theater for a midnight showing of the newly-released Star Wars movie. His folks were so fired up that they came into work even when they were not scheduled, late at night, to be sure things were perfect. He then traded the midnight showing with the theater manager for a catered party for the theater employees. Clever!
6. Engage in frequent team-building activities. Hint: *The Encyclopedia of Team-Building Activities* published by Jossey-Bass is a great source, and there are others. Remember, great teams do not just happen—they are consciously built.
7. When possible, assign projects to be done by teams rather than by individuals, and give the team a challenge to beat a previous record or other marks-on-the-wall.
8. Use the Code of Conduct described previously to govern and moderate team and individual behavior.

Everyone in an organization should be involved with customer service. Not only are they feeling the customer, but they are getting a feeling for what's not working. —Penny Handscomb, British talent and leadership coach

Number Six: The Power of Challenging Your Processes

The final force multiplier is crucial. Leaders know that nothing is ever perfect and that all systems can be improved. This does not mean to engage in “change for change’s sake.” People resist “flavor of the month” initiatives. It does mean that we are constantly benchmarking ourselves and stretching to find new and better ways to do business and serve customers.



This has become increasingly critical in recent years. It is now almost impossible to rely on product or price differentiation alone to carve a niche in the market. As soon as a good idea or product is released, competitors mirror it. And someone, somewhere, will sell it cheaper or faster, if only on Amazon or eBay! The way to truly differentiate is first having the right people, then top-notch service policies, procedures, and strategies. To do this, challenge every process, every procedure, and every policy to see if there is a better way to do it *from the customers’ standpoint*.

I have witnessed that organizations over time tend to organize and create procedures and policies that make work easier or more efficient from the employees’ standpoint. While this can be positive, sometimes it has a negative effect on customers. Managers also tend to knee-jerk and write policies to cover every one percent unusual situation that arises, not recognizing that they have created an extra step or frustration for 99 percent of their employees. Soon, policy and procedures manuals are inches thick and customers’ frustrations a mile high. Some organizations and leaders punish the “ninety and nine” for the mistakes of the one—when one staff member does something amiss, they create a policy that constrains and punishes everyone.

A great religious leader was asked over a century ago how he so successfully governed a very disparate group of converts from a dozen nations. He simply said, “I teach them correct principles and they govern themselves.”¹⁵ We can follow this creed in our own leadership at home and at work—challenge the process, reduce as much as possible into clear principles, and release employees to govern themselves accordingly.

To challenge the process successfully, I suggest the following:

1. Constantly examine the operation as a customer. Call in as a phone customer: what is the phone system like? Start in the parking lot and examine every “point of impact” where a customer engages the services. What is frustrating? What looks good? When there is something wrong, fix it!



2. Reward problem *solving* not problem *finding*. Challenge others to not bring a problem without at least two possible solutions, and a recommendation of which one is best. If you reward problem finding there may soon be a pack of panting “golden retrievers” happily bringing more problems to solve. Send them back for solutions!

3. Engage in frequent brainstorming sessions to uncover and solve sticky problems. I recommend posting a “challenge of the week” for employees to mull over from Monday to Friday, then having a fast-moving brainstorm session to find solutions.

4. Shop the competition and do research to benchmark what the very best are doing. Never get complacent.

5. Be flexible to meet the market demands. Customers change and so do their needs and wants to some extent. Keep an eye on social trends and try to be ahead of the curve.

6. The best way to predict the future is to *create* it. Find a product or service strategy that no one else has thought of. The Sony Walkman is such a story. No customer had ever asked Sony to create a portable cassette player with small headphones to wear while jogging. No customer had even thought such technology was possible. Sony engineers simply created and introduced it in 1979 and thus predicted Sony’s future—soon hundreds of thousands of customers were demanding a Walkman and Sony had to open entire factories to meet the demand. Sony sold over 200 million units! *Time* magazine lists it as one of the most influential gadgets and gizmos.¹⁶ Soon dozens of manufacturers made similar devices, but customers still asked for a “Walkman.” What is the equivalent of the “Sony Walkman” in your market today? Don’t wait for customers to ask for it; build it and they will come! Sometimes, by arriving early with a great product, a brand name

comes to represent the type of product—examples are Band-Aids and Kleenex.

7. Listen to customers. Hold customer focus groups like Sony does. Involve all stakeholders in challenging your processes. This includes involving internal customers as well: hold employee focus groups to solve internal and external service problems. First-line service staff often are the ones that know what systems most frustrate customers and what products customers are seeking.

LeaderTips: I have created a deck of cards called *LeaderTips*. Each card contains one practical tip to becoming a more effective, engaging leader. This tool is available for purchase on my website. Below are some of the ideas.

Card #1: Practice one of the **Four T's** today: **Treat** someone especially well, **Train** someone better, **Thank** someone for work well done, or express your **Trust** in someone.

Card #2: Spend at least a half hour today in LBWA (Leadership by Wandering Around). Use the time to connect with people on a personal basis, not to correct them!

Card #3: Visit with one staff member or peer today and ask, “What can I do differently to help you do your job more effectively?” Tip: NEVER ask someone what you can do better—just differently.

Card #8: Share your company or team mission statement with the group and ask them what it means to them.



A Challenge: Choose one of these four actions above and try it out this week.

And Don't Forget to Take Care of Yourself

Abraham Lincoln reportedly said, “If I had six hours to cut down a tree, I would spend four of them sharpening my axe.” It is easy, as leaders, to symbolically keep piling up the wood in front of ourselves and our staff, requiring more and more and setting higher goals. Each of us is a being with four parts: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual, and each is a part that needs constant nourishment and sharpening. Aesop’s famous tale of the Goose and the Golden Egg reminds us of what happens when we kill the goose to get the golden eggs and then find out we have killed the very source of them and can get no more. Great leaders take care of themselves physically through exercise, nutrition, hydration, rest, and stress management. They encourage staff to do so as well, and bring elements of fun and stress management into the workplace. I have known clients who bring in office massage therapists to give free massages, set up nap rooms where staff can sign out for a power nap, and do myriad other things to make work relaxing and empowering. They universally report results in higher productivity, greater creativity and higher retention.

Wrapping Up

In this chapter, we have explored how leadership is, and always will be, the decisive “force multiplier” in every situation, from battlefields to boardrooms. Extraordinary leadership unlocks the full potential of a service team to provide cutting-edge service. Previously I included John Buchanan’s quote, “The task of leadership is not to create greatness in humanity, but to elicit it, for the greatness is already there.”

Tremendous, untapped power and potential exists in any current service team, current products, and current customer base. By following these six and other “force multipliers,” releasing this potential is possible.

Arthur Jones said, “All organizations are perfectly aligned to have the results they are getting.” Unless we have the courage to change, to lead differently and to challenge the status quo, we will remain exactly where we are.

Personal Applications

Rate yourself on Force Multiplier #1

Our Mission Statement Is:

Cumbersome, wordy, uninspiring, forgettable	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Compelling, crisp, exciting, focused and useful
Unknown to most people, rarely used to make decisions or drive action	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Known and used by all to drive action and attitudes

How about in Force Multiplier #2?

How Well Are Our People Engaged?

Our processes encumber, disempower, and disengage our employees.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Our processes allow maximum flexibility and empowerment to our employees.
Our employees are not trained well enough in how to satisfy customer wants and what their options are.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Our training provides concrete tools and guidelines on how to serve our customers.

And Force Multiplier #3

Our Hiring and Onboarding Processes

Tend to result in poor hires and difficult, unmotivated service personnel.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Deliver us the right mix of employees for working with our customers.
Our hiring interview questions are based mostly on skills.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Our behavior-based questions reveal a person's true personality and values.

On to Force Multiplier #4
How Do We Treat Each Other?

Employees often feel belittled, valueless, disheartened, and hurt in our culture.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Employees are uplifted, encouraged, and heartened by our culture and environment.
Our overall spirit at work is negative and draining. Emphasis is on correcting weaknesses.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Our overall spirit is uplifting, positive and enlivening. Our emphasis is on leveraging our strengths and recognizing what we do well.

Then, Force Multiplier #5
Are We Teams or Work Groups?

People tend to work independently, have personal agendas, and compete internally, with little interdependent interaction.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	People work in united interdependency, compete externally, with shared interaction and a sense of belongingness.
We rarely or inconsistently engage in team-building and team-thinking.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	We are constantly engaging in team building activities and promoting team-thinking.

Finally, Force Multiplier #6.
How Are We at Challenging the Process?

We have many cumbersome, archaic, and frustrating policies, processes, and procedures that choke initiative and frustrate our customers.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Our processes, policies, and procedures are designed with the customer in mind and facilitate our ability to serve them.
Our leaders and culture tend to support problem identification rather than problem solving. Employees are not empowered to solve problems and decisions and problem solving are centralized.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	A definite spirit of problem solving exists throughout our team. We encourage, recognize and reward problem solving at all levels and “power-down” problem solving to all levels.

Total Your Scores: There are two questions for each multiplier, so a perfect score would be 120. Add up your score and, if possible, have others do the same and share your results. Given the results, where would be a great place to start?



Case Study: It's All about Relationships

Studies have indicated that the single most important thing you can do for your career and for your business is to build relationships. Cantor Fitzgerald is a large investment banking firm that lost 65 percent of its employees and half its infrastructure in the terror attack on September 11, 2001. While most companies would have gone bankrupt after a disaster like this, Cantor created a charity that received over \$1 million by September 14th. They were up

and running by September 19th in space that had been donated to them by a connection they had in the community. Today, the company oversees more assets than they did before September 11 and their charity has provided for the families of the 658 Cantor employees who died that day, and other 9/11 victims as well.

Cantor Fitzgerald fundamentally knew that it is not just in the business of private investment services—it is in the business of creating lasting relationships. Today, it continues to give back and create relationships that will sustain the company far into the future. This is an example of visionary leadership.

Moral: Be resilient in the face of challenges. Challenge the process and forge ahead!

It's a Two-Way Street: Being a Great Customer Helps Too!

We can put a lot of effort into delivering great customer service, but what about the other side of the coin? What are our responsibilities as a *customer* in the relationship?



Most relationships are a two-way street and we as customers greatly affect how well a service organization or another person can help us. I hear many horror stories of the abuse heaped upon hapless service staff by rude, irate and demanding customers. Often service staff bears the brunt of customers' frustrations—even from issues in customers' personal lives. It is one of the reasons that turnover is so high in the service industry.

We as customers have something to do in the two elements that both sides need: (1) Solve My Problem and (2) Leave Me Feeling Great about the Experience.

1. Solve My Problem



Remember that the person on the serving end also has problems! Their problems include helping provide us the service and products we want so they can do their job, keeping their manager off their back, and feeling satisfied at shift's end.

As customers, we can help them by clearly articulating the needs and wants we have and perhaps doing a bit of research ourselves. When I bought my new car this year, I had done extensive research into the various makes and models and I knew the interior and exterior colors and features I wanted, as well as what a reasonable price would be. I sealed the deal in an hour, and it was a true win for both sides.

We can also take ownership for any problems we might have wholly or partly caused, especially when returning a broken or opened item. Try to work with, not against, the service staff to find solutions that are just and fair for both sides. Sometimes I find people almost taking sadistic delight in wringing the best possible win out of a business, not caring about the loss they are causing. As my wife and I travel the world in foreign and often third world countries, we sometimes notice tourists bickering and bartering over a few dollars, which to them mean little, but for the vendor might be the difference in dinner on the table for their family. This not only does not solve the merchant's needs, but also can leave a bitter taste in their mouth about foreign visitors.

On the positive side, my wife had a touching experience in a little outdoor market in Myanmar. A petite, shy woman came up selling little bunches of flowers, asking for about a dime of our money. My wife handed her a dollar, which to her was probably a day's earnings. This sweet woman had tears in her eyes and spontaneously hugged my wife, who also walked away in tears. Priceless.



2. Leave Me Feeling Great about the Experience

The service experience is also a two-way street. Both the customer and the serving staff are experiencing the feelings going on in the relationship. We can be patient, kind, and understanding to the staff serving us. Remember they are human beings too, with feelings and problems of their own. A friendly face and kindness can lift their spirits, especially when they may have faced a string of less-pleasant folks. In showing kindness, we are passing it along and

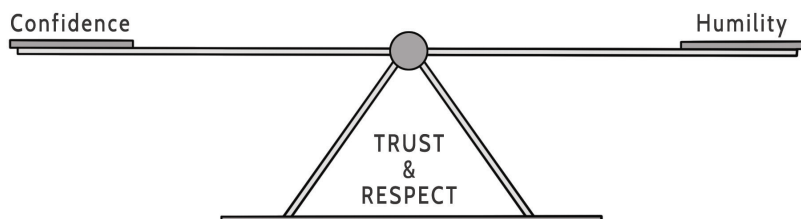
setting the stage for other customers to have good experiences too.

Since I stay in hotels so often as a road-warrior, I have created a thank-you letter for housekeepers. I thank them for making my stay more pleasant, comfortable, safe and sanitary, and express how that positively affects my work and helps me return home happy and rested. I tell them how honorable and important their work is. I leave the letter in an envelope along with my tip and my email address. I have gotten emails back from housekeepers telling me no customer has ever done that for them and it lifted their spirits. One shared it with the whole staff and her manager emailed me back to thank me. I also try to remember to thank the TSA agents at the airport for protecting our country and helping me feel safer each time I fly. I once looked back and saw one agent wiping a tear from his eye while helping the next passenger.

Customer feedback surveys can be long and annoying at times, and often only those customers who are very unhappy take the time to provide feedback. When we receive great service, we can take the time to thank the staff who provided it in these surveys, and when we can remember a staff member by name it will often get back to them. Picking up a business card for a general manager and sending a thank-you email is another kind gesture. In all of this, like life itself, the Golden Rule works well.

The Relationship Balance

Strong and healthy relationships are built on trust and respect. One relatively simple way to illustrate this is shown in this image:



Each of us brings a combination of confidence and humility into our interpersonal exchanges. This is true in a customer–business relationship as well. When we are healthily confident, we can assert our opinions and needs in a clear, pleasant, and direct way. Then, our all-important humility allows us to also kindly consider the other person’s needs and ideas.

