

The Handbook

World Class

Customer Service



Timeless for where life is going,
not where it's been ...



Because Life is bigger than
business...

Randall Coleman



A blue silhouette of a person sitting and holding a large sign. The sign contains the text: "Because Life Is Still Bigger Than Business:"

“Because
Life
Is Still
Bigger Than
Business:”

The Handbook of
World-Class Customer Service

Second Edition

(Timeless; for where it's going, not for where it's been)



Agree

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Preface Number One

Beautiful Execution with Perfect Knowledge!



A company managed by robots, with robots as employees, cannot influence its customers. Even though it might produce flawless products endlessly, it cannot produce customer loyalty by any means other than perfect products; it cannot influence people. If people were robots, it wouldn't matter. But people are not robots. Therein lies all you need to know about why world-class customer service is the most influential power at your disposal.

If you really want customer loyalty, you can't buy it, you can't get it by discounting (devaluing) your products and services, you can't earn it by making false claims, you can't convince customers via advertising and you can't get it by belittling the competition.

You have to *earn it*, in both tangible and intangible ways. The best way to earn it is delivering what you say you will, exceeding expectations when you can, innovating as smartly and as often as you should, and by influencing your customers and putting them first. Let them see who you are, let them draw their own conclusions, let them decide what is good for them, let them decide what is fair, let them see for themselves what experiences your products and services produce and always thank them, sincerely. If you understand what all of this means, and you understand people (your customers), you need not read any further.

Influence: the power or capacity of causing an effect in indirect or intangible ways



Agree

When it comes to influencing customers, every company, organization or individual in the world that delivers a product or service to one or more customers or users has a Sphere of Influence (SOI), a physical facility or setting, and/ or a group or base of customers.

A hotel can be your SOI, a restaurant can be your SOI, a cable TV company can be your SOI, an ISP can be your SOI, a private lounge can be your SOI, a coffee company can be your SOI, a telephone company can be your SOI, for an elected official, his or her jurisdiction is the SOI, a golf course can be your SOI, a yacht charter business can be your SOI, an airline can be your SOI, a financial services company can be your SOI, a hospital can be your SOI, a private law practice can be your SOI, a dentist office can be your SOI, or a food stall on the street in Bangkok, or Singapore, or London, or New York or Mexico City can be your SOI.

Purchasers or users of your product or service are in or pass through your SOI. These are the people you have "influenced" or can "influence" via their contact with your organization, business, product, or service. How you influence them is dependent upon their experience with you, your products and/or your services. It is also dependent upon their direct contact with you and/or your employees or representatives, and/or their contact with management or associated companies. World-Class Customer Service (WCCS) is created and delivered by management and employees in a SOI; it is facilitated by tools, it is made sincere by the

"human touch," it is reinforced through messages, and it is maintained by a continuity of excellence. Finally, it is underpinned by commitment. Commitment to world class customer service, from top to bottom, is the prerequisite.

If your SOI is a government agency, a public utility company, or a monopoly business or service, your SOI customer experience depends upon the energy of the leadership and the sense of fairness in your organization and towards your customers. The "need" for WCCS in a non-competitive SOI is dependent on how enlightened the leadership of the organization is and how enlightened the bureaucrats and politicians who ultimately answer to the customers/ constituents are.



Agree

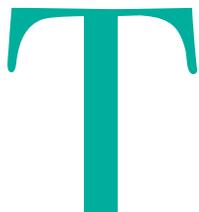
A large, light blue silhouette of a person climbing a ladder, positioned on the left side of the page. The person is facing right, with their right arm extended upwards to grip a higher rung of the ladder. The ladder is also a light blue silhouette, extending from the bottom left towards the top left.

There is virtually nothing that the customer comes in touch with that is NOT a tool.

If your SOI is large, as in a cable TV company or a phone company, with a big management team and employee base, your challenge to deliver WCCS is certainly doable, but not without great difficulty. If your SOI is on a small scale, a restaurant for example, your challenge is far easier. The starting point for both is the same, the processes are the same, and the “finishing line” is the same, but the time and effort needed to accomplish the task and the number of people involved varies drastically.

Tools facilitate WCCS. Tools enable you to create your customer experience. Tools are everything at your disposal, to create, deliver, and follow up the entire customer experience in your SOI. A phone call is a tool, a letter is a tool, an email is a tool, your customer service software is a tool, your invoices are a tool, a marketing brochure is a tool, an open kitchen concept is a tool, the kind of gangplank used to lead the customer to a yacht for sale is a tool, the internet is a tool, the car showroom is a tool, the airline private lounge is a tool, the airport is a tool, the jet is a tool, the in-flight service is a tool, the wine list in a wine bar is a tool, in-store product displays are tools; there is virtually nothing that the customer comes in touch with that is NOT a tool.

Agree

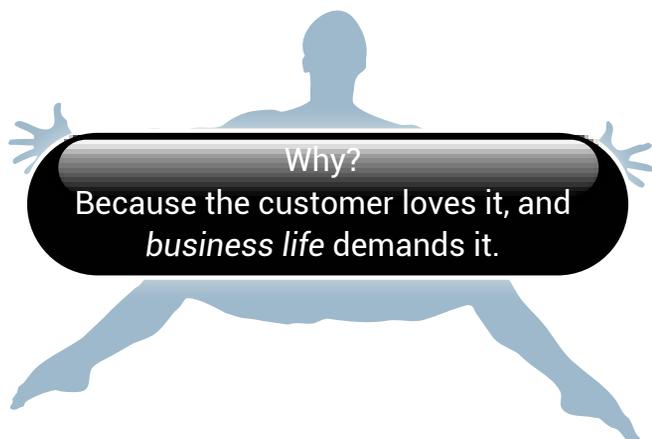
A large, teal-colored graphic consisting of a vertical stem and a horizontal top bar, resembling a stylized letter 'T' or a T-shaped tool handle.



"The human touch."