However, if we are overly confident, it can move us from healthy assertiveness to overbearing, pushy, bullish arrogance and tip the balance away from respect and trust. On the other hand, if we are overly humble or passive we can err on the side of sheepishness and acquiescence and cave in to the demands and needs of others. Again, the balance bar shifts away from respect and trust. Here are some examples:

By driving too hard for a bargain, a customer may feel they have smugly and confidently gotten their way, but cause a financial or trust loss with the business. Eventually it hurts someone. Businesses then must absorb the loss or perhaps pass it on to other customers with higher prices. Shoplifting is an example. A report by Retail Knowledge recently identified that U.S. retailers are losing 60 billion dollars a year to shoplifting and employee theft.¹⁷ Sadly, employee theft exceeds external shoplifting losses. In this situation, one party has high confidence and courage for their own interests, and low consideration for the impact on others.

It can go the other way as well. A business or company can drive hard for the best bargain with a customer, almost forcing a sale. There is little humble appreciation for the best interests of the consumer. In the long run, trust and respect are lost by both, and the customer leaves feeling taken advantage of. Loyalty is lost.

As customers, when we have been wronged, we can respectfully stand up for our rights, bring the problem to the attention of the company, and ask for a fair compensation. Many customers do not do this and instead choose the passive-aggressive approach by simply vowing to never return and instead bad-mouth the company or product to others. Here, the losing party has low confidence for themselves and yields to high humility and unduly high consideration for the other.

In all such cases, both parties lose. Neither gets what they want, and both walk away resentful. Almost any imbalance of the confidence–humility bar ends up in a loss for everyone.

In a business or retail situation, the customer and the servicing team can strive to find a true balance for both sides. Both walk away feeling good or even great about what happens. They know there is a higher, more inventive solution that neither may have thought about at the start. It requires a very creative stance and a combination of humility and confidence on both sides.

Personal Applications

This causes us a bit of introspection. Put yourself in your role as a customer. Are you being respectful in how you treat and interact with those who serve you? Do you strive to act with high confidence and courage for yourself and your rights and high humility and consideration for those who serve you?



1. When you feel wronged or slighted as a customer, bring the issue up courageously but respectfully with the other party. Try to find a solution that you both consider just and respectful.

2. Take time to thank those who serve you. Verbally is best, right at the moment of service, and then perhaps later follow up with an email or letter to the company.

3. Clearly articulate your needs and identify the deeper purpose or need behind the product you are seeking. Do your research and clearly know the facts and figures you need as you go shopping. This helps the serving staff find the right solution for you.

4. Remember that your dollars are blessing the lives of others and helping your local and world economy. The survival of companies and our economy depends on consumer confidence, which drives the financial engine.

5. While online shopping is convenient, strive to also support traditional stores. It is a sad development that more and more of them are closing in the face of online competition. Don't forget your local retailers—keeping your dollars and tax dollars locally helps everyone.

6. When bartering as a tourist, enjoy the expected negotiation game, but then sometimes choose to err on the side of generosity, passing on your blessings to others.



Case Study: A Wet Carpet, but a Loyal Family

A friend of mine told me a great story. His daughter and son-in-law took their family to Disneyland. When they checked into their Disney resort room, there was a carpet-dryer fan blowing noisily and the carpet was a bit damp, with a slightly musty smell in the air. She asserted her rights and told the hotel manager. He explained there were no other rooms and there had been a water leak and promptly gave her two options if she would stay in that room: a free night and all-day passes for her family, or a \$500 credit to be spent anywhere in the park while they were there. She called her father delightedly and said, “We are going to have so much extra fun with \$500!” They came home with extra souvenirs and a loyalty worth far beyond the price Disney paid. She could have been a very upset and demanding customer, but through understanding and kindness (both ways), it was a true win-win.

Moral: As a customer, don’t hesitate to respectfully stand up for your rights because it can result in a great loyalty opportunity for you and the business.

Conclusion

We see our customers as invited guests to a party, and we are the hosts. It's our job every day to make every important aspect of the customer experience a little bit better. —Jeff Bezos, CEO of Amazon

“Leadership today requires a new mindset, skillset, and toolset.”
—Stephen R. Covey

Those same words found in his book *The 8th Habit* apply equally well to the world of customer service. Gone are the days when merely satisfying a customer is enough. Customers have more and more choices to turn to in our ever-expanding world of global competition, further fueled by the advent of online shopping



and information on the Internet. The ones who endure will be those businesses and organizations that can attract and retain loyalty, both in their staff and in their external customers.

This, then, is the new mindset—to shift staff out of the “satisfaction is good enough” mode of thinking. We must instill in our staff, and in our leadership, the criticality of winning loyalty. We need leaders who create positive, energized cultures that attract and retain loyal staff. We should hire, train, motivate, and reward those staff who are passionately committed to winning loyalty and working in great teams.

And we need systems and processes that enable that staff to provide superlative service that delights our customers, making it pleasurable to do business with us.

But a new mindset is not enough if we don't back it up with a new skillset. Our leaders need new skills to lead and motivate a new generation and face the challenges of a new world. Our staff need both technical and interpersonal skills to create a loyalty-centric culture. And finally, our systems and processes must be skillful and flexible enough to respond instantly to customers' needs.

Customer service is just a day in, day out ongoing, never ending, unremitting, persevering, compassionate, type of activity. —Leon Gorman, former CEO of L.L.Bean

Along with skills, people need a new toolset. I have provided some of these throughout this book, including the Hot Tip Card suggestions and dozens of other practical ideas. As our society evolves, and the demands of customers evolve with it, new tools must be created and used. We at VisionBound would be delighted to present these and many other tools to your team in our workshops.

So, we return to where we started, with the goal of each of us becoming a super-service-hero: inspired, motivated, and skilled to provide outstanding service to our customers, while building positive and lasting relationships with coworkers, friends, and family.

We are each born for greatness and so are the organizations we lead or belong to. If we work together in unity, we can achieve heights we might never have imagined. I hope that this book has both inspired and re-tooled us for an ever-increasing momentum of success as we serve our valued customers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kevin R. Miller". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kevin" and last name "Miller" clearly distinguishable.

—Kevin R. Miller

FONDS

The remaining chapters in this book provide applications for specific markets:

Chapter Twelve:	Retailing
Chapter Thirteen:	Education
Chapter Fourteen:	Public Service
Chapter Fifteen:	Healthcare
Chapter Sixteen:	Call Centers
Chapter Seventeen:	Realtors
Chapter Eighteen:	Hospitality

Winning Loyalty in Retailing

Much in the previous chapters applies directly to retailing. Some fascinating research has been done on how retailers can do a better job of understanding customers and the two things they want: (1) Solve my problem and (2) Leave me feeling great about the experience.



Paco Underhill used observational research, interviews and other techniques to analyze what causes people to buy or not buy in a store. He presented practical ideas in his book *Why We Buy* on how retailers can structure their store and their processes to encourage shoppers to linger longer, buy more, and return. He also delved into the differences in women shoppers and what motivates them or turns them off in the buying process. Many of his findings are found in his books *Why We Buy* and *What Women Want*.



1. Solve My Problem

Keep in mind that it is almost always problems that bring people to a store. If there were no problems, there would be no commerce. Understanding the deeper needs

of shoppers will help solve their problems the first time. Ask the right questions, like those provided in Chapter Four. Here are some more specific ideas:

Shopping Baskets: Notice where the small shopping baskets are the next time you go to a store—stacked at the front of the store as people enter. This makes sense if someone knows they are after several items. But often a shopper comes in for one item, then remembers or sees others he or she needs. Now they are in a dilemma and the baskets they need are no longer handy. They must uncomfortably carry the items in their arms, or take them back, past the cashier, to the front to get a hand basket. Paco Underhill had a store strategically place stacks of hand baskets at the end of aisles throughout the store, and measurably increased sales of impulse buying. “Hey, I’ve got a basket! What else might I need?”

Don’t Overstock and Beware of the “Butt Brush”: Studies show that people are often so overwhelmed by the sheer number of choices that they become frazzled and leave without buying anything. In retail, having just the right items attractively displayed with the optimum number of selections is a key. This is particularly true in clothing. Underhill saw one women’s store where the dresses and blouses were packed into the racks so tightly, customers could hardly remove them. And the racks were placed too close, so women were uncomfortable with the “butt brush” of having their backsides touched by the clothing. He interviewed women who left without buying and they said, “It was overwhelming, and it felt uncomfortable and claustrophobic.” He had the retailer decrease the number of selections by almost half and add open space between the racks—these changes increased sales significantly, while reducing costs. More is not always better!

The Item Locator: I once visited a grocery store that offered clipboards that had an alphabetized item locator list. The clipboards were hanging near the shopping carts as customers entered. Customers could compare their shopping list to the locator list and know exactly what aisles to visit. It both solved their problems and left them feeling great. I am currently doing projects for the military commissary system. It offers shoppers a way to download shopping lists for each store, either alphabetized or sorted by aisle order. The

location of each item is on the list. This speeds shoppers through the store and wins loyalty.

On the Sales Floor: Shoppers appreciate when a sales person clearly directs and even walks them to the item in the store. Once I asked a salesperson where rubber bands were located, and she cheerfully walked dozens of yards with me to show me and even knew something about the relative quality of rubber bands. It was a two-dollar purchase, but I won't forget that caring. Once you have guided the person to the item they are looking for, always ask, "Is there anything else you are looking for?" One store manager told me that almost always the customer says, "Yes." One great salesperson asked me to show her my shopping list and jotted down the aisle number where I'd find each item. Impressive.



2. Leave Me Feeling Great about the Experience

The Bathrooms: Remember, in a survey, women shoppers placed "cleanliness of the women's bathroom" as the number one or two reason why they will or will not return to a store. Keep it spotlessly clean, add fresh flowers and air fresheners, a comfortable chair to rest in or nurse babies, soft music and handy purse hangers on one side of each stall.

The Landing Zone: As discussed earlier, stores have a landing zone. It is the area where customers first enter the store and transition their minds to the shopping experience. The larger the store, the larger the landing zone should be. This area is supremely important. Keep it clean, welcoming and non-cluttered. Have carts and hand baskets there, and ATMs, Redbox and other amenities handy. This is a good place to post store specials. The front door should especially be spotlessly clean, and make sure store hours are prominently displayed outside in very large letters so people don't have to leave their cars to read them.

The Cashier/Front End Experience: Cashiers are the Directors of Last Impressions and sometimes the Directors of First Impressions in a store. As I go through cashier lines it is a rare event when one of the cashiers makes eye contact, welcomes me to the store, engages

with me and then simply says, “Thanks for shopping at _____ today, and we hope you come back soon.” Often, I find myself thanking THEM more than they thank me. I did this recently, and the bored cashier said, “No problem.” NO PROBLEM? I just gave her money! I enjoy training cashiers with fantastic tips on how to leave a great impression.

Some suggestions:

1. When not serving a customer, walk out to the aisle to welcome shoppers to your station.
2. Compliment customers on items they have selected.
3. Be especially nice to children.
4. Introduce yourself and thank the customer for coming to the store.
5. As they leave, thank the customer for shopping at your store and graciously invite them to return.
6. Consider putting thank-you notes, coupons or sales announcements in their bags.
7. Keep your cashier area spotlessly clean.
8. Remember, you may be the “director of last impressions,” so make those final moments memorable.

Cleanliness: The landing zone is not the only place to keep spotlessly clean. Dirty, littered and dusty floors and even parking lots signal disorder and uncaring to the customer and leave an unpleasant impression.

Music: Studies show how music can invite or repel shoppers. A study by the Lind Institute and other researchers show that calm, baroque music tends to relax people and help them make decisions. Blaring, loud and distracting music confuses customer’s minds and can even drive them away. One mall manager told me a funny story. He had a problem with teenagers loitering and skateboarding around the mall entrance. He cleverly drove them away by playing “elevator” music and classical music.

The Greeter: A store greeter provides a supreme opportunity to help the shopper transition in the “landing zone.” A big box retailer knows this and provides greeters—some of whom could be better trained! A great greeter welcomes people warmly and asks if they

need directions to a specific purchase—sort of like their personal shopper. They are particularly kind to children—perhaps even giving them a small toy like a ring to wear or a sticker. Put the most personable staff member in the store as a greeter. The dollar amount you pay them is a small investment for what you can get in return.

Other Ideas

1. Store layout. Great retailers understand the science around store layout, some of which is found in Underhill's book. Shoppers tend to drift like currents in certain right to back to left to front patterns. Placing high-margin, high-velocity and low-cost items in this pattern can increase sales. One retailer told me he makes more margin on a single bottle of water at the cash register cooler than he does from a whole case of water. The price tag on an item is not directly tied to the margin made from selling it. The same retailer told me he can sometimes make the same margin from a box of nails as he does from an electric drill.



2. Incentivize your staff to put “numbers on the scoreboard.” I once went around a large retailer in a mall and asked random staff if they knew exactly how much the store made in sales yesterday or last week. I didn't ask them for the number, just if they knew it. None did. I asked them if they knew how much their department sold yesterday. None did. I asked if they knew if their store was more profitable year to date than it was last year to the same date. None did. I am sure that managers knew this information, but if there are no goals, scoreboards, celebrations, and incentives, how do we expect staff to be motivated to add to the score? Charles Coonradt offers many ideas in his great book *The Game of Work*. He suggests turning work into a game, with “goal posts,” scoreboards, energy and fun. The more work feels like a game, the more staff are motivated and energized. Encourage them to step out of their “silo” to add numbers to the scoreboard. A salesperson who sells a suit, finds a matching tie, then walks the person to the shoe department has just doubled the “points” they added to the scoreboard. Let them report that and celebrate it in the team huddle the next day.

3. Teach every staff member the basics of how your business operates and makes money. I find that very few staff members, even managers themselves, understand how a business makes money. Ram Charan wrote a book called *What the CEO Wants You to Know*. In 139 pages, he presents a simple, crisp explanation of how most businesses have five basic building blocks: Cash, Margin, Velocity, Growth and Customers. He also finds that even managers don't fully understand these five building blocks. For instance, a high-margin item with low velocity (only sold once a week) does less for a store than a lower margin item with high velocity, like bottled water. Managers do well when they provide basic business acumen to their staff in a clear, easily understood way. Once staff understand these building blocks, they can offer creative ideas on how to become more profitable.

4. Brainstorm with your staff. Periodically, even once a week, hold a fifteen-minute brainstorm activity with your staff on how to improve the store or do something new and different to increase sales. Often the best and freshest ideas come from the newest and youngest staff, who see things through fresh lenses. Younger staff also know what is new and "hot" among their peers long before "higher headquarters" does. They also know how to best display them.

5. Hold customer focus groups. Invite groups of customers to come for a free lunch while you query them for ideas on how to improve the store. You might organize them by demographics—retirees, young mothers, teens, or business people. They will appreciate being listened to and become even more loyal, and they will provide many great ideas.

We return to Walt Disney's statement, "We will do what we do so well that the people who see it will want to see it again and bring friends." This is a great motto for any retailer. Solve customers' problems and leave them feeling great and you will succeed!

Much weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth is often heard when a "big-box" retailer moves into town. It is true that often these mega-stores drive smaller retailers into the ground, but it need not always be true. Smart retailers can benefit by being neighbors to these big-box outfits, blessed by the increased traffic now drawn to

the area. It is analogous to a motorcycle riding behind a large truck, sucked along by the vacuum. This is most true when smaller retailers offer products not found in the big-box. Savvy smaller retailers know they can best compete in the service moments—“Leave them feeling great about the experience.” Smaller retailers must provide the superlative, personalized service rarely found in the large giants. They also can be much more knowledgeable about the products themselves. But it’s also important to face reality. In one locale, a Walgreens was halfway through building a site when a Walmart announced it was building across the street. Walgreens pulled the plug and never finished the building. It knew it did not offer much of a competitive advantage.



Case Study: The Costco Christmas Tree

In January 2018, a woman carried her dead Christmas tree back to Costco and requested a refund. Other customers standing in line were incredulous that this woman would take advantage of Costco’s generous no-questions-asked return policy. The woman obviously had used the tree over the holidays and now was returning it? Videos were taken and the story raced through social media. Perhaps it was unreasonable—yet Costco kindly returned her money. One might think this was an example of win-lose: the woman won, and Costco lost. But the free advertising Costco got through millions of online hits might even make it a win-win! I also give Costco high marks for honoring its pledge to customers, even though some might take advantage of it.

Moral: Be generous in your “bounce-backs” to customers; it wins far more loyalty than it typically costs.



Personal Applications

What can you do to apply any of these ideas we covered or other ideas to the store this week?

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Winning Loyalty in Education

By Kevin R. Miller and J. Lynn Jones

The first duty to children is to make them happy. If you have not made them so, you have wronged them. No other good they may get can make up for that.
—Charles Buxton English philosopher and writer



W*e aren't in customer service! We're a school.*" I have heard this many times—usually from administrators who are stuck in a paradigm or mindset that is outdated. Progressive educational leaders are realizing that schools today are as much in customer service as any retailer or other business. They are also facing a world of competition.

Parents today have an increasing number of choices for educating their children. Once it was basically either public or private schools. Now, thousands of charter schools dot the land, some within public school districts and others chartered by outside foundations or special interest groups. Homeschooling is becoming much more sophisticated with large homeschooling organizations

providing outstanding resources to parents. Private schools compete for students, and now students can get online schooling by qualified instructors all the way through high school graduation. With so many choices, each of these types of schools must provide a better solution than their competition to attract and retain students and top-quality teachers and administrators.

Can you recall the terror you might have felt as a sixth-grader facing the “big jump” to junior high school? Mine happened in 1966 in my hometown in California. I was terrified. Counselors came to brief the sixth-graders in our school and what horrified me the most was the thought of P.E., particularly the “gang showers” they told us about. I had a terrible summer, dreading that first day when I would face the gauntlet of ninth-graders.

Now imagine you are a sixth-grader in the town where I live now. The junior high principal takes time during the summer to personally visit the homes of all incoming seventh-graders to introduce himself, find out about their hobbies and interests, and give them a welcome packet. He told us, “Last year I lost a dozen students to charter schools and I intend to change that.” He says it is the best investment he can make. We call it “muddy boots leadership.”

Who Is a Customer?

The problem may partly lie in the traditional definition of a “customer.” If you think of it in a narrow spectrum, you envision someone entering a retail store. But if you define a customer as anyone who has a need, the term certainly includes education.

The hard reality is that schools have many customers. Of course, they include the students themselves—but the list also includes parents, caregivers, relatives, civic and business leaders, and just about everyone in the community they serve. The outcome of great customer service in education is thus far more important than in food service or retailing; it affects the future of individual lives, families, our country and the world.

Providing a top-quality school culture also has an even more important outcome: students learn better when they feel cared for, safe and enjoy coming to school. When they are treated as valued

customers, they respond in kind. There may be less bullying, more cooperation and learning and retention, and test scores can even improve. Dr. Jane Knight, a noted educator, told me of a study done where thousands of high school dropouts were asked the number one reason they left school. Rarely was it because they did not want to learn. The number one reason given was, “I didn’t feel good there.”

Education Customers Do Four Things

We learned in previous chapters that loyal customers do four things: (1) they come back, (2) they buy more, (3) they refer their friends, and (4) they offer their suggestions and feedback. These apply in education with a couple of twists. Loyal parents, guardians, and community leaders: (1) Support and participate in school activities; (2) They are loyal advocates who refer the school to their friends; (3) They support school bond issues and taxes for education; and perhaps best of all, (4) They trust schools with their children and interfere less, thus allowing for more instructional time. One result of this loyalty is increased teacher and staff morale. This can result in less teacher/staff turnover and attracts top-quality teachers and staff. When children or youth feel loyal to their school they simply behave better, cooperate more, and learn better.

Measuring Loyalty: The School Net Promoter Score

If we use the Ultimate Question and Net Promoter Score in a school setting, we can ask the ten-scale question, “How likely is it you would recommend this school to a friend or someone seeking a school for their family?” Or even to a child: “After your time in our school, how likely is it you would think other children should come here?” Using our NPS calculation, those giving you a nine or ten are loyal promoters, those giving you a seven or eight are passive, and those six and below are unhappy detractors of a school. Whatever their score, they are talking about the school in the community and it is affecting its success. Subtracting the



percentage of promoters from the percentage of detractors gives you the Net Promoter Score.

To raise loyalty scores, we need to provide the same two things wanted by all these customer/stakeholders: (1) Solve my problem and (2) Leave me feeling great about the experience.

2. Solve My Problem

Most parents or caregivers have one major problem to solve—they want what is best for their child. But what is best can vary among students who have different needs, abilities and goals. One size does not fit all in education. Great schools identify the strengths and challenges of individual children and provide customized programs and solutions to solve these needs.



Throughout the school year, problems also emerge in the form of behavior issues or other challenges. Solving these problems requires a customer-centric culture and teachers, staff and administrators who strive to do whatever it takes to solve them.

In the summer of 2002, Eileen Quintana, a dedicated mother with Navajo ancestry, attended a meeting of the Nebo School District Board of Education in Utah. Eileen had just learned that only 37 percent of the Native American high school seniors in the district had graduated from high school that year. Normally a calm and quiet woman, Eileen pounded the podium and stated, “If this were white kids, heads would roll!” The board members were very concerned, were previously unaware of the unacceptable situation, and asked the administration to remedy the problem.

Soon thereafter Eileen was hired as a paraprofessional tasked to provide solutions. A parent advocacy group was organized, grants were received, and a systematic approach of academics and culture awareness began. Eileen and her advocates recognized that they had many customers: students, parents, principals, teachers, counselors, etc. They worked hard to solve problems with personal interest and made sure that each of those who helped their cause knew of the life-changing actions they had made. When principals allowed them

to share culturally appropriate curriculum in classes, they thanked those involved and gave small Native American-themed gifts. They invited district officials to Pow Wow events and other gatherings and recognized them in those gatherings as distinguished contributors to the cause. They became fast friends with high school counselors as they shared the load for tracking students needing specific supports to meet graduation requirements. The district made space available for the program to thrive and contributed funding to support the program.

As the program began to achieve success as measured through student success and graduation rates, Eileen and her team communicated often with state and national Indian Education leaders and touted the significant support they had received from the school board, administration, counselors and others. In the ensuing years, the Native American population graduation statistics continued to improve and eventually surpassed all other subgroups with the culmination of a 100 percent graduation rate in 2015.

But remember, parents and other stakeholders expect a school system to provide a good education and solve other kinds of problems. Solving them gets to satisfaction (seven or eight on the NPS scale), but not necessarily *loyalty*.

2. Leave Me Feeling Great about the Experience

This is where loyalty is won. All customers, from students and parents to outside stakeholders, want to feel great when coming into the school. They want teachers, staff and administrators to be uniquely nice to them. No one wants to feel like they or their child is just “another number.” This is what that excellent junior high school principal understands as he personally visits each new student.

Again, it is the small things that are the big things, and often the longest remembered. Todd Whitaker, a noted education speaker and consultant, interviewed elementary school children about what





they most remembered about their principal. One stood out to me—"I remember him knowing my name and helping me unlock my bike."

I was impressed visiting an elementary school where there was a photo album in the front foyer. Each administrator and teacher and staff member had a couple of pages in the album explaining why they love their job and showing personal photos of their growing up years and family today. I watched as children and visitors thumbed through it to get to know the staff, and perhaps help them choose next year's teacher!

Changing a School Culture: One Mini-Behavior at a Time

I heard Dr. Stephen R. Covey say, "Organizations don't behave. People behave." A correlation would be: "Schools don't behave. The people in the school behave." The best way to change a school culture is to encourage people to treat each other kindly and build friendships and relationships.

To this end, we at VisionBound created three special decks of **Hot Tip Cards** for use in education. First, I created one for teachers, staff, and administration. Then, with the help of several experienced educators, we created a deck for elementary school children and another for youth in middle/high school. Children today are socializing through smart phones and social media, and often they are not learning the tips and skills they need for interacting directly and positively with each other and with adults. These decks provide specific ideas that any student can use to build relationships. There is a teacher's facilitator guide with ideas on how to use the cards in the classroom. They can even be given out to all students in an assembly and various recognition and incentives can award those who use the cards. The decks for children are available on my website.

Here are four examples from each deck:

Staff (Teachers, Support, and Administration):

Card #3: Walk a student and/or parent to the door as they are leaving.

Card #6: Notice each person's eye color and turn your heart to them.

Card #10: Give more compliments today—to students and/or faculty and staff.

Card #27: In every interaction today, strive to be interested, not interesting!

Elementary:

Card #2: Invite someone new to play with you at recess or after school.

Card #8: Compliment your teacher for a great lesson.

Card #16: Thank your mother or father for dinner or something they did for you or your family.

Card #20: Do an extra chore at home without being asked or reminded.

Youth:

Card #2: Introduce yourself to a new person. Make a new friend.

Card #6: Look people in the eye today when talking to them.

Card #8: Engage with your family at dinner time—no texting!

Card #10: Give a friend, teacher or parent a positive compliment today.

Each card has a grid of twenty-one boxes on the back, because if you do something twenty-one times it becomes more of a habit. One charter school district has provided these cards to every student and staff member and has a “Twenty-One Club” to recognize anyone who has done a card twenty-one times. It has had a noticeable effect on the culture of the school, even reducing bullying and improving learning.

An Important By-Product: Happy Teachers and Staff



The cards and this process also directly address how teachers, administrators and staff treat each other. It is easier to attract and retain top-quality staff when the culture is positive and uplifting. I once spoke to a state superintendent who told me one of her biggest concerns was the high attrition rate of first- and second-year teachers. Of course, many left for good reasons such as moving or starting a family. Yet in her exit interviews, many told her they could not tolerate the

behavior of fellow teachers towards them and others. The gossiping, jealousies, and pettiness ate at their morale. They often said, “We love the students, but we can’t stand the school culture.”

For this reason, we find that the Hot Tip cards also help remind staff to make friends with each other and treat each other with great dignity and respect. One first-year teacher went out of her way the first semester to create a fun, vibrant, effective learning environment in her classroom and the students loved it. But the day before Christmas break, she was “invited” to the break room where several senior faculty members told her she was too “uppity” and making them look bad and promised to make her life miserable. She resigned during Christmas break and left the education field. These kinds of toxic cultures are hurting everyone—students and staff like.



Case Study: Improving School Culture by J. Lynn Jones

When Nebo School District in Utah rolled out this Customers Only Want Two Things program for all employees, it started with the school secretaries. This group quickly caught on and especially enjoyed using the hot-tip cards. Over the past two years, speech therapists, psychologists, teachers, principals, technicians, and bus drivers have enjoyed applying the tools in their respective assignments. The custodians were very animated during the training and one claims that his job has become much easier with his focus on building loyal customers among the students at his school.

In the lunchroom, he had previously spent a significant part of his day cleaning up after the students. Now students are more careful to avoid spills and make sure they pick up trash and food items before going out to play after eating. They enjoy the friendship and two-way concern shared with their school custodian and do their share to make his job easier. The custodian now can focus on other areas in the school to ensure that hallways, restrooms, and instructional areas are clean and inviting for students and others. Some schools in Nebo School District have opted to have education customer loyalty with their entire teaching staff together. In these instances, they have reported an increase in both parent engagement and in employee satisfaction. The goal in Nebo is that all employees will receive the training and they are well on their way to having all 4,000+ employees practicing these important skills. One junior high principal wants to issue the Youth Hot Tip cards to all the students, with recognition and prizes for acting on them.

Moral: Enroll your support staff and help them see how important they are to the school culture.

The Power of Educational Leadership

The noted author and leadership expert, Tom Peters, once said, “Leadership—that’s it. Give me, for example, a rotten school system, a decrepit schoolhouse, a school budget crisis, but a great principal, and you’ve got a good-to-great school. Give me a great system, great facility, etc., but a rotten principal, and you’ve got a poor-to-awful school.”

Over the years, we have seen this truth played out on many educational fronts.

About ten years ago, I was talking to a superintendent from a Native American reservation in the American Southwest. He told me that there were two elementary schools in his district: one the poorest performing and the other the best performing. He swapped principals and, within 18 months, guess what? The schools also swapped in performance quality. He told me of the best-performing principal: “She can lead anyone to learn and lead any school to success. She knows how to inspire students, parents, and teachers.

She knows how to hold people accountable to reach the best that is in them, and she doesn't accept excuses. She gets everyone involved in the common vision." I recommend reading the book *No Excuses: 21 Lessons from High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools* by Samuel Casey Carter.

It is the responsibility of leadership at all levels to create a culture that is motivating, safe, inspiring, and uplifting. It is certainly possible to administer a school and not lead it: Management is power over people; leadership is power **with** people. We even refer to school leadership as "the administration." The very term can denote the limited role they often play.

The Power of Educational Vision and Mission

Let's first explore the power of creating a vision and mission for the school, from the school itself down to each classroom. An article in a business journal presented the power of choosing the right language in creating a mission statement. It was titled, "You'll know it when you tremble." Quite simply, a great mission statement is more than "framed whatever" on a wall. It serves as the unifying, synergizing "North Star" for faculty, staff, parents, students, and the entire community. It clearly establishes the all-important "why" and not just the "what" of what the school or district does.