WCCS is created by the "human touch." The human touch means not only the care, consideration and thoughtfulness that have gone into exactly how and what you create as "your" particular customer experience, but also the human interaction, beginning with the education and training of your staff. It also means how you deliver WCCS, i.e., how well you have thought through just how to inject the care, the consideration and thoughtfulness in, not only your WCCS standards, but also the SOI the WCCS is delivered in. Maximizing the human touch depends upon first, the degree to which you understand your customers, and secondly, the length your WCCS practices go to deliver the human touch; in words, in correspondence, in action and in how you have created your SOI/venue. The customer must come first.





WCCS is reinforced through messages in that every action and form of correspondence sends a written and an unwritten message to your customer. A company that ensures meaningful communications with the customer, both at the company's venue and away from the company's venue (the total SOI) sends a message that they truly care for and truly appreciate the customer, whether the customer is at the company's venue or not.

A company that does nothing sends an unwritten message to customers that they do not care about the customer or the experience the customer has at the company's venue or within its SOI, or that they only care when the customer is within its SOI, but cannot be bothered when the customer is not within its SOI.

WCCS is maintained by a continuity of excellence. This means your company (or you) must stay current on WCCS practices and maintain the highest standards of delivering WCCS without fail, every time, every day, every week, every month, every year, every decade. You can never NOT deliver WCCS, ever. You and your entire organization must remain committed.

Why?

Because the customer loves it, and *business life* demands it.

Preface Number Two



Embrace a new business life now
or be left in the dust by those who do.

There has been an irrefutable evolution going on in business for centuries. More and more, this thing we call “life” brings its invisible force to bear. More and more, enlightened management comes closer to enlightened employees. Both are realizing the foolishness of past practices of separating business and life. More and more, the classic separation between management and employees is a negative, particularly when it comes to customer service, and particularly in the age of the Internet.

More and more, employees are becoming empowered, with tools, with trust, and with knowledge. More and more, management is realizing the workplace is a place of real life and doesn't exist solely in a business plan or a budget or organizational chart. More and more, management is embracing a new kind of business life; the one that employees have always yearned for and the one that good employees have known should have always existed. It is in this environment that real customer service, WCCS, can take place.

This handbook is for the CEOs, senior managers, middle managers, frontline supervisors, and employees who can smell the change in the air, the wake-up call life is giving you - Embrace a new business life now or be left in the dust by those who do.

The evolution of technology has kick-started the worldwide transformation of the integration of “life” into business and business into life - It will not be denied. Soon, the Internet will represent everything a person can think, in audio, video and audio/video form. In a sense, you will have nothing to hide because it can't be hidden. Apart from short-lived inventions, there may be no secret strategies or weapons.

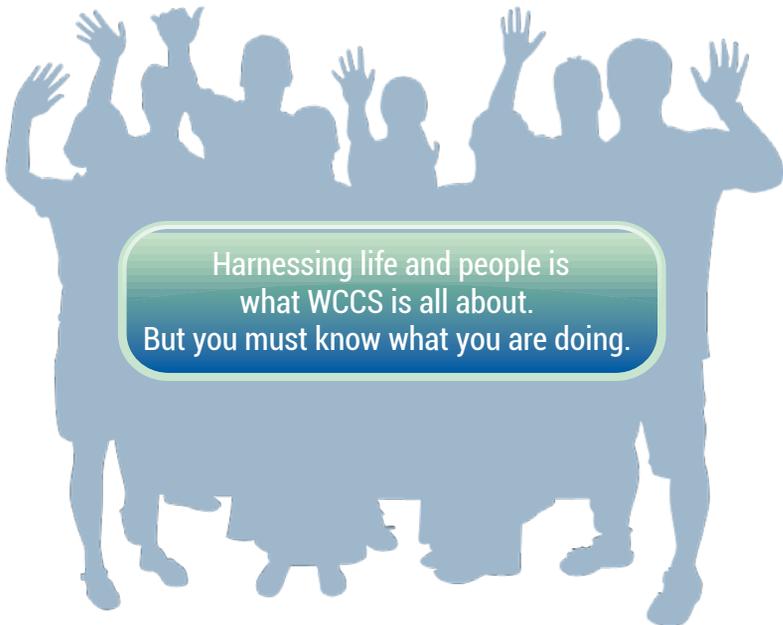
 Agree



Depending upon your business, your competitive advantage will no longer be the state-of-the-art hardware for your infrastructure business, or the most current software for your mobile phone business, or the most beautiful furnishings or largest outdoor pool for your hotel, or the yacht with the most features for your yacht business, or the tableware from Italy for your showroom, or the most channels for your cable TV company, or the tropical setting and the music that provides the ambience for your wine bar, the latest culinary equipment for your open-kitchen boutique restaurant, the most expensive material for your tailor business, or the latest fashions for your dress shop. Why? Because most any company in the world, and in particular your competitor, can lease, license or buy the same "competitive advantages" that you can. Your ultimate competitive advantage will be you and your people, wrapped up into your total customer experience. This is your business garden, and if you aren't nurturing your garden, you may have no garden at all in short order.

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When the value of customer loyalty comes knocking on your door, if it hasn't already, or gets in your face, will you be prepared? Has it already dawned upon you that you can cultivate a tremendous competitive advantage by turning your customer service up ten notches? Are you preparing your employees? Are they knowledgeable of world-class customer service practices? Have you embraced the hybrid business/real world they live in? Do you know their concerns - for themselves, their loved ones and your business? Have you reached them with your mission? Have you enlightened them with your vision? Is your vision enlightening? Have you reached them at all? Have your employees rewarded you with loyalty? If they haven't, it is a leap of faith to think your customers will reward you with theirs. Have you put influences in place that will grow your organization into the world-class customer service business it should be to not only compete effectively, but to be the best?



Harnessing life and people is
what WCCS is all about.
But you must know what you are doing.

You would be at a tremendous advantage if you had the most loyal, well-trained, dedicated and happy employee force in your industry. If you did, and if your employees shared in the ownership of your organization, if their future was part of your future, and if you had the right vision and had set course for WCCS and held the line, you would be number one. Harnessing life and people is what WCCS is all about but you must know what you are doing.