I was working with a district leadership team to create a new mission statement. The old one was a typical mumbo-jumbo of trite phrases one would expect and took two paragraphs to state. I did my old trick of pulling out a squirt gun and dared anyone to recite it or get wet. No one could, including the superintendent. After a half day of wording, thinking, and rewording, the mission became: "*We inspire a passion for lifelong learning in ourselves, our students and the community.*" We then had a discussion of how we would do that. That mission statement became their North Star for the years ahead.

But what about each classroom? That is where the true learning occurs. In the FranklinCovey program *The Leader in Me*, teachers are encouraged to help the children write a classroom mission statement. I have collected images of my favorites the country over. One takes top prize, from a second-grade classroom in Texas: "*We come to*

school to learn what everything means and to learn to read so we can read to our little child when we grow up. We learn math so we can get smart and don't get fired." Doesn't that say it all? It was posted at their eye level by the door, and each child had cut out a colored shape of his or her hand and glued it around the edge with their name on it. As they entered the classroom, they touched their hand to their name.

But it does not stop there. Each child also wrote his or her own "I have a dream" vision for their life and posted it in their own leadership journal. I was sitting with a fourth-grader in Alena, Texas, reviewing her goals and leadership journal. She had written on her "I Have a Dream" page that her career goal was to become a flight attendant. She had drawn an image of herself in a blue suit next to an American Airlines plane. I asked her about her dream and why education was important. She told me she needed to learn math so she could help distribute the weight of passengers on a plane. (In over a million miles of air travel I have never seen anyone asked to move because they were overweight!) And she said she needed to learn first aid because she read of a flight attendant who helped deliver a baby. I was absolutely charmed and said, "So, I'll see you on a plane in fifteen years?" And she confidently replied, "I'll be there, Mr. Miller."

When great educational leaders do the right things, they become the "force multiplier" I referred to in Chapter 9. They create a new mindset and skillset and then provide the tools to make it happen. We believe the mindset of winning loyalty and the skillset and toolset of the Hot Tip Cards can be part of a great process of transforming a school culture, and eventually transforming lives and relationships.

Remember to involve every staff member in creating this environment. I heard an inspiring story from a principal who told me that he had a school janitor who was doing a good job, but was basically going through the motions, not realizing how important he was. The principal took him aside and said, "We have great teachers and wonderful classrooms, but as good as these are, we can't teach children who are home sick." He showed the janitor statistics that most childhood cases of colds and flu are picked up at school. He then told the janitor, "You and your team are some of the most important educators in this school.

Your job is to keep kids healthy in the classroom so we all can teach them.” The light switched on in this man. He made “GermBuster” T-shirts for his crew. They brainstormed ways to sanitize and clean the school, including installing hand sanitizer stations by outside doors. He checks each morning to see how many students are reported absent for illness and takes each absence as a personal challenge. He made a scoreboard of absenteeism on the door of his janitor closet. He and his team visited classrooms to teach the children about germs and how to stay healthy. He spray-painted a broom with gold paint and awards the Golden Broom Award each week to the classroom that is the cleanest. He promised the students that the class that did the best in cleanliness and sanitation over the year would win the ultimate prize—a barbecue lunch cooked by the janitors and a showing of the Ghostbusters movie. The principal reported that over a one-year period, absenteeism from illness dropped over fifty percent and he had a special award created for the janitorial team.

Beware, and Be Aware of, the Weapons of Mass Distraction



We’ve all heard of the dreaded WMD—Weapons of Mass Destruction. But our beloved technologies like smart phones and tablets can easily become another kind of WMD—Weapons of Mass *Distraction*. This is prevalent among a rising generation of young people who are primarily relating and connecting through devices, not in interpersonal, human ways. One principal sighed when he told me he finds himself longing for the noise and pandemonium of his high school cafeteria in the 1980s. Now he sees nearly dead silence as he watches dozens of students, faces front-lit by their screens, as they text, tweet and Instagram people sitting around them! I think we owe it to our youth to model warm, human interactions and help them learn these tools. For more information about this alarming trend, read the book *Glow Kids: How Screen Addiction is Hi-jacking our Kids*, by Nicholas Kardaras, or watch his YouTube presentations.



Case Study: A Voice from the Trenches by Jason R. Miller

I have been teaching junior high for over twelve years, and like many teachers in public education, I struggle to meet the needs of my large classes. This semester I have over 250 students, all with different learning styles, needs, and personalities. I often ask myself, “How do I positively impact ALL of them?” Sometimes it seems like an overwhelming task. Kevin Miller’s cards for teachers have been a big help. For example, at the beginning of class, I stand by the door with a smile and greet each student by name and look him or her in the eye. I give lots of positive feedback within the classroom. Still, I felt I could do more.

Recently I was walking down the hall, thinking about how I could better serve my students, when the example of the Starfish Thrower story came to mind. Maybe I couldn’t be a superstar or game changer to all my students, but I could at least make a difference to some of them. I decided to be more positively interactive with parents by sending out at least five positive emails or notes home a week. In each email, I express how awesome I think their student is, and I try to give a specific example from the week. I try to target those students who aren’t flashy and probably aren’t recognized much, but are always there and trying hard. It takes me about fifteen minutes to complete all five, and the parent responses to these emails are heartwarming. One parent said that the email I sent was the first time any teacher has personally recognized her daughter’s efforts in school. The parent shared my email with her daughter, who immediately began crying. She ended saying that they were going out for ice cream to celebrate. What a difference a three-minute email made to that family and that student! Like all teachers, I don’t have much free time, but I hope to add to the number of positive home contacts that I make.

Moral: Take time to connect one-on-one with students and their families.

Personal Applications



1. Brainstorm with your staff ways to solve peoples' problems and leave them feeling great. Create task-force teams to implement the ideas.
2. Walk around your school and grounds as if you were a child or parent walking in. How does it look and feel? Are your problems being solved and do you feel great everywhere?
3. Call in to your office and ask a question. See how you are treated, and how well your phone system works.
4. Go the extra mile to contact parents about the positive things you notice about their children.
5. Randomly ask several parents or others how they feel about the school and ask the question, "What can we do differently to be even better?"
6. Remember that the small things are the big things. Pay special attention to the cleanliness and overall environment of your restrooms (particularly the girls'/women's restrooms!)
7. Create a physically welcoming environment: include plants, paintings, and historical photos of the school and community.
8. Consider having parent focus groups to find out parents' ideas on how to improve the school. Feed them a school lunch while they are there!
9. Make sure your signs are friendly and positive in tone and message.
10. Administer an online survey to all your stakeholders, asking them the Net Promoter Score question.
11. Create a scrapbook that introduces each teacher, administrator, and staff member and place it on a table in the entry.
12. Create an inspiring, short mission statement for your school. Encourage each classroom to create its own class mission statement and post it outside the classroom door. Help children to create a vision for their lives.
13. Prominently display the school mission statement in the entry, perhaps with photographs, or artwork from the children, illustrating living it in action.

14. Have both a staff and student greeter welcome children as they enter the front doors each morning.

What do we live for if not to make life less difficult for each other? —George Eliot, author

Adult Learners: A Special Category of Customers

Adult education provides another rich source of important customers. Hundreds of thousands of adults, young and old, are registering for college courses in public and private universities, trade schools and specialized career programs. Their needs, wants, and expectations are as varied and unique as they are. Many companies today are finding they need to provide continuous education and workforce development for their staff to keep up with the rapidly changing world. In some cases, businesses even need to provide basic educational skills that workers failed to gain in early education. These adult learners are an important group of educational customers.

Adult learners bring a new dimension to problem solving. Children mostly come to school because they are told to, and their needs are more straightforward and met with established curriculum. Multiple studies show that over half of adults are not satisfied at work. Many reach out to higher education institutes to solve their problems. Some adult learners are very focused. Many college students know what career they are preparing for, and many older adults are focused on a clear career change. However, some young adults are not sure what they need or want—they just know they need education, or someone else is expecting them to get out of the house and go to college. Older adults want a career change or need to add new skills, but are faced with a widening variety of options that confuse and may even immobilize them. They need caring and resourceful career counselors and registrars who can help them identify their unique skills and find the correct path. In many cases, they also need emotional support because many adults did not have a great experience in their early education and approach learning

and change with great trepidation. Others may need financial aid and, in some cases, help in moving to new locations where courses are held.

Adults already have many personal and family conflicts such as financial and childcare concerns and scheduling issues. It's important to identify these potential problems early on and to develop a game plan to address each problem along the way. The most important role of the education institute is to provide long-term support throughout a student's education journey in order to keep them focused on the end goal and result.

Numerous studies show that only about 20 percent of young adult college students finish their degrees in four years. About 60 percent finish in six years.¹⁸ This number drops to 40 percent for older students. Institutions that help students along the way can increase the graduation rate and increase their profits.

How we leave people feeling is just as important for adult learners entering college or embarking on a career change. For ten years, my daughter has been involved in helping adult learners transition to a new career. She has found that this element—how she leaves them feeling through the experience—is a deciding factor. They range in age from young adult to middle age and for many it is an overwhelming and frightening experience to go back to school and embark on a new career path. Throughout this process, they need an ally who can instill hope and confidence and provide a wide range of resources, including finding housing, obtaining child care and getting financial aid. How she and others treat and support them in this journey influences their loyalty, resulting in more referrals, and most importantly, a higher graduation and success rate.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Winning Loyalty in Citizens

Customer Service in Government

I've met many people across the public sector who are as efficient and entrepreneurial as anyone in the private sector but also have a sense of public duty that is awe-inspiring. —Tony Blair, former Prime Minister of England



“**W**e aren’t in customer service—we’re city/county/state workers.” Nothing could be further from the truth. Perhaps more than ever we need to create service that inspires loyalty in our citizens. By the true definition of a customer as “anyone having a need,” our citizens have great needs. They have problems to solve, and they want to feel cared for by those who serve them.

One sad fallacy lies in the attitude of some in government service. They know that citizens have no other place to go to pay a water bill or a fine, or to get their driver’s license renewed. Thus, they think they have a free pass to treat customers any way they like.

Occasionally I have encountered a government office that “gets it.” One of these was a Department of Motor Vehicle office in

Kansas about 25 years ago. This was back in the day when you had to physically go to the DMV office yearly to renew your car registration, or perhaps renew your driver's license. You may remember the typical experience—standing in a seemingly interminable line, trudging past blank walls, with an occasional poster citing various rules and regulations. This DMV was different. They wallpapered the entire wall with all the Sunday Comic Strip pages from years past, from waist to eye level. People chuckled as they read Beetle Bailey, Peanuts and other favorites. I saw people letting others pass them in line because they were enjoying their time so much! The time in line sped past and by the time they reached the counter they were in a much better mood to pay those pesky fees. It completely changed the feeling in the building, not just for the customers but for the staff as well. After all these years, I have never forgotten that and the loyalty it won in me.

My local DMV office has transformed over the past twenty years. Now there is a greeter that politely asks what you are coming in for and directs you to the right line. They have flat screen TV's mounted to the ceilings to entertain and others to show whose number is being served and your estimated wait time. As you leave, they invite you to take a survey on an electronic tablet that shows a series of frowny and smiley faces to choose from and a keypad to enter remarks.

Let the public service be a proud and lively career. —President John F. Kennedy

Citizen Customers Do Four Things

We learned in previous chapters that loyal business customers do four things: (1) they come back, (2) they buy more, (3) they refer their friends, and (4) they offer their suggestions and feedback. These apply in public service with a couple of twists. Using a city as an example, loyal citizens:

- Support and participate in civic events like registering their children in youth sports programs.



- Refer their friends who are looking for a great place to move or settle. They don't "trash-talk" the city and are loyal advocates.
- They support local bond issues and taxes.
- Perhaps best of all, they trust civic workers and work more cooperatively with them. They choose to do business in the city. One more result of this is increased staff morale. This can result in less staff turnover and attracts top quality civic workers.

This can even have a big impact on the revenue/tax and business base. I talked to a leader of a major brand-name retailer and asked him what factors his company uses in determining where to build a new store. He says they send in some "secret shoppers" who act like they are interested in moving to the city and ask random people how they like living there. They ask their opinions about the school system and other things. They visit the city and county offices to see how they treat customers and get a feel for the spirit of service.

Measuring Loyalty: The Citizen Net Promoter Score



If we use the Net Promoter Score in a civic setting, we can ask the ten-scale question, "How likely is it you would recommend living (or doing business) in this town to a friend or family member?" Using our NPS cal-

culcation, those giving a nine or ten are loyal promoters, those giving a seven or eight are passive, and those six and below are unhappy detractors. Whatever their score, they are talking about the city and its staff in the community and it is affecting overall success. Subtracting the percentage of promoters from the percentage of detractors gives the Net Promoter Score.

To raise loyalty scores, we need to provide the same two things wanted by all customer/stakeholders: (1) Solve my problem, and (2) Leave me feeling great about the experience.

1. Solve My Problem

Every citizen from time to time has problems to solve from simple to complex. Few are looking forward to coming into city or state/federal offices. It's just something they must do. Some problems are straightforward, while other problems are complex and often involve emotional situations such as coming in to pay a traffic ticket or meet with a judge.

But remember, citizen-customers expect you to solve this problem. They expect to pay their water bill or get a driver's license. Solving them gets to satisfaction (seven or eight on the NPS scale), but not necessarily *loyalty*.

It starts with respect. If you respect the customer as a human being, and truly honor their right to be treated fairly and honestly, everything else is much easier. —Doug Smith, American ice-hockey player and author

2. Leave Me Feeling Great about the Experience

This is what wins loyalty. Every citizen wants to feel great when coming into your office. They want staff to be uniquely nice to them. No one wants to feel like they or their problem is just another number. This is what that DMV office in Kansas understood.

Here are examples from our **Public Service Hot Tip Cards**:

Card #2: Use the citizen's name twice in each transaction or visit.

Card #7: Greet every customer within ten seconds of their entering.

Card #15: Come up with one idea today on how to improve something.

Card #18: Treat every complaint as a gift today; thank the

person for bringing the problem to your attention and do all you can to positively solve it.

Card #41: Make friends with a coworker today. Invite them to lunch and get to know them!

I recently presented our *Citizens Only Want Two Things* program to the combined city and county employees in a rural town. It was interesting to see how many of them sullenly filed in wondering why in the world they were in a customer-service workshop. There were police, librarians, and street workers along with office staff. By the end of the session, I saw the lights coming on as they began to understand the importance of winning customer loyalty. One of the main points they took away was the importance of how they treated each other as fellow employees (internal customers). Everyone wants a more positive, uplifting work culture.