This kind of power, harnessing life and people, cannot be stopped and it cannot be beaten. If you can manage to accomplish this feat, and it is no small task, what you will have mastered is not taught in economics classes, it is not found in operating manuals, nor is it a line item in any budget on earth. Only when you get there will you discover what you have really done. In a unique way, in a "business environment," you will have mastered something that will have a shape, form, function, purpose and endurance characteristics unique to the entity that makes up you, your employees and your customers - it's called "life." You will have mastered business life, and with that you will have great influence on your employees and your customers, and

ironically, they will give you this "power" because you earned it on their terms, not yours.

No doubt your endeavor will have a high-tech twist. The technology we have now and will have in the future can deliver, decipher, drive, compute, calculate, crash, create, run the business, run the house, run the car, run the jet, humor, hammer, humiliate, humble, simulate, stop, start, scan, and a mind-boggling myriad of additional multiple tasks. Use it for all you can, but best of all, use it to deliver the one thing that will, in the end, make the biggest difference to your drive to world-class customer service. Use the technology to deliver the human touch. Use the technology to reinforce the human touch. Use the technology to support the human touch, and, if you happen to be in the telecommunications business, keep making it simpler and simpler to use the technology; you will get closer and closer to your customers.

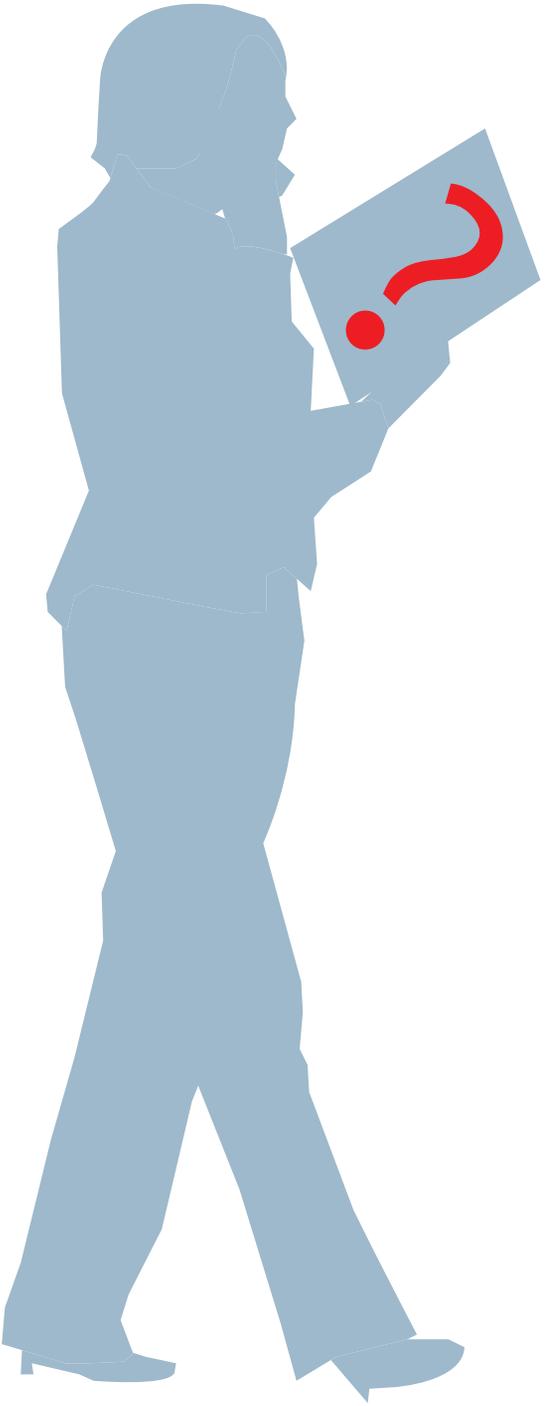
This handbook will be a useful tool in your journey, perhaps the most useful tool you will find. How useful it becomes is up to you.





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Chapter One

What is World-Class Customer Service?

When you dare go where no one else in your business has gone before, you have the mindset to reach World-Class Customer Service.

WCCS is not a particular place, it is not a thing, it is not a one-time achievement, it is not a single idea, it is not a spot on a map, it is not a schedule of activity, it is not a collection of policies, it is not an event, it is not a goal and it is not an end. In fact, it is more a beginning.

WCCS is a way of life; a way of business life.

To use an analogy, reaching WCCS, for any business, old or new, is like changing the course of a giant ocean liner called The HMS Mindset. The bridge of the ship, where the captain is, is your organization's leadership. The engine is every employee's mind. The wake is not only every customer's experience with your company, but also every customer's and non-customer's perception of your company, your product, and your service. While the culture aboard each ship is different and no two ships are exactly alike, they are all dependent upon a critical mass of personnel, the crew, thinking and acting in concert to keep the ship running in order to get you where you want to go.



You will find it difficult to change course, culture, or otherwise once momentum has picked up in any direction, whether a planned route or due to drifting. Changing direction in a coordinated fashion takes effort on the part of everyone, and it takes fresh ideas and good leadership. In the same vein, it is just as difficult to change perceptions of your organization easily once they become imbedded.



What is World-Class Customer Service?



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WCCS is “created perception,” created, as you will see, by the human touch of all involved. WCCS lies in the world of impressions, of your customers’ and non-customers’ first, your frontline staff second, and everyone else in your corporation third. But WCCS is substantive, and it does have a look and feel. It also bears recognizable attributes, produces positive results, breeds notoriety, nurtures a spontaneous environment, is constantly creating nice little surprises, and attracts outside interest, including customers who are “touched.”

To get there you need to know or learn many things, especially about people, all of which you can learn from yourself, your colleagues, and your customers. You will need

to be committed to many things, particularly people, which again, you can learn from yourself, your colleagues, and your customers. You will need to “un-learn” many things, particularly about people, which you can un-learn from yourself, your colleagues, and your customers. You need to create many new things, especially regarding your “how to deal with people tools”, which you can learn from yourself, your colleagues, and your customers.

You will need to open your mind before you begin. You will have to accept the fact or, in some cases admit, that your service isn’t really as good as you think it is. You will likely also need to admit that you don’t know specifically where “there” is but you will do whatever it takes to get “there.”

When the goal is attained, WCCS becomes a mindset held by virtually all employees. What that means is practically every employee embraces the proposition and challenge that he or she will do whatever it takes to take care of the customer or support those who take care of the customer. By accepting and embracing this proposition (which can take anywhere from twelve to thirty-six months to reach depending upon the size of your organization), you are altering the lifestyle/culture of your organization, yourself, and to varying degrees, your customers. You are creating an "entity" whose nature goes from wherever and whatever it was/is to an incubator of creativity, conscientiousness, passion, sincerity, good people, an excellent environment, minimal policies, and world-class actions.

You will have created an environment where business ethics and human virtues, dignity, integrity, and a passion for excellence are intrinsically woven into the fabric of the company, where an enjoyable workplace is the norm, where the president spends time with any employee or customer at any given time regardless of the level of the employee or the status of the customer. You will have created an environment where accountability is as much self-induced and peer-induced as it is management-induced.

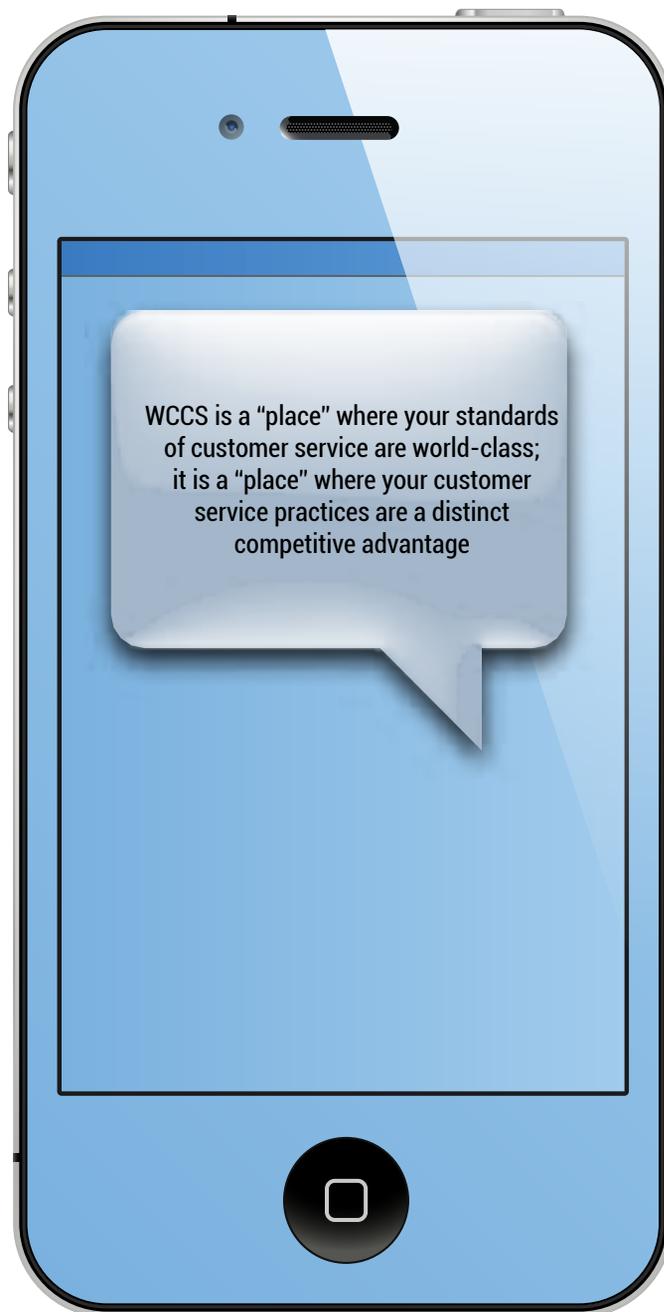
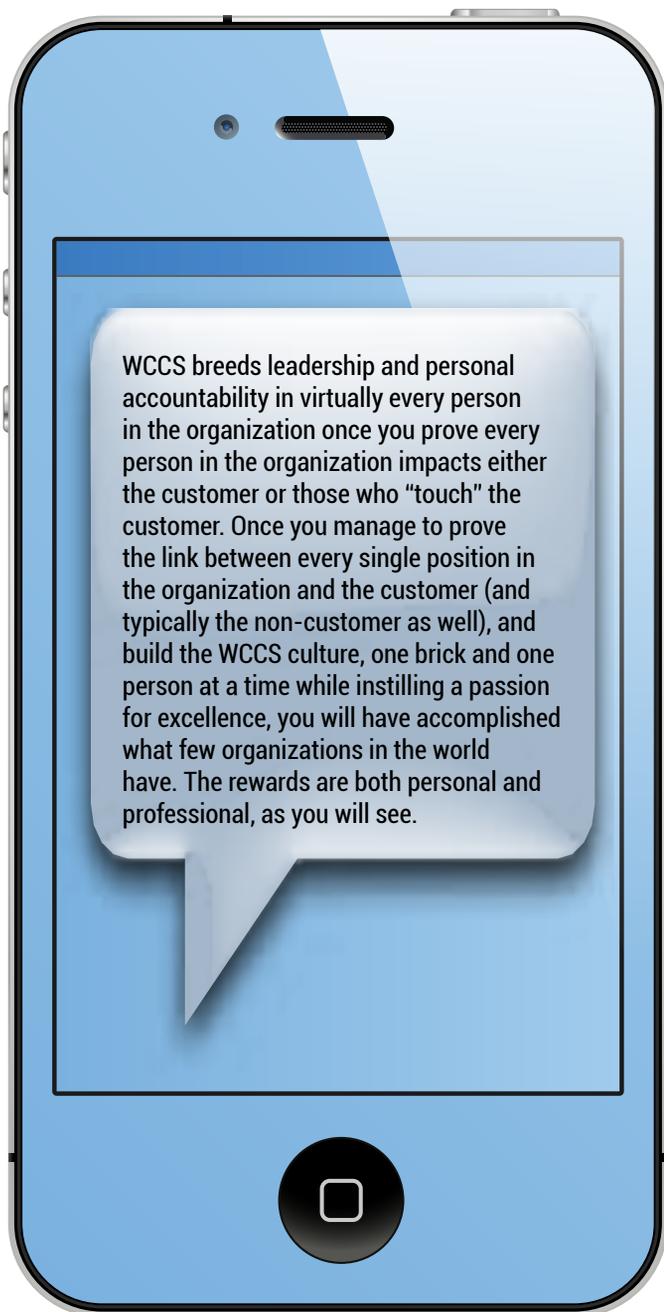




What is World-Class Customer Service?