The Power of Civic Leadership

The power of leadership as a force multiplier plays out at any civic or government level. It is the responsibility of leaders at all levels to create a civic culture that is motivating, safe, inspiring, and uplifting. It is certainly possible to administer a city and not lead it. Administrators focus on policies, procedures and efficiency—doing things right. Leaders focus on vision and effectiveness—doing the right things. A high priority for civic leaders is the power of creating a vision and mission for the city, from the city itself down to team purpose statements in every department.

The Power of Civic Vision and Mission

Quite simply, a great mission statement unites citizens, staff and the entire community. It establishes the all-important “why,” and not just the “what,” of what the city does. Here is an example from the city of Buffalo, New York. “We assist our residents in attaining and maintaining a high-quality standard of living.” An even simpler one is “Thunder Bay: Healthy, Vibrant, Connected, Strong.”

The key is to develop a mission statement that is no more than

10–20 words long and addresses the all-important “why” in the first few words. “We create a higher quality of life for our citizens, friends and visitors.” “We inspire life by providing the highest quality of caring service to our residents.” If desired, follow it with several short bullet points that add the “how.”

Once the mission statement is written, make it come alive. Publish it, discuss it, and put it on the backs of business cards (ensure that all staff have business cards). Post it prominently where citizens and visitors will see it in the civic offices.

Personal Applications

1. Brainstorm with your staff ways to solve the customers’ problems and leave them feeling great. Create task-force teams to implement the ideas.

2. Walk around your operation as if you were a citizen walking in. How does it look and feel? Do you feel someone cares and will address your problem, and do you feel great in the building?

3. Call in to your office and ask a question. See how you are treated, and how well your “phone tree” works.

4. Randomly ask several citizens how they feel about living in the community and ask the question, “What can we do differently to be even better?”

5. Remember that the small things are the big things. Pay special attention to the cleanliness and overall environment of your restrooms (particularly the women’s restroom).

6. Create a physically welcoming environment: include plants, paintings, and historical photos of the city.

7. Consider having citizen focus groups to find out citizens’ ideas on how to improve city services and the community.

8. Make sure your signs are friendly and positive in tone and message.

9. Only hire personable, helpful people. Place your most engaging, likeable people in key customer-facing positions such as the receptionist.



10. Administer an online survey to all your citizens, asking them the NPS question. Create simple NPS question cards and ask citizens to rate you at the time of service.



Case Study: A Highway Patrol Officer, Hero

Twenty years ago, I had a memorable experience with a highway patrol officer that left an indelible impression on me. I blew through a red light and the red and blue lights flashed in my mirror. I pulled over, dreading what was coming next. But instead of an imposing figure behind dark sunglasses growling, “License and registration, please,” he took off his glasses, leaned down, looked kindly into my eyes and said, “I am SO glad you are safe!” He went on to say that it was a challenging intersection, easy to miss, and that is why he often stopped people because he had cleaned up some messy accidents there in the past. He continued to chat in a friendly way with me, asking me where I was bound, all the time writing me my ticket. He thanked me for wearing my seatbelt. As we parted, he patted my arm and said, “You are important to us; please continue to drive safely.” He wished me a great day and walked back to his car. That one encounter changed my view of our state highway patrol. I found his badge number on the ticket and wrote a letter to the commander of state highway patrol, praising the encounter and hoping more of his officers could learn these skills.

Moral: Even when you can’t solve someone’s problem, or even must do something rather unpleasant, there is always a way that leaves them feeling better, or even great, in the experience.

There is something enormously fulfilling about being engaged in something bigger than yourself.

It imparts a satisfying sense of purpose which is not attained in any other way. —General Brent Scowcroft, former U.S. National Security Advisor

Winning Loyalty in Healthcare

It's a Whole Different Ball Game

When we love and laugh with our patients, we elevate
the highest form of healing, which is inner peace.
—Leslie Gibson, healthcare consultant



Winning loyal customers in healthcare takes on a whole new dimension. It can be a matter of life and death.

A Personal Story

An elderly relative decided at a young age that he did not trust doctors or nurses or healthcare in general. No one quite knows the reason, but he was adamant. He rarely would go to a doctor for any reason even for checkups. He was a big, thick and solid man and seemed robust and healthy. He and his wife went to serve a service mission in England in the early 1980s. One morning he awoke and told his wife, “I love you twice as much now—I have two heartbeats.” He told her he felt each heartbeat twice in a row, once in his heart and once in the center of his chest below his breastbone. Alarmed,

she suggested they go to a doctor. He said something like, “I’m not going to some doctor in England.” A day or two later his aorta burst from an aneurism and he died.

When I think of that story, I wonder who indirectly killed him. What experience with a doctor or nurse or clinic did he have in his youth that so soured him against a service that eventually could have saved his life? I share this story to reiterate the important point—*Customer loyalty is closely tied to the emotion of trust.* And in health-care, trust can even make the difference between life and death.



There are four main reasons why winning patient loyalty is so important in healthcare:

1. We need patients who don’t hesitate to use healthcare services quickly when they sense a health problem. Had our relative gone that day to a heart specialist in England, he might have lived many more years.
2. One of the most important sources of diagnostic information comes from the patient. Various studies, such as one done by the Mayo Clinic, suggest that at least one in five diagnoses are wrong or incomplete, and over 60 percent of the time, those patients who go for a second opinion receive a different diagnosis.¹⁹ One reason may be that doctors are not listening deeply enough to their patients. When a patient senses personal interest and concern, they don’t hesitate to tell a doctor or nurse about the seemingly small indicator that might be the missing key in the diagnoses.
3. For the same reason, if patients know that the doctor is a trusted professional who cares about them, they are much more likely to take their prescriptions or follow a healthcare regimen.
4. And finally, we want patients to recommend us to their friends and family members or new-comers to the community. One of the first questions someone asks as they move into an area is, “Do you know a good doctor/dentist/pediatrician?” The answer to that could keep you in business.

Competition can be keen in healthcare. In a popular, but mid-sized residential and retirement community of 90,000 residents,

I was told by a dentist that there are over 300 dentists in town. Imagine how important it is for them to attract and retain loyal customers who recommend them to others. In my hometown, a plethora of new assisted living and memory-care facilities are springing up and vacancies are everywhere in a rather low-margin market.

The U.S. government is rolling out a rating system that awards hospitals, clinics and home-health/hospice organizations with a one- to five-star rating based on many factors, including patient/customer satisfaction. A five-star rating can earn a higher reimbursement rate from government funding than a three- or four-star rating. So, customer loyalty even impacts profitability.

Good customer service costs less than
bad customer service. —Sally Gronow,
Welsh Water Company executive

Measuring Loyalty: The Healthcare Net Promoter Score

A Net Promoter Score in a health-care setting asks the ten-scale question, “How likely is it you would recommend our healthcare facility to a friend or family member?” Using the NPS calculation, those giving a nine or ten are loyal promoters, those giving a seven or eight are passive, and those six and below are unhappy detractors. Whatever their score, they are talking about it in the community and it is affecting overall success, as well as their willingness to use all healthcare services.



Subtracting the percentage of promoters from the percentage of detractors gives the Net Promoter Score.

Raising the Net Promoter Score can have a big impact on a clinic's success. In one project in a home healthcare company, the NPS was raised from 38 to 65 in a year's period and they raised their patient census by over 20 percent. That can have a huge impact on a bottom line. They raised the NPS in various ways by using some of the ideas presented in this chapter.

To raise loyalty scores, we need to provide the same two things wanted by all customer/stakeholders: (1) Solve my problem and (2) Leave me feeling great about the experience. And remember it is not just the patients. Healthcare customers include all important family members and friends who visit and often help make healthcare decisions for their loved ones.



1. Solve My Problem

Solving the patient's problem is obviously paramount in healthcare. But we need to solve the right problem, at the right time, in the right way, and often quickly. Patients who trust us will work with us, not against us, in their healthcare diagnosis and solutions. Healthcare problems can be very complex and often grounded in lifestyle issues such as diet and obesity. It takes gentle and respectful care to inspire people to complete medical treatments and to make lifestyle changes.



The key here is to deeply listen to the patient. The ancient Chinese symbol for listening has three symbols combined into one: eyes, ears and heart. It's not enough to merely listen with our ears and with our diagnostic machines. Listening to others with our hearts and eyes opens lines of communication that help provide just the right kind of care. One physician shared with me his three main points in being a great doctor: Ability, Affability and Availability.

2. Leave Me Feeling Great about the Experience

This is what most wins loyalty. Every patient wants to feel great when coming into an office or clinic. They want medical staff to be uniquely nice to them. No one wants to feel like they or their problem is just "another number." I will illustrate this with two personal stories.

In the summer of 2017, my wife broke her ankle. First, we went to the instant care clinic where we



normally go in town. It was 7:30 on a Friday evening, a half hour to closing, and it was obvious that the doctor and the staff were more interested in getting home than in helping us. It was a “get her in and out as fast as we can” experience. She left with a boot on her leg and a pair of crutches and an x-ray confirmation but little more information or help, and we were scared and concerned.



It did not get much better when we went early the next week to an orthopedic clinic. The diagnosis was more complete, and the doctor was fairly kind, but when my wife asked a simple question about the tightness of her boot, the nurse said, “I don’t know—it’s not my foot,” and walked out! Again, we left with many unanswered questions. Finally, my wife turned to YouTube and the Internet to get the answers. She watched informative videos about how to walk with crutches and how bones heal. It’s a sad affair when YouTube is a better medical advisor than

your doctor is.

If you asked my wife the NPS question, she would give the first clinic a five (at least they were fast!) and the orthopedic clinic no better than a seven. It’s important to remember that it is a team effort to win patient loyalty. She said she would give the x-ray technician in the orthopedic clinic a nine, the doctor a seven, and his nurse assistant a four. For the most part, my wife was not left feeling great that time about her healthcare experiences. On a positive note, she would give her physical therapy clinic a nine or ten: they are courteous, caring, thorough, informative and professional in every way.

My hometown dentist normally gives me a personal phone call within 24 hours of my visit. He calls me by my first name and queries whether all feels well and if there are any problems or issues. He told me he simply sets aside 15 minutes each day to call each of his patients from the day before. This leaves me feeling great. It’s a gesture that has won my loyalty and him several referrals.

In another example, I had a same-day surgery at the Utah Valley

Regional Medical Center. Not long later, I got a card in the mail signed by the six nurses and staff who attended to me. The card thanked me for visiting them and wished me a quick recovery. Thanks to Kaye, Lark, Morgan, Amy, Donna and Barbara!

There is a touching scene in the movie *Patch Adams*, starring Robin Williams, and which is based on a true story. Patch had basically sneaked into medical school, bringing his warm personal style. In one scene, a physician is describing to some residents and interns the medical conditions of an obviously frightened woman lying on a gurney. All asked medically related questions until Patch queried, “What is her name?” The doctor looked surprised and when Patch repeated the question, the doctor referred to her chart and said, “Margie.” Patch warmly gazed into her eyes and called her by name, and she looked relieved. You are left understanding which of them she would have then wanted as her attending physician.



There is a superb video, *How to Connect in Healthcare in 90 Seconds or Less*, which features Nicholas Boothman, who is an expert in neuro-linguistic programming and studies the ways human beings connect. He makes the important point that patients want to connect with their caregiver first with their *human* side, then with their *clinical* side. They want to trust a caregiver as a person—that they care and have human feelings and empathy. A caregiver can do this in as little as ninety seconds if they use the right skills. Once warmth and trust are established, working with the patient in a clinical way will be much faster and smoother.

Leadership in Healthcare

The power of leadership as a force multiplier plays out in healthcare as well. I have been inspired by some truly great healthcare leaders in my years of consulting. They care about their patients and lead their organizations with skill. Leadership is a definite challenge in healthcare. We often promote people who are clinically excellent into leadership positions without giving them the skills they need

to be successful. Just because someone is an excellent nurse does not guarantee they will be an effective shift leader. In one stroke of a pen we might lose our best nurse and gain our poorest leader. Administration is not necessarily the same as true leadership. It is the responsibility of leadership at all levels to create a safe, positive and uplifting culture for patients and staff like.

The Power of Healthcare Vision and Mission

A great mission statement provides a unifying purpose for patients, visitors, staff, and the entire community. It does not just describe the “what,” but the all-important “why.”

A fine example is in a hospital near where I live. Prominently displayed in the lobby is its mission statement: “Above all, we are committed to the care and improvement of human life. In recognition of this commitment we strive to provide high-quality cost-efficient healthcare,” followed by their Four C’s: Compassionate Care, Clinical Excellence, Continuous Improvement and Cost Efficiency.

The key is to end with a mission statement that is no more than 10–20 words long and addresses the all-important “why” in the first few words. Once it is written, make it come alive. Publish it, discuss it, and put it on the backs of business cards (ensure that all staff have business cards). Post it prominently where patients and visitors will see it.

Here are examples of **Hot Tip Cards** that can apply in healthcare:

Card #11: Be especially nice to retirees and elderly today: show them manners are not a lost art!

Card #13: Pick up trash or improve an outside area today.

Card #20: LAST when working with difficult folks: Listen, Apologize, Solve and Thank.

Card #23: Every day this week, walk through your operation and try to experience it as a “virtual customer,” stopping to ask yourself, “Are problems being solved here and am I feeling great?”



Case Study

In the past three years, I have taken over a thousand staff in major hospitals through a healthcare service program utilizing the Hot Tip cards and various QuickCards, and the positive impact continues. One CEO notices many more positive comments coming from patients and the community, as well as a positive increase in the way staff members treat each other. In those departments that have a strong leader, the changes are even more pronounced. The Net Promoter Score is on the rise and the culture is gradually shifting. Everyone wants a more positive, uplifting work culture.

Moral: Measure the loyalty of both your patients and your staff and take actions to increase it.

Personal Applications

1. Be sure to place your most customer-friendly staff at your reception desk. Receptionists are your “directors of first impressions” and often set the tone for the rest of the customer experience.

2. Improve your waiting room experience. You may not be able to change the amount of time people spend waiting there, but you can “bend” their perception of time by making it an uplifting, relaxing time. As mentioned before, the best clinic waiting room I ever saw featured the following:



- a. A sparkling clean front door and entryway.
- b. Wonderfully clean and welcoming restrooms with fresh flowers and soft music playing.
- c. A children’s play area with a TV/DVD playing *Finding Nemo* and an actual aquarium with a real clown fish and angel fish (Nemo and Dory) swimming around (donated by a local pet store).
- d. Soft baroque music playing in the background. Baroque music has been found to reduce stress and anxiety in a waiting room, per a study by the Lind Institute in San Francisco.