You will have created a business lifestyle for your staff where they enjoy, at a minimum, “intellectual and visceral ownership,” and at the maximum, real ownership (if you make stock and/or stock options available). They will have a piece of the organization they want to feel a part of, the organization they will grow, where they want to feel comfortable, where they can laugh, where they can cry, where they can receive acknowledgement of having done a good job, where they are appreciated, and where the division between “management and employee” is simply on paper and used only when necessary. You will also have created an organization that realizes the futility of trying to separate business from life and life from business; that the oldest management practice in the world, of creating an “us vs them” environment, will finally be rendered dead.

WCCS may prove to be the hardest and most focused undertaking you have embarked upon to date, but, once there, one of the easiest to maintain. Once there, at the pinnacle of performance, both personal and professional, you learn to outperform your competition, and enjoy life on thin air. You witness an organization that takes on a life of its own, that operates on the principle that the shortest direction is truly a straight line of action between two points, i.e., doing whatever it takes to take care of the customer. You will have, along with your employees, created an entity where sidestepping responsibility, second-guessing, hesitancy, excuse-making, absenteeism, reluctance to perform, subversion and unfairness, all remain problems of a different kind of organization.



What is World-Class Customer Service?

It is a place where even your own standards are constantly surpassed. It is a league of its own, full of innovation, of creative ways to satisfy the customer, of instant action, of customer-oriented people, of passionate employees whom refuse to deliver anything less than excellence, of colleagues whom refuse to let them deliver anything less, of pride in the workplace, of employees whom thrive on protecting their world-class status and, most of all, of satisfied customers.

You know you are there when: other service organizations start calling and want to come visit to see how you practice such excellent customer service; you begin to receive local, regional and international recognition and awards; customers begin to send letters and cards of commendation and thank you to customer service staff and management; customer service success stories are constantly retold in the hallways, lunchrooms and throughout the office; non-customer service employees begin to take credit and feel pride for the company's customer service; the region's best customer service businesses try to "steal" your managers; and finally, when word of mouth reaches "critical mass," "everybody" (especially customers) knows your customer service is the best.

But it is not all flowers and big puffy clouds on a sunny day. You aren't going to arrive at the office one day and find a band of angels waiting to magically transform your business environment and to serve every customer's wish. Like anything else, you will get out of it what you put into it, as will every single employee, but in doing so, a greater meaning of this thing we call "business life" will evolve, and you will not feel as though you cheated yourself or your employees nor they themselves out of approximately 41% of your collective waking lives, or 55% of your collective adult lives.

World-Class Customer Service is, besides performance at standards rarely achieved let alone maintained at a near phenomenal level, a "new" kind of business life experience, and one you will only realize the greatness of once you are there. Beyond a doubt, your customers will know they are onto a company with a heart, a company that knows what their lives are really like and approaches them from their perspective, sincerely.