- e. A display of healthcare pamphlets and information.
- f. A collection of up-to-date recent magazines enclosed in clear plastic covers for easier sanitation. (They had about twenty magazine subscriptions donated by local businesses in exchange for featuring them as the donor on the cover.)
- g. Best of all, they had a digital revolving sign on the wall that showed how long the waiting time would be so patients know how long to expect to wait. This keeps them from being frustrated and coming up to the front desk wondering how long it will be. I have also seen this done more simply with just a dry erase board at the reception desk.

3. Involve your physicians and nurses in your customer loyalty initiative.

4. A doctor or nurse can do many simple things to make the warm human connection and be uniquely nice to a patient. One home health nurse brings a single red rose each time she visits a patient, along with a “thought for the week” she prints on a small card and signs. This simple step has earned her patients’ complete loyalty and allows her to serve their clinical needs better.



5. As discussed earlier, patients want to connect with their healthcare providers as people before they trust them as clinicians. One clinic I visited had a photo board in the waiting area that featured pictures of each doctor and nurse with a little personal information about them, such as their hobbies and interests. Patients would read this board and know something about their doctor, which might lead to a more personal interaction.

6. Remember it takes a team. Examine your operation from the street and parking lot clear through to checkout. Ask yourself, “If I were a patient, how would I feel here?” Would problems be solved, and would the patient or visitor feel great about the experience? Organize your staff into task-forces empowered to make changes: Task Force Waiting Room, Task Force Bathrooms, Task Force Exam Rooms, etc.

7. Provide practical leadership skills sessions to all managers

and to those aspiring to become team leaders or managers. Set them for success, not failure. Offer team-building sessions to inspire and unite your staff.

8. Continually measure and track both patient/customer loyalty and your staff loyalty. I suggest you use the simple Net Promoter Score question right at the time of service.

The vocation of every man and woman is to serve
other people. —Leo Tolstoy, Russian author

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Winning Loyalty in Contact Centers

He profits most who serves best.
—Arthur F. Sheldon, author

Press one for English, two for Spanish, three for Lithuanian . . . ” “If you need more information, please visit our website.” “Your estimated wait time will be ten minutes.” “Hello, hello? Can you understand me?” “Can you please connect me with someone whose English I can understand?”



These and a litany of other things are heard all over the world as more companies are outsourcing their customer service to contact/call centers located around the globe. As I talk to customers, often their number one complaint rises from the terrible experiences they have with contact centers. In a hilarious Dilbert cartoon, a marketing researcher reports, “The results of our customer service survey are in. 88 percent of our customers spat at their telephones until they died of dehydration. We are calling those ‘the lucky ones.’”

There are many issues behind problems in contact centers that are not the purview of this chapter. But one certainly is: how do we create a warm, human connection with our customers when we lose 93 percent of what entails good communication?²⁰ Studies show that

the words we use are only about seven percent of our communication; the rest is body language, tone, face-to-face and what we call meta-communication—the conscious and unconscious vibes that naturally pass between people when together.

On the phone, we lose body language, the face-to-face element, and sometimes tone in pre-recorded information. It gets even worse in email and texting. When companies outsource their contact centers to foreign countries, they add the issue of English as a second language, and a different world of voice tones and colloquialisms. Nevertheless, there are ways to work around many of these problems. Hiring people with a great command of language is a must (and not just “book learned” language), but whenever possible, “boots on the ground cultural education”—experience living in the country whose people they will serve. These experiences add the nuances and the connections that can win trust and loyalty, even over the phone.

Measuring Loyalty: The Call Center Net Promoter Score

Contact centers currently measure customer satisfaction in a variety of ways. Sometimes they send customers a survey by email shortly after the service call, sometimes even asking them to rate a certain staff member. Other times they ask customers to stay on the line for a brief one or two sentence survey. A Net Promoter Score in a contact setting asks the ten-scale question, “How likely is it you would recommend our services to a friend or family member?” Using the NPS calculation, those giving a nine or ten are loyal promoters, those giving a seven or eight are passive, and those six and below are unhappy detractors. Whatever their score, they are talking about it with others and it is affecting overall success. Subtracting the percentage of promoters from the percentage of detractors gives the Net Promoter Score. It is important to use a ten-point scale. A major airline has a recorded survey with a single question (good) but only a five-point scale (bad). Five points does not give the respondent enough leeway to provide an accurate NPS.



Raising the Net Promoter Score can have a big impact on a call center success. If the center services various companies, it could well determine if they retain those clients in the future.

Contact center call-in customers need the same two things that this book addresses throughout: (1) Solve my problem, and (2) Leave me feeling great about the experience. Often, contact centers are adept at the first part, providing relevant information and solving the person's problems. But this alone will not win loyalty, as we have learned. It is the latter half, leaving them feeling great about the experience, that wins that loyalty.

Each year, various polling organizations release their lists of the worst companies in the United States for customer service—the “rogues’ gallery” of miserable service.²¹ I was interested to see that several of the companies were telecommunication companies. Most of the complaints had to do with terrible contact center experiences as frustrated customers tried to get their problems solved or feel any sense of genuine caring. These companies seem to flop in both sides of their customers’ needs. Just recently, my wife and I finally got fed up with the terrible service from our mobile service provider and moved our contract to a competitor. The life-time value of losing us will be in the tens of thousands of dollars.

1. Solve My Problem

This can be particularly challenging in the call/contact center world. Customers often call in already frustrated because their problems have not been solved. It may even be one of several previous call-ins. And sometimes it seems like the service representatives are not empowered to solve the problem. Customers get the run-around or must wait for service representatives to talk to a manager or put them on hold while they chase down a solution or permission from another department. Effective contact centers empower their front-line service representatives with a broad dollar range and other options to provide fast, caring problem-solving.

Training staff members how to ask the deeper needs questions discussed in Chapter 4 can help this process. Often callers may lack



technical expertise about the issue, so skilled technicians can ask the right diagnostic questions to get to the real problem. Additionally, representatives may be on a time clock, expected to churn through calls as fast as they can. This drives counter behaviors as the reps look for quick-fix solutions, often knowing the unfortunate caller will be back soon, but hopefully for another rep to deal with!

In my experience, it is probably this lack of fast, effective problem solving that drives most customers' frustrations with call centers. Nevertheless, how we leave the caller feeling can go a long way to build trust and earn a great reputation.



2. Leave Me Feeling Great about the Experience

It does not take a lot to do this on a call. The simple “smile while you dial” technique often goes far—people can sense a smile. Engaging with the customer on a personal basis helps too. The most memorable calls I have had with service representatives came when the representative greeted me with a cheery voice and found a way in the call to interact with me in a personal way. In a recent call with a company that has a tech support call center, the rep noticed where I live, so he asked me if I was a skier and told me how much he likes to ski in my area. He managed to do this while multi-tasking to solve my problem. I was almost sad to hear the call end when he called me by name one more time and wished me a Happy New Year. I had half intended to drop my service with the company until that call with him. Now I am a much more loyal customer.

No customer wants to feel like they are just “another number in a line of callers.” They deserve to feel like they are unique, and their issue will be dealt with accordingly. Without new tools and ideas, soon the calls can become and sound robotic, as if the representative were reading from a script (which many of them are required to do).

Here are a few samples from the **Call Center Hot Tip Deck**:

Card #2: Greet every customer with your name and their name and thank him/her for being a loyal customer.

Card #14: Learn detailed information about two of your main products or services this week.

Card #26: Validate feelings today. When someone has a strong emotion, don't try to fix it, just validate and empathize.

Card #27: Be N.I.C.E today: Notice something special about someone, be Interested in it and Care enough to Express it.

Leadership in Contact Centers

Leaders who work in contact centers have some special challenges. One of them is leading and motivating a younger generation, many of whom took their jobs as a temporary stopping point along a different career path while they are going to college or looking for other jobs. Understanding what motivates a millennial generation of workers is crucial to lead them effectively.



Case Study: Phone Trees from Hell by Beau Sorensen

Like most people, I have been frustrated by complex and seemingly never-ending phone trees.

Recently, I was transferred from one representative to another, each time having to re-explain my problem. No one seemed empowered to help me and I was finally transferred to a manager, where again I had to explain the problem. The call-back prompt did not work, and the process started all over again. The representative asked me to call back to give them time to find a solution. When I did, there were no notes in their system about what had happened previously, and the process started all over again. Finding solutions may not be technologically easy, but when done well, it makes a world of difference for the customer on the other end of the line.

Moral: Examine every process and find new and better ways to speed customers through, solving problems and leaving them feeling great.



1. One problem lies in the pressure put upon representatives to get through a call as quickly as possible. Some are put on timers and chastised if they

spend more than that allotted time per call. The reasons are understandable: a number one complaint of callers is the time in queue. But when customers finally get on the phone with a representative, they don't like to feel rushed either. So, this balance is a double-edged sword and possibly a lose-lose scenario. One solution is to have two types of representatives and ask the customer which they need. If the customers know they have a relatively simple, straightforward request they press "one" and will be sped through the line. If they have a deeper issue and need some time, they press "two" and are given to experienced, personable representatives who will give them the time they need. They also know that their wait time may be longer, but the wait will be worth it.

2. Many call centers have a "burn and churn" mentality when it comes to hiring representatives. They figure these people will have a short life when it comes to work, so they fail to treat them in ways that earn loyalty. "If you leave, we can easily hire another like you." Turn this around by assuming each representative could potentially grow and progress with the company. Provide a work culture that is positive and welcoming, and first-line supervisors who know how to motivate today's generation of workers. One problem is that often call centers promote representatives who are technically skilled—but that does not mean they are skilled in leading a team. Institute a great "emerging leader" academy program as part of your succession planning to prepare high-potential representatives to become team leads. Contact us if you are interested in how to design one.

3. Reward your teams with frequent celebrations and fun activities. I suggest you read the book *Sticking Points* by Haydn Shaw to understand how to work with and motivate the four current generations. Other great books include *301 Ways to Have Fun at Work*, *1001 Ways to Energize Employees* and *1001 Ways to Reward Employees* by Bob Nelson. Another classic is *What Motivates Me*, by Adrian Gostick.

Personal Applications

Consider the things you just read in this chapter and determine one or two actions you can take to improve the customer experience in your contact center.



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Winning Loyalty in Realty

Keep on sowing your seeds, for you never know which will grow—perhaps all will. —Albert Einstein, scientist

Previously, we learned about the LVC (Lifetime Value of a Customer)—something absolutely essential in real estate.

I have bought three homes in the last thirty years and in none of these cases would I be loyal enough to my realtor to enthusiastically recommend them. I'd give each one a six or a seven in the Net Promoter Score question. Sure, in each case they solved my problem: they helped me find the right home, negotiated a fair price, but the last I saw of any of them was at closing when they shook my hand and handed me my keys. "One and done," was their battle cry.

Compare that to a realtor who sold a home to a friend of mine. When the family went to take possession of their new home, their realtor had giftwrapped the front door. When they entered, he had a beautiful bouquet of fresh flowers and a "welcome home" sign on the kitchen counter for the wife. In each child's room was a brand-new toy (he had learned from each of them what they most liked). And in the garage was a new set of drill bits and a picture-hanging



kit for my friend (knowing how many pictures he had to hang). He also came on moving day and helped my friend carry in some boxes. Now what do you think *his* Net Promoter Score would be? My friend has referred his realtor at every chance he gets.

Another top realtor in my city, Kelly Ercanbrack, ensures that the relationship continues long after the sale. His team follows up periodically with movie tickets, birthday and anniversary wishes, and a number of other amenities. Almost all his sales come from referrals from loyal clients.

We learned in previous chapters that loyal business customers do four things: (1) they come back, (2) they buy more, (3) they refer their friends, and (4) they offer their suggestions and feedback. Think of how this applies in real estate. Many people buy homes more than once—sometimes trading up in their same community. And hasn't someone asked you if you know a good realtor to help them buy or sell a home? The impact of winning loyalty is unbelievable.



But customers now have several ways to buy homes other than through a traditional real estate agent. I recently noticed a sign on the freeway near my home that says, “Avoid the sin of commission,” and shows a smart phone app where you can list your own home or search for a home without needing help from a traditional agent. Now even on the Internet, buyers can enjoy a virtual tour of dozens of homes sorted by their own criteria, some even in 360 degrees or 3D as if they were walking through the front door. In many cases, they can work directly with the buyer or seller, and dozens of loan offices and closing teams are standing by to help. People begin to wonder why they would need a real estate agent at all, or if they use them, it is for minimal service.

An army of realtors is out there to compete with as well. Tom Ferry reports, “In 2014 NAR reported 87 percent of all new agents fail after five years in the industry and only 13 percent make it. Agents don’t leave the industry because they made too much money—no, they leave the industry because they didn’t make any.” Only a small percentage make it big and sell multiple homes in a year.²² At a recent conference sponsored by Realtor.com, the National Association of

Realtors gave a presentation in which they said that 97 percent of Realtors in the U.S. did not do a *single* transaction in 2016!

Here are other interesting U.S. statistics per the National Association of Realtors, which are found in the same footnote referenced above:

- 64 percent of sellers who used a real estate agent found their agents through a referral by friends or family, and 25 percent used the agent they previously worked with to buy or sell a home.

- Realtors assisted in 89 percent of the sales of the 5,785,000 homes sold in 2015. 11 percent of the sales did not involve a realtor and this number is increasing.

- The 1,308,616 realtors in 2017 had a median income of \$42,500. Most realtors reported working 40 hours per week in 2016.

- The typical realtor is a 53-year-old white female who attended college and is a homeowner.

Home ownership is a keystone of wealth—both financial affluence and emotional security.

—Suze Orman, financial advisor and author

Measuring Loyalty in Realty

If we use the Net Promoter Score in a realtor setting, we can ask the ten-scale question, “How likely is it you would recommend me as a realtor (or our agency) to a friend or family member?” Using our NPS calculation, those giving a nine or ten are loyal promoters, those giving a seven or eight are passive, and those six and below are unhappy detractors. Whatever their score, they are talking about their realtor to others and it is affecting his or her success. Subtracting the percentage of promoters from the percentage of detractors gives the Net Promoter Score.



One main consideration is that agents rarely act completely solo through the entire process. A home buyer faces a gauntlet of others who help with financing and loans, title insurance and at closing

(which is one of the most stressful two hours you will ever spend as you sign your life away a dozen times on thick, confusing stacks of paper). Fair or not, an agent's loyalty score may be affected by the experiences people have with others in the process. It then behooves every agent to make sure that those who help in this process are ones they trust to treat their buyer exactly as they would.

So, what can an agent do to stand out in the crowd and make a positive, lasting relationship that wins loyalty long after the sale, or even when no sale results?