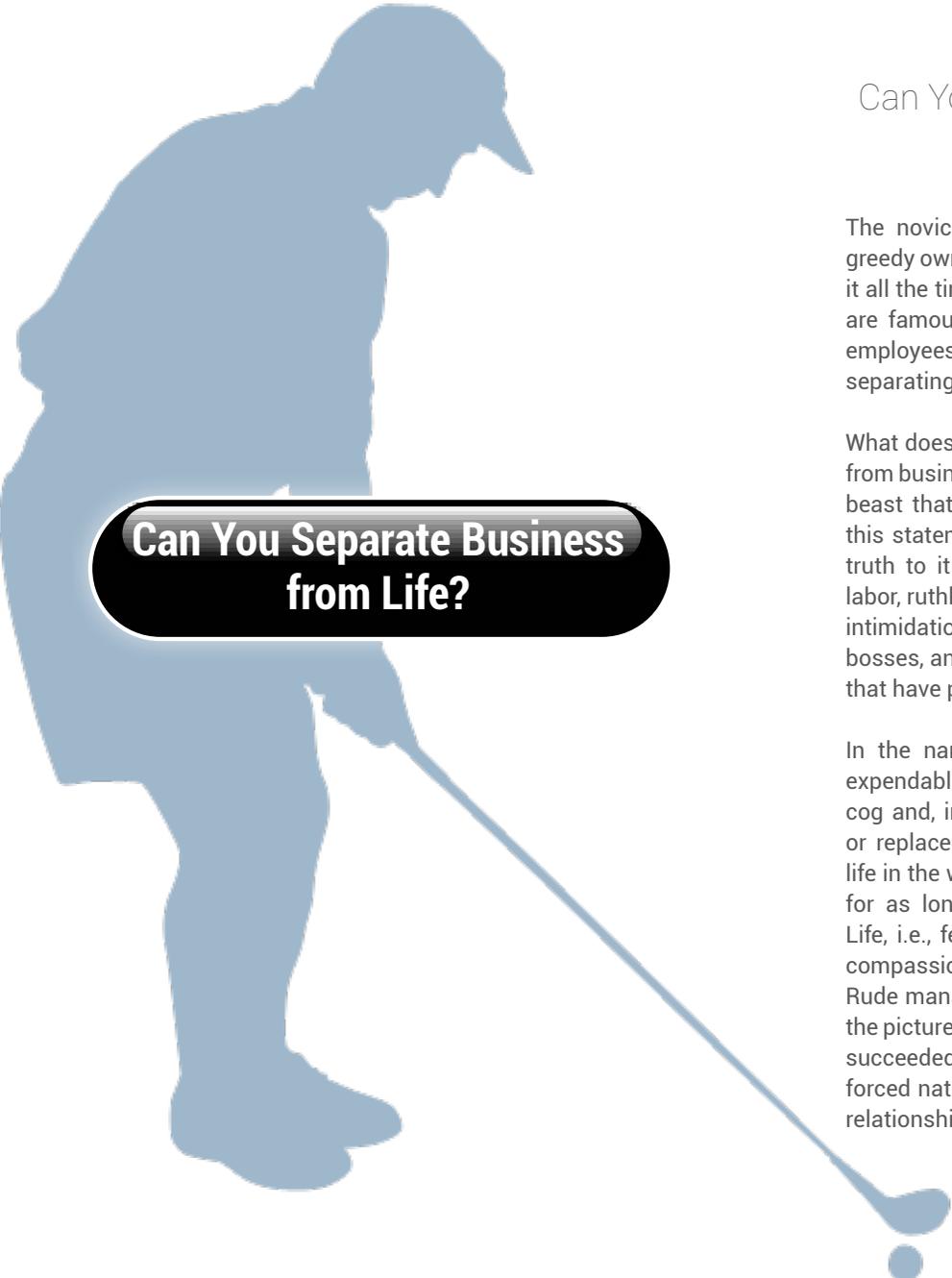
Chapter Two

Can You Separate Business from Life?

The novice does it. The ignorant manager does it. The greedy owner does it. The passive investor does it. Banks do it all the time. The biggest shareholders do it. Governments are famous for it. Even the poor performers among your employees do it. But *you must not do it*. You must stop separating life from business and business from life.

What does this mean, separating business from life and life from business? "Business" has for decades been a heartless beast that cared only about productivity and profit. While this statement be a bit of an exaggeration, there is a lot of truth to it. We all know about sweatshops, slavery, child labor, ruthless bosses, corrupt union officials and members, intimidation, harassment, overzealousness, greed, jealous bosses, and the myriad of other undesirable characteristics that have punctuated the evolution of "the corporation."

In the name of business, the individual was a cog, an expendable cog, a replaceable cog, a poorly maintained cog and, in the end, a sacrificial cog, ready to be dumped or replaced whenever management decided. To business, life in the workplace was extracting energy from employees for as long as possible for as little money as possible. Life, i.e., feelings, family concerns, health issues, fairness, compassion, employee growth, etc. had no place in business. Rude management then met rude unions and "life" entered the picture, albeit in a forced manner. While unions may have succeeded in forcing attention to turn to "life issues," the forced nature of the exchange only nurtured an adversarial relationship, which in most union businesses still exists.



Can You Separate Business from Life?





The enlightened business has figured this “life equation” out. The gap between business and life is invisible in the *enlightened workplace*. Gone are the times when the employee was a non-entity, a number to punch a time clock, at least for these companies. The segregation of life and business is transformed into the balance of life and work. Management knows, at the end of the day, the company’s customer service is only as good as the goodness of their employees. Enlightened management knows employees come to work with other things on their minds; management knows there are other influences affecting employees on any given day, week, month or year. Management knows the same is true for management personnel. In the enlightened company, “life” is integrated into the company.

The integration is founded upon the principle that the company IS the people. The balance between life and business is also founded upon the principle of fairness, in all its respects, to employees, to the company, to the customers, and to vendors.

Fairness is the killer application in balancing business and life, in balancing employee issues, in balancing customer issues and in building trust. **NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE OF FAIRNESS.** Fairness is at the root of virtually all employee issues of consequence. It’s not pay, or promotions; it’s fairness. Think back on your most notorious disputes with employees. In retrospect, at the end of the day, wasn’t the number one issue about fairness in some way, shape or form? In fact, how many of the world’s large and small problems boil down to fairness? How about in your own household?

 A blue silhouette of a person sitting on a tennis racket, with their hand on their chin in a thoughtful pose. A speech bubble is positioned above their head.

**NEVER
UNDERESTIMATE
THE IMPORTANCE
OF FAIRNESS**

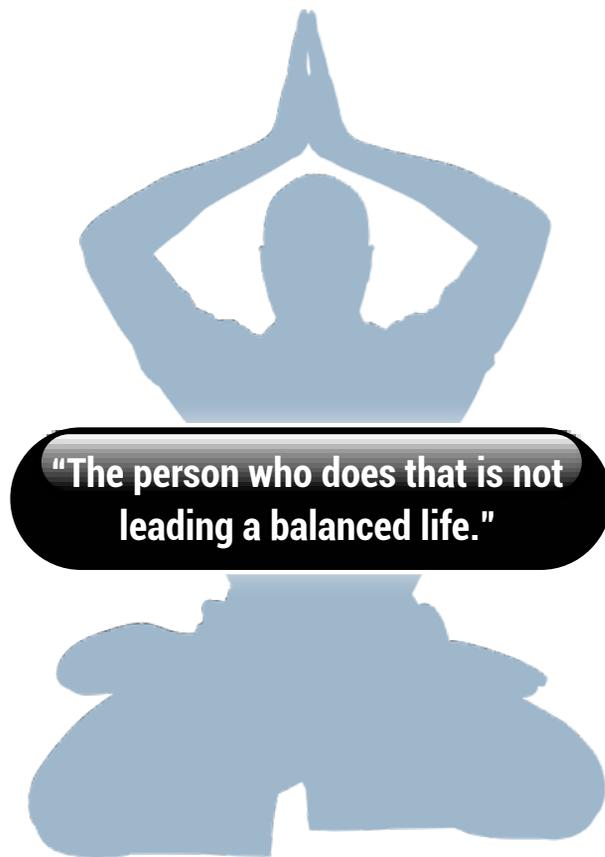
**Can You Separate Business
from Life?**

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An important element of this balancing act is to teach your employees about fairness. They must be educated on both sides of the fairness issue. They need to learn what fairness means to the company, AFTER you teach them how business and life is a balancing act in your organization. Swallow your pride and let the initial fairness story revolve around your employees. You'll have all the time you need to educate them on what the bottom line is and why it is important to every employee, particularly if stock options are part of your culture. Employees will understand the bottom line very quickly if they know there is an enhanced direct benefit to their financial betterment. The balancing act is truly that, but over time, you will be amazed at how supportive, understanding, and empathetic your employees will become, all because you are perceived as fair in business and in "life," their life, which is what employees have been crying out loud about for the better part of two centuries.

Don't worry. Life doesn't run amok. Personal issues don't reign supreme. Departmental cliques and gossip don't run rampant. Life crossing into business and vice versa simply means the obvious is recognized for what it is. The workplace remains professional at all times, but "new degrees" of professionalism are borne and accepted.

Employees have never left their personal lives outside the door to the office, and rarely does an employee truly leave work at the office. If they don't physically take work home with them, they certainly think about work during off-work hours. The more dedicated the worker, the more time spent outside of work thinking about work. Additionally employees don't leave their personal worlds at home. Only the most anal of humans could manage that or even want to. The person who does that is not leading a balanced life.



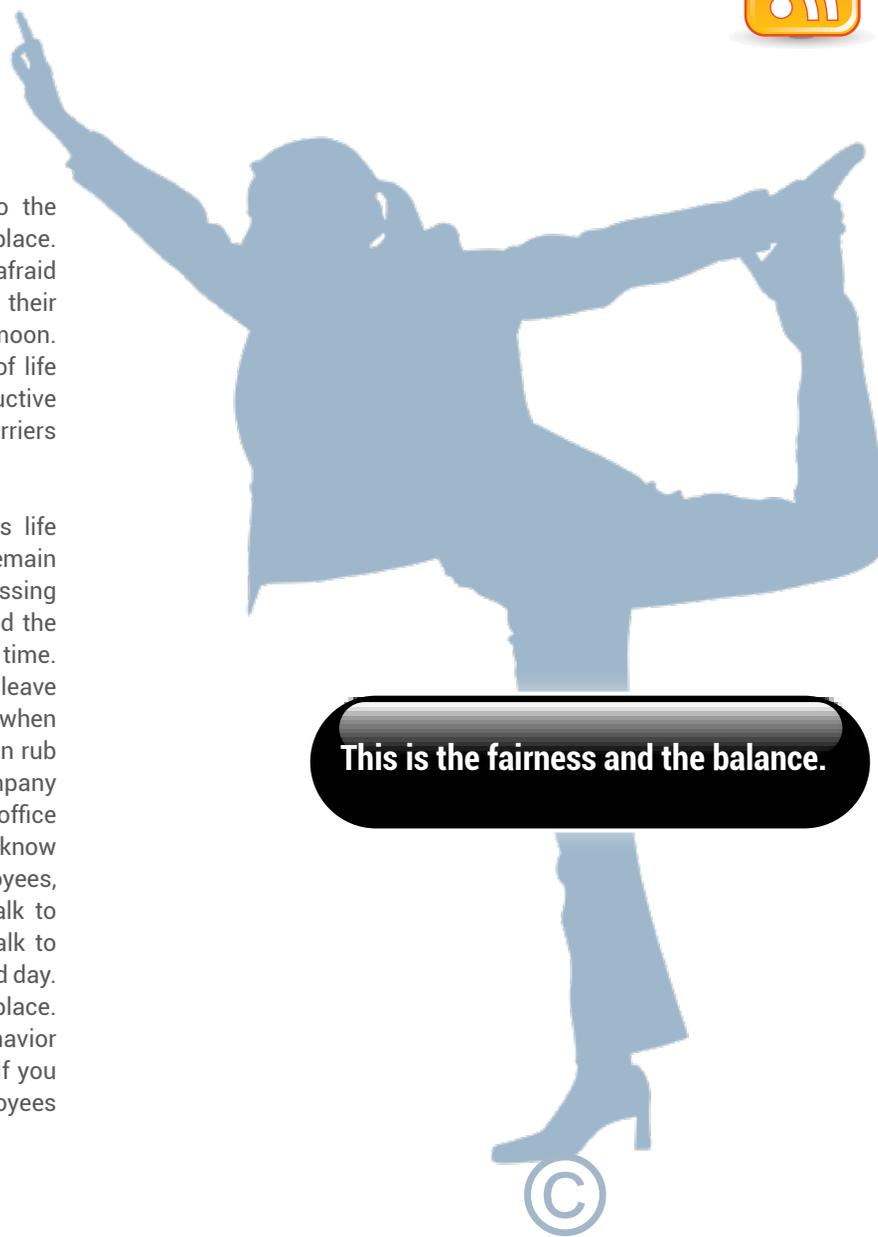
"The person who does that is not leading a balanced life."





Management needs to give life its due. Let it into the workplace. Don't fight it. Don't pretend it doesn't take place. Don't create an environment where employees are afraid to show their baby pictures, or hesitant to talk about their children's accomplishments, or their upcoming honeymoon. Don't create subtle resistance to the daily entrance of life into the workplace. You will be serving no constructive end if you do. In fact, you may be creating your own barriers to success.

But, by the same token, clearly lay down the terms life gets let in by. After all, the balancing act also must remain professional. This is the fairness and the balance. Passing around baby pictures is one thing, but passing around the baby can be quite another, particularly at the wrong time. Let your employees know you don't expect them to leave their personal lives at the door. Let them know that when someone has a bad situation at home, you know it can rub off on others on the job. Let them know that your company is not so ignorant as to think what goes on outside the office should not impact job performance, but also let them know you want to minimize the impact by supporting employees, not punishing them. Talk to them about balance. Talk to them about the intrinsic mix of life and business. Talk to them about using discretion when they are having a bad day. Talk to them about maintaining balance in the workplace. Let them work it out by themselves. Don't force behavior upon them that is, in the "outside world" unrealistic. If you are fair, and if your HR department is on the ball, employees will know how to handle themselves.



This is the fairness and the balance.