To raise loyalty scores, realtors and others in the home-buying process need to provide the same two things wanted by all customers: (1) Solve my problem and (2) Leave me feeling great about the buying experience.

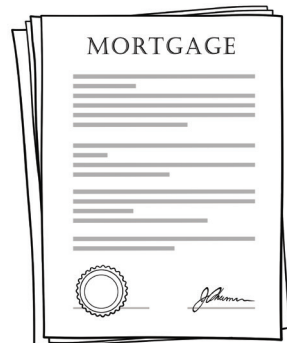


1. Solve My Problem

The problem most property buyers have is straightforward on paper: they are either seeking to sell a home for the best price they can or buy one with the same hope.

Great realtors strive to deeply understand their clients' real needs and resource limitations. Much of the collapse of the housing industry years ago with sub-prime loans came as unthinking, scrupulous, or under-skilled realtors and lenders put buyers into homes that were far above their ability to pay off when variable loans changed their monthly rates. A total of 861,664 families lost their homes to foreclosure during 2008, per RealtyTrac and reported in *Money* magazine. More than 3.1 million foreclosure filings were issued during 2008, which means that one of every 54 households received a notice that year.²³

The key here is to listen deeply and empathetically to understand exactly what the buyer or seller needs or has in mind. Autobiographical listening is when we listen through our needs and



frames of reference rather than those of the speaker. Empathic listening builds trust and respect.

But remember, clients expect the process to solve this problem. They expect realtors to help represent them and get the best deal possible. Solving this gets to satisfaction (seven or eight on the NPS scale), but not necessarily *loyalty*. In my case, I was satisfied with the experience with my realtors, and got the three homes I wanted. But I am not loyal enough to any of them to necessarily refer them to my friends. This leads into the second thing clients need.

We shape our dwellings and afterwards our dwellings shape us. —Sir Winston Churchill, former prime minister of the United Kingdom

2. Leave Me Feeling Great about the Experience

Every client wants to feel supported, cared for, assured and trusting through the process. This may likely be one of the biggest investments of their life, or one of their biggest sales. They want their agents and everyone involved to be “uniquely nice” to them. They already may be somewhat resentful about the commissions they are going to pay at either end of the deal, and wonder if they could have just done the whole thing on their own.

But skilled and caring realtors who know their industry well can truly help buyers and sellers solve their exact problem and leave them feeling great. A friend of mine, Brandon Ashby, told me a story of a middle-aged couple who had chosen a rather expensive home, much more than they needed. They had the resources and were ready to buy and had even asked him to



prepare an offer, but he continued looking for better options that might equally fit their need and not carry the same high expense. When he met with them to sign the offer the following day, he carefully helped them analyze factors they had not thought about and showed them homes that were much less costly, and which better fit their needs. He said he lost thousands in commissions and it took him much more of his personal time to help them, but they were so grateful that they have recommended him several times to friends and relatives and he thus made several sales. Recently, when I told him I would like to include his story in this book he said, “What a coincidence, I am meeting with that couple in an hour to discuss the purchase of another investment property.” He has helped them buy two investment properties in the last two years and now they are working on the third and fourth.

Here are examples from the **Realty Hot Tip Cards**:

Card #2: Listen twice as much as you talk. Deeply understand the customer’s needs and wants before offering solutions.

Card #3: Set clear expectations up front about how you will communicate and work with them; then exceed these.

Card #9: Treat children kindly: go out of your way to notice them and entertain them so their parents can focus on their purpose. A selection of games and apps can help.

Card #18: Be available to share your expertise and observations without being too clingy or over-selling. Let the home sell itself.

Personal Applications

1. Brainstorm with your agents and support/office staff ways to solve the customer’s problems and leave them feeling great.

2. Walk around your agency as if you were a client walking in. How does it look and feel? Are your problems being solved and do you feel great in the building?

3. Call in to your office and ask a question. See how you are treated, and how well your phone tree works.



4. Use the Net Promoter Score question at the end of each sale and ask it of all previous buyers and sellers.

5. Know as much as you possibly can about every facet of the community including schools, churches and community activities. Have a “briefing book” to leave clients with all this relevant information for them to study.

6. Remember that even if you fail in making the sale, you can still win their loyalty by how you leave them feeling through the process. You never know how this impression will come back to bless you later.

7. Don’t let your relationship end at the sale or closing. Do unique, kind things to reinforce that you care more about them than you do the commission. Remember their birthdays and the anniversary of the day they moved in. You will think of many other ways to do this when you open your mind.

I don’t know exactly why the notion of homeownership has such a grasp on the American imagination. Perhaps as descendants of landless immigrants we turn our plots into symbols of stability.

–Ellen Goodman, journalist and Pulitzer Prize winner

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Winning Loyalty in Hospitality

Recently my wife and I checked into the Crystal Inn in St. George, Utah. As we entered the suite, there on the credenza was a personal welcoming letter addressed to us by the customer relations manager. Next to it was a famous, moist Magleby's chocolate cake in a box, with two spoons and two napkins and two bottles of water. Uniquely nice, yes. Appreciated? Much so. And am I loyal to Crystal Inn? You bet.



We have stayed thousands of nights in hotels and cruise ship cabins over the past 40 years. Many of the experiences have been incredible, others barely memorable, and some we would choose to forget entirely.

Previously, we learned about the LVC, Lifetime Value of a Customer and this factor is supremely important in the hotel or restaurant business. Competition has always been keen, but the game is getting harder and harder as the quality of rooms and service continues to get better. Differentiating between hotels is becoming

harder because the basics are expected—clean rooms and bathrooms, nicely scented amenities, comfortable beds and pillows, flat-screen TVs and free internet. All of these are available in even rather basic hotels.

If I turn back the hands of time, perhaps you remember or can imagine cross-country trips in the 1960s. My family took such a trip in 1961, and every evening we would drive along a highway dotted with the roadside motels of the day. Blinking signs touting “Color TV” and “Clean Rooms” enticed travelers. My dad would pull into one after another and my mother would go to the clerk, get a set of keys, and open a room for her inspection. Often, we would stop at three or four to find one that met her cleanliness standards. Even then, I remember going to sleep to the smell of stale cigarette smoke and in rooms with coffee stains on the carpet.

Things were of course much better in the higher-end hotel market. Ritz-Carlton, Hilton and Marriott were already catering to their customers and extraordinary experiences and services were more commonplace.

It was a welcome addition to the market when companies like Best Western, Holiday Inn and Travelodge began bringing some level of standardization to the industry. By the 1970s and 1980s, travelers could pretty much count on what they were getting into. Since then, things have cranked up. A plethora of great chains have replaced most of the old-style motels of bygone days. (We still enjoy nostalgic drives along Route 66 in places where some of the old motels still tout “clean rooms” and “color TVs.” I suppose now if they wanted to differentiate themselves, they would advertise “Black and White TVs, stained carpets, and thread-bare towels”!)

We learned in previous chapters that loyal business customers do four things: (1) they come back, (2) they buy more, (3) they refer their friends, and (4) they offer their suggestions and feedback. Think of how this applies in the hotel industry. When my wife and I travel now, we typically just choose a property in our loyalty point system to earn the loyalty points. We rarely look elsewhere. The impact of winning loyalty is unbelievable.



Measuring Loyalty in Hospitality

Probably the biggest grief I have with hotels is the ineffectiveness of their customer service surveys.

Most of them are sent electronically and sometimes days after my stay. These surveys are usually too long and too late. By the time the survey arrives in my email box, I've probably stayed in another hotel. The experiences blend together into a mostly forgettable blob. The bottom line: with surveys like this, hotels get data that is "skewed" and "screwed." As we've discussed earlier, the only people that typically take these surveys are those who are upset enough to remember to give you a screen-full, a friend or relative who wants to happy-sheet the hotel, or people who have no life and enjoy taking surveys!

How much better would it be if a hotel simply gave me a card at checkout when my experience, emotions and ideas are fresh? The card would have two questions: the Net Promoter Question, followed by "What can we do differently?" or "Why did you give us that score?"

For example, a recent stay happened to be at a hotel in Petersburg, Virginia. In my recommended scenario, they would have presented me a simple half- or quarter-sheet card that asks:

"After your experiences with us, how likely is it you would recommend our hotel to a friend or family member?"

Highly Unlikely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Highly Likely

Using our NPS calculation, those giving you a nine or ten are loyal promoters, those giving you a seven or eight are passive, and those six and below are unhappy detractors. Whatever their score, they are talking about your hotel to others and it is affecting your success. Subtracting the percentage of promoters from the percentage of detractors gives the Net Promoter Score.

In my case, I would have given them a seven or eight because I was passive about my stay. It wasn't at all bad. It was just what I

expected. Clean room. Comfortable bed. Nothing stood out.

A couple of years ago we stayed in another hotel in San Antonio, Texas, and the room was not made up the second day! The housekeeper just blew by it, and his or her supervisor must not have checked. I called down and they recovered by crediting me the night's stay. I also wrote a note and left it for the manager, and they awarded me some extra points. Unfortunately, even the generous recovery does not guarantee I will stay in that hotel in San Antonio again. If either of these two hotels had tried to personally connect with me, they could have captured my loyalty.

The issue is made more complicated by the string of “points of impact” that a hotel guest has in your property. It starts in the parking lot—is it clean and are there sufficient parking spaces? Then on through the lobby to the check-in desk and to the comfort and cleanliness of the room. Then there is the possibility of the pool, fitness center, restaurant and finally the check-out process. At any of these points of impact, the guest can have a “make it or break it” experience.

To raise loyalty scores, hotels need to provide the same two things wanted by all guests—(1) Solve my problem and (2) Leave me feeling great about the experience.



1. Solve My Problem

The problem most guests have is straightforward: they need a comfortable room and pleasant stay, perhaps only for a night or two.

But remember, guests *expect* the experience to solve this problem. They expect what the industry now provides almost everywhere. Only if the hotel messes up, like the housekeepers did that day in San Antonio, will this issue negatively arise. However, take time to understand what the customer's deeper needs might be. If they arrive with a spouse, their needs may be much different. Perhaps they are celebrating a special day together. A simple inquiry might help you to understand a deeper need: “So what brings you to our lovely city today?” This

could lead to a very customized approach, like a recommendation for a romantic restaurant.

Perhaps it is a tired Road Warrior like me who is there for a business conference or perhaps to present a workshop. My needs are much different. I'd like an introduction to the business center and perhaps a list of recommended restaurants in the area.



In all my hundreds of stays in hotels, I remember only a few instances where a front desk clerk tried to understand my deeper needs. I would appreciate a list of recommended restaurants, points of interest and even a map of the area. As a business consultant, I'd like to know where to find printing and mailing services. I typically must ask for these kinds of things and sometimes they have answers, sometimes not. A great hotel would anticipate these questions and provide answers before the guest must ask. Once, a front desk clerk asked if I would enjoy a movie that evening. I said "yes," and she pulled up a list of theaters in the area with show times. And she arranged the hotel shuttle driver to take me to the theater and pick me up when I called her.

Often, it is simple and inexpensive to solve basic customer needs. One that is becoming more important than ever is easy-to-use electrical outlets by the bed, where people can charge their personal devices. I can't count the number of times I have searched for outlets, sometimes pulling nightstands out from the wall only to find that both outlets there are used by the lamp and clock, and often guarded by dust-bunnies! I've had to plug the mobile phone in across the room, and sometimes even in the bathroom. A simple solution: Purchase a power strip with USB ports and attach it to the side of the nightstand, or better yet, replace the bedside lamp with one that also has power outlets and a USB charging port. Best yet, in a recent stay in a newly built hotel, the wall power plates had been handily moved above the nightstands and each contained two built-in USB charging ports and two power outlets. Impressive!

I have seen some creative and even humorous attempts by innovative

hotels to solve problems. Once I was staying in a hotel located in a popular fishing and hunting area in South Dakota. The hotel faced a problem: Tired, dirty hunters would come in from the fields and use the clean room towels to wipe down their boots, guns and even hunting dogs. Hundreds of towels were torn and ruined. So, the hotel cut up those towels into rags and stacked them in the room on the credenza, with a sign: “We have placed these clean, usable rags in your room for cleaning your guns, drying your dogs, polishing your boots, etc. The towels and washcloths in the bathroom are reserved for personal use only.” I wonder which staff member came up with that solution!

2. Leave Me Feeling Great about the Experience

This is what wins loyalty. And in many cases, this does not have to be a big thing. Every time I can stay in a DoubleTree hotel, I do so simply for one thing: their warm signature chocolate chip cookies. They tout this simple differentiator everywhere—even the wraps on their hotel van shuttles have pictures of their cookie! A



few other chains or individual hotels do something similar, offering free cookies or treats, but no one comes close to DoubleTree. And when you ask almost anyone what they think of when they think of DoubleTree, it's the cookies. Some DoubleTree hotels have a very generous cookie policy, offering them to me each time I come back in the evenings. Most will give extra cookies to you when you ask, and it's even better to be greeted with one every day.

Small and relatively inexpensive tokens like these go a long way to welcome guests and create the all-important emotion of loyalty.

In a previous chapter, I told of a housekeeping staff member in a Hampton Inn in Sheridan, Wyoming. She left me a handwritten note—it simply welcomed me to Sheridan and said to contact her if I needed anything to make my stay more comfortable. It was signed with her name and a smiley face. I have stayed in hotels costing

many times that and never before received a handwritten note from a housekeeper.

As another example—only once has this happened—when the bill was slipped under my door the morning of checkout, the manager had simply written, “Thanks for staying, Kevin, and we hope you come back soon,” with his personal signature. Nice touch!

We checked into a hotel in Krakow, Poland, with our daughter, her husband and four children. The friendly desk clerk came around the counter and personally greeted each child and presented each a stuffed dragon symbolic of their city. We all want to go back and stay in that hotel.

A friend of mine manages a hotel and has empowered his staff to go the extra mile in customizing the guest experience. When the staff notices the family has small children, they can create a basket of goodies from the hotel boutique store and deliver it to the room. One staff member learned that a family had just experienced a death in the family and was there for a funeral. The staff member bought a floral arrangement and sympathy card and delivered it to the room. Any related expenses are simply given to the manager—no further approval needed. This signals to the staff that they are trusted and empowered, and it invigorates their service experience and gives greater meaning to their jobs.

Here are some examples of solving customer’s needs and leaving them feeling great about the experience:

1. Bottled water: Knowing your guests are thirsty, you should provide free bottles of water, replaced every day. This is a must, and costs pennies. It irks me to see a charge of \$3 for a bottle of water! It is curious to me that often it is the higher-end, more expensive hotels, that still charge for bottles of water that are free in lower-cost hotels.
2. Plenty of handy power outlets.
3. Shoeshine services.
4. Towels and hand sanitizers in the fitness room and by the pool.
5. Advertisements for pizza and hot food delivery services if the hotel doesn’t offer room service.

6. Coffee table books about the city or area and perhaps some coupons for local events and services.

7. A handbill of local sporting, music or cultural events such as comedy clubs, concerts and plays.

8. Free shuttle service to local shopping spots with hourly pick up times.

9. Newspapers delivered to the door.

10. A welcome gift bag of locally produced items perhaps donated by local businesses as promotions.



Case Study: Honesty Builds Loyalty at the Peninsula Hotel

We particularly enjoy the hospitality in Asian hotels. We are charmed by the way Japanese desk clerks give a slight bow as they respectfully return your credit card with both hands. We had a remarkable experience in the Peninsula Hotel in Manila. My wife left her mobile phone on a table by the pool. We searched for it, then called the front desk, fearing the worst. In a few minutes, a knock came at our door and there was a bellman with her phone on an immaculate silver tray. Such honesty and care earned our complete loyalty to the hotel.

Moral: Be totally honest with your customers to earn their loyalty!

Here are examples from the **Hospitality Hot Tip Cards** for use by hotel staff:

Card #2: Greet every guest within ten seconds of their entering.

Card #3: Walk a guest to the door as they are leaving.

Card #5: Notice repeat guests and use their names without having to ask them.

Card #16: Find a way to say “yes” to something, even if you don’t have what the guest wants.

Card #28: Ask three guests today, “What can we do differently?”



Case Study: Warmth in Washington DC by Beau Sorensen

When we visit Washington DC, we invariably choose to stay in a certain hotel, mostly because of Eddie. It’s just a medium-tiered hotel, but Eddie prides himself on top-tier, personalized service. He welcomes us by name when we check in and customizes his service. When our children are with us, he greets them warmly and provides little gifts throughout the stay. If it is just me, he works to make sure I have everything I need and asks about my family, remembering them by name. In every interaction, Eddie makes us feel welcome, and much more special than just another guest. Eddie has earned our unquestioned loyalty.

Moral: What do you do to provide your personal touch to your customers—especially your most loyal ones?

Personal Applications

1. Brainstorm with your fellow staff members new and better ways to impact the guest experience.
2. Use the Net Promoter Score question on a simple card presented to the guests upon checkout or left in their room. Invite those who fill it out to enjoy a free treat.
3. Imagine you are in one of your rooms. Put yourself in the place of a guest and ask, (1) Are my potential problems solved here, and (2) Am I feeling great about this experience?
4. Call your own registration line and see how pleasant and smooth the process is. Also, visit your website to see if it is effective and easy to navigate.
5. Put your most friendly staff at the hotel registration desk: they are often the “directors of first impressions.” In fact, I suggest you make a name plate “Director of First Impressions” and put it on the counter facing the front desk staff—just to remind them how important they are.



6. Create a series of handouts customized to the various types of guests with ideas of places or services they might need. For a business person, it might have a list of places best for dinner meetings and where to get copies made. For a couple, it might be the most romantic restaurants in town or suggested date activities.

7. Ensure that there are handy places to charge electronic devices near the bed.

8. Replace the door hangers (which fall on the floor when you open the door) with sliding signs mounted on the door or door-frame. Slide to left, color red, "do not disturb," slide to the right, green, "service please."

9. Install makeup mirrors that have switches to change the lighting so a woman can see how her makeup will look outside or under florescent light or incandescent light.

10. Write a personal thank-you, by name, on the person's bill as they check out.

11. If it is a returning customer, a personal welcome letter in their room is always appreciated, and perhaps a greeting on the TV as they enter.

12. Take notes on unique things a guest uses or likes and enter those notes in your database. When they check in, have one of those items waiting for them, perhaps a favorite newspaper or candy bar.

13. One hotel I stayed in arranged local businesses to provide a sample welcome bag of their local products and had these bags waiting in the rooms. I enjoyed a local chocolate so much, I visited the store!

14. Install the rounded shower curtain rods to give people more room as they shower. No one likes to touch cold, wet shower curtains!

15. Have folded towels in animal shapes, especially when children will be checking in. The internet abounds in ideas on how to fold many shapes.

16. Ensure there is an information station in the lobby with current well-stocked pamphlets of local attractions.

17. Have warm cookies upon check-in! Also, provide bottles of water waiting in the room (free . . . don't charge for these).

18. If a group like a sports team has reserved a block of rooms,

customize the lobby with their logo and colors somewhere and a welcome poster.

19. One hotel had a large world map on the wall and invited people to place pins in locations they had visited or seen in the last year.

20. Make the breakfast area inviting and fun. One hotel recently had some Star Wars–themed notes “Let the forks be with you,” and had written funny things on the bananas with Sharpie markers.

21. Consider giving random guests a golden token upon check in and ask them to award it to a staff member who gives them the best service. This causes your guests to be on the lookout for good things. And it is very rewarding to a staff member to be recognized on the spot by a guest. Have staff members share when they got a token and why.

22. Have a comment box at the front counter and invite people to drop in comment cards. The box should be clear, so people are motivated by seeing that others have left comments.



Case Study: Treating Your Staff Well Pays Off in Loyalty!

What happens when you truly take care of your staff? Marriott is one of the largest hoteliers in the world, with over 6,000 properties in 122 countries, and the Marriott experience earned it an 80 in the American Consumer Satisfaction Index in 2016. Marriott also earns high loyalty among its staff. It provides staff members solutions to everyday problems like babysitting, immigration issues, and even substance abuse counseling. The result directly affects the guest experience: when staff feel cared for, they want to care for guests.

Moral: Help your staff feel appreciated, empowered and cared for. It pays off handsomely.

Notes

1. For more information on CX data in the Walker study Customer 2020, go to <https://blog.walkerinfo.com/customers-2020-unfiltered/>.
2. See Google online dictionary for definition of loyalty.
3. See article “Customer Loyalty Statistics 2016 Edition,” by Brandon Carter. <http://blog.accessdevelopment.com/customer-loyalty-statistics-2016-edition#loyalty>.
4. “Stop Losing Money and Focus on Customer Service,” *www. Entrepreneur.com*, Marketing, September 3, 2013.
5. For more information, see Net Promoter System data at www.netpromotersystem.com and from www.surveymonkey.com search NPS.
6. See 2017 Grocery Report, www.trustedinsight.trendsource.com.
7. For the complete story, see *Chicken Soup for the Soul at Work*, pages 280–283.
8. See *Heart at Work*, page 8–9 for the complete story.
9. I have combined various lists of consumer complaints. For more information, www.issuetrack.com provides information on retailing complaints. Search www.consumerreports.org for more.
10. This video, and another great one in the series called The Guest, can be rented or purchased from www.corporatetraining-shop.com.
11. For more information on the effects of Baroque music, see www.musicandlearning.com.

12. 1 Corinthians 13:8 King James Version.
13. For the complete story, see “Customer Service Is Not a Mickey Mouse Affair” in the book *Chicken Soup for the Soul at Work*, page 113.
14. See “2018 Best Places to Work Employee’s Choice” at www.glassdoor.com for a full list.
15. Joseph Smith Jr., quoted by John Taylor, in *Millennial Star*, 15 Nov. 1851, p. 339.
16. See “The 50 Most Influential Gadgets of All Time,” www.time.com/tech/gadgets.
17. See “New Report Identifies US Retailers Lose \$60 Billion a Year,” www.Forbes.com October 15, 2015.
18. See “Fast Facts Graduation Rates” at www.nces.ed.gov National Center for Education Statistics.
19. See <https://www.studyfinds.org/second-opinion-doctor-diagnosis-study/>.
20. See “How Much of Communication Is Really Nonverbal,” at www.nonverbalgroup.com.
21. See Temkin Group Q1 2017 Consumer Benchmark Study at www.templekin.com.
22. See www.tomferry.com, which cites reports by the National Association of Realtors.
23. See money.cnn.com/2009/01/15/real_estate/millions_in_foreclosure/.

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The VisionBound Story

The Loyalty Company

I founded VisionBound International in 1996 when I retired from my service as an active duty U.S. Army officer. In that role, I became passionate about the power of great leadership, having seen the effects of great and poor leadership in Army units.

The mission of VisionBound is “to accelerate greatness by releasing human potential” because we believe in the great innate potential that lies in all human beings. It is tragic that over half of employed people feel no job satisfaction and most are only giving the minimum effort needed to emotionally and mentally survive at work. We want to turn this around by bringing light and hope. However, the old saying is true—“Hope is NOT a strategy.” We must provide people, leaders and teams with the skills, tools, energy and passion needed to make sustainable change.

In the past twenty years, we have worked to bring under one umbrella dozens of courses and workshops. We think of these as “Lego bricks” which can be assembled into whatever combination you need, based on our free team assessments. Our Vital Signs survey is a free offer we use to help “diagnose before we prescribe.”

We typically explain our approach with the “Three Lane Model.” You’ll move forward along three lanes, which are linked together: **Win Loyal Customers, Provide Inspiring Leadership and Build Winning Teams.** Programs in each of these lanes allow you to start anywhere in the model.

We prefer to start in the **Win Loyal Customers** lane with our

flagship program *Customers Only Want Two Things: Winning Loyal Customers*. The program teaches winning loyalty both inside and outside the company with a refreshing new approach. A companion workshop provides managers with ideas and skills on how to build and empower a service team, and a third workshop addresses how to work with difficult customers.

This series couples nicely with our extensive array of customizable leadership academies within our **VisionBound Leadership Institute**. We have learned that nothing is sustainable without great leadership.

Along the way, we can assist you in the third lane of **Building Winning Teams** with half- to full-day team-building retreats and workshops. These are packed with great team-building activities teaching healthy communication, uniting employees around a common team purpose, and creating a team Code of Conduct to govern behaviors.

For all of this to work well, a company must follow their **North Star** with a clearly defined vision, mission, values, strategy, and goals. Studies show that only about 15 percent of people know their company's North Star and it is often unclear and fuzzy even at the executive level. VisionBound offers a fine program of strategic planning, usually off-site with executive and senior leaders, to guide them in creating this clear North Star.

For all these reasons, we brand ourselves *The Loyalty Company*, because our goal is to create a culture of loyalty. We want to help companies and teams take themselves to new levels of focus and achievement and create a culture that will win loyalty among all their stakeholders. We can all work together to release the human potential in your company.

How We Can Help

Experience our full VisionBound *Customers Only Want Two Things: Winning Loyal Customers* program. Each staff member will receive the Hot Tip Deck, many QuickCards and other tools to win loyalty. Our Building and Leading a Service Team seminar instills managers with skills to create a service culture.

Our *VisionBound Leadership Institute* will instill inspiring leadership throughout your organization, from executives to your next-generation of emerging leaders.

Participate in our no-cost offer: A Vital Signs Survey that will gauge the level of loyalty in your staff and measure over thirty indicators of a successful company. See a sample at www.surveymonkey.com/r/vssample.

Benefit from our other customized assessment and survey tools, including our *Strength-Based Leader 360 Profile*.

VisionBound at Sea: we will take your team on an amazing learning adventure aboard a cruise ship somewhere in the world, combining learning with relaxation, team building and fun. See www.visionboundatsea.com.

We are available for a wide variety of other services, from strategic planning sessions to keynote addresses and break-out sessions.

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Testimonials for the Workshop

“I have had the opportunity to follow the evolution of VisionBound’s customer loyalty platform: *Customer’s Only Want Two Things*. I have seen it presented in business, civic and education venues. How many times have you had a subpar meal at a restaurant, been unable to find what you were looking for at a store, or been frustrated with what seems to be meaningless bureaucracy in completing routine civic tasks? How many of those experiences could have been improved, or even resolved, if the waitress, salesclerk or government worker would have been empowered and motivated to not only solve your problem, but to also leave you feeling great about the experience?

“Kevin Miller’s unique leadership experiences from the battlefield to the boardroom provide valuable insight on how to leverage

leadership as the ultimate force multiplier and empower the troops to magnify their efforts. Anyone seeking greater success in business should delve into this book and use the many skills Kevin presents. Whether your customers are found on the sales floor, in a community, classroom or even within the walls of your home, this book will provide you the insight, practical tools and techniques to move from satisfaction to loyalty.”

—Chuck Richards, former Regional Director of Operations for Walmart and Director of Walmart Leadership Academy store manager track.

“While co-presenting the VisionBound *Customers Only Want Two Things* program with Kevin Miller, we have received positive responses from the participants. They have been pleasantly surprised that this training was not just another boring lecture, but an interactive program that engages all participants. It has been exciting to hear at follow up trainings the stories of how the participants have successfully used the Hot Tip cards when interacting with customers. Over a year I witnessed a complete culture shift in a large healthcare organization. It is rewarding to see the employees have more pride in their work, efficiently working as teams and building customer loyalty. During my day-to-day interactions with various businesses, I have become keenly aware of how much this program is needed. Simply providing a service may enable a business to survive, but to thrive, a business must create raving fans who share with others about their outstanding experience.”

—Pam Sudlow, former President, National Exchange Club

“While serving as the CEO of a thousand person Indian Health Services hospital in New Mexico, I invited Kevin to bring this outstanding workshop to our entire staff, along with his leadership program and team-building events. I saw an almost immediate, then long-term result. Our culture measurably improved and I began getting numerous compliments from our patients and others in the community. I was pleased to see more positive interactions between staff, nurses and physicians as well. This program really works...I can attest to that and encourage any team to experience it.”

--Vida Khow, CEO Native American Healthcare Solutions

About the Author



Kevin R. Miller is founder and CEO of VisionBound International LLC, and VisionBound at Sea, and founder of VisionBound Africa. He served as an active duty U.S. Army Officer, including as a company commander in the 7th Infantry Division. He is passionate about unleashing the potential of people, teams and organizations. He has had the unique opportunity to work with a wide range of companies, from Fortune 100 companies to small entrepreneurial companies, as well as government, military, education and state and civic organizations. Kevin holds graduate degrees from Kansas State University and Utah State University and is a graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, where he also served as an instructor. He has taught at three universities. Kevin lives with his wife, Denise, in Springville, Utah. They have four children and six grandchildren.

About the Illustrator



Izabela Ciesinka is an illustrator living in Toronto, Canada. She has created art for various picture books, activity books, games, and other products. She finds herself most inspired by various development artists working in 2D and 3D animation. At present, she is working on various illustration projects alongside her first picture book as an author/illustrator.

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