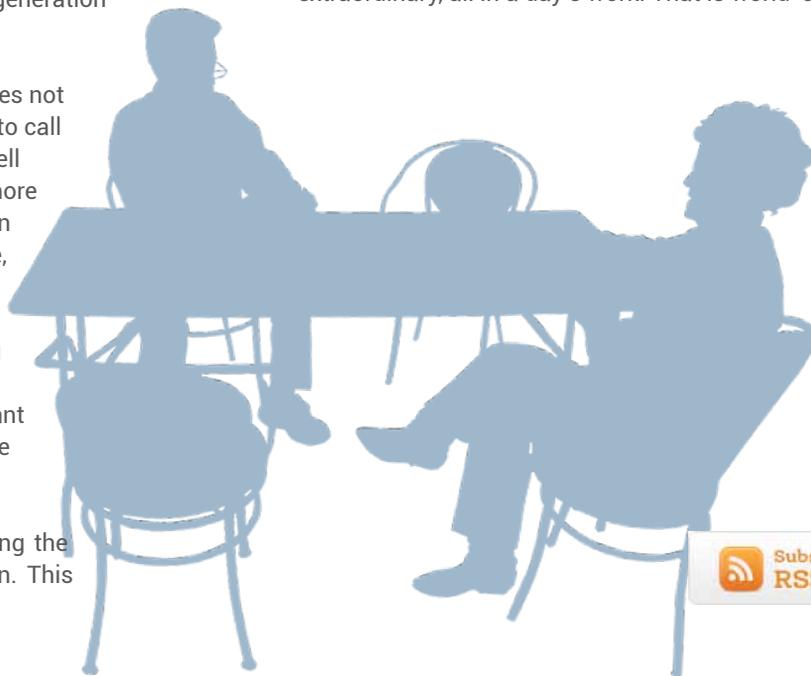
There is no way business can ever reverse what is happening,

The convergence of business and life can't be stopped. The key is to get ahead of the curve, to see what's coming, to see what life has been revealing since the industrial revolution; human nature is human nature, and when the scale of life is tipped unfairly against human nature, life will seek balance. This balancing act (between work and life) in the workplace has been evolving for generations. It isn't going to stop now. With each generation of management and each generation of employee, the gap narrows.

The last point involves life and customers. Life does not stop for a customer when they pick up the phone to call you. Indeed, if they are upset with you, you very well may be their "life" at that moment. They may be more upset with you than they were the day before when the dog got out of the house, the car had a flat tire, the children came down with the flu, or whatever. There is no way you are going to separate business from life in this situation, nor should you try. There is no way you should be quoting policy verbatim when in this situation, not unless you want to either irritate the hand that feeds you or lose the customer altogether.

This is where hiring the right people or developing the right characteristics in your employees comes in. This

is where empowerment comes in. This is where the proper training by HR comes in. This is where the enlightened management philosophy comes in, and again, this is where life and balance comes in. When you let life into your business, you let life into your employees while they are in the workplace. Doing so helps your employees take care of your customers because your customers put life at your door every hour of the day, right smack-dab in your employees' laps, and most of the time, the customer doesn't really care about balance. However, it will be a balanced employee that can balance the customer, almost one hundred percent of the time. It will be a balanced employee who will have the self-confidence to perform acts from the ordinary to the extraordinary, all in a day's work. That is world-class.



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**This is why you must put life and balance
into your organization.**

When you create an environment that is fair, reasonable and balanced, employees instinctively begin to realize there are reasonable limits to how much outside life can and should be brought into the workplace. And when a customer is dealing with a well-balanced, empathetic employee, they instinctively begin to realize there are limits to just how irritated and punitive they can be. When you have created this kind of a mix, which may take two or three years, you begin to have the balance between business and life you will need to reach WCCS.



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Chapter Three

What Does Corporate Culture Have to Do with It?

There is no comparison of any historic work culture to that of the newly formed WCCS work culture.

The early evolution of corporate culture was more a study in greed, ignorance, and brute force than anything else. Even today, in many industries, greed still remains the defining characteristic. A glaring example of this is the economic crisis of 2008 where the greed of financial institutions (management of financial institutions to be more accurate) brought down the entire global economy. Flash forward, it's 2012, and financial and political greed are about to collapse every financial and political house of cards on the planet.

Historically, there hasn't been a concerted mainstream effort to create a corporate culture. Management wasn't concerned with such things as health care, employee benefits, stock options, flexible schedules, on-premise gyms, education subsidies, employee input or, heaven forbid, corporate culture. This didn't change significantly until the 1980s.

Prior to the 1980s, "life" as we know it, was always kept out of the workplace. It was not a place where human development was thought to be a competitive edge. It was a place where management had neither the presence of mind and heart nor luxury of letting workers have a life. Indeed, "life" was kept outside the door.

Thus went the first evolution of business life.

What Does Corporate Culture Have to Do with It?



As it does evolution occurred. That thing we call “life” has brought better times to bear, better businesses have blossomed, better environments have been created, some forced, some not. Over the years, employees have fared better, again sometimes due to the force of law, or violence, or by simply wearing down management. But more often than not, it is because management has steadily realized the separation between management and employees is narrowing with each new innovation in technology and business thought. Corporate culture steadily evolves with it. The development of corporate culture has paralleled the entry of “life” into the business environment. As the separation between life and business continues to narrow, the customer service industry corporate culture becomes more and more a people- oriented (employee and customer).

As technology evolves, customer choices increase. Corporate culture has become more competition-oriented, more quality-oriented, and more customer service-oriented, eventually culminating in this thing called World-Class Customer Service.





What Does Corporate Culture Have to Do with It?



Compare any work culture, past or present to WCCS, and none will measure up. WCCS is in a league of its' own. The WCCS workplace culture is unique. It is special. It is a balanced mix of life and business. It is riddled with enlightened, common sense people who know you don't have to be a rocket scientist to take care of customers. The WCCS culture knows the importance of people, the value of employees, the side effects of happiness, the priority of the relentless pursuit of excellence, and the undying faith of the "new" company culture.

The WCCS company culture is a balancing act. It is a culture that rewards balance, in people, in policies, in goal setting, in rewarding, in achieving, in winning, and in taking care of the customer. It is a culture that is clear, well-defined, unambiguous, well thought out, creative, enjoyable, non-threatening, comfortable, and easy to fit into. A WCCS culture can be characterized by the following:

- 1 An enlightened management team that recognizes the importance of world-class customer service and knows how to get there. The management team is competent, creative, innovative, friendly, intelligent, not afraid to have fun, communicates with all levels of employees, informs the entire company on virtually all company matters including financial performance, has high personal standards, sets high company standards, isn't quirky, and is unlikely to be characterized as either emotional or bureaucratic or boring.

What Does Corporate Culture Have to Do with It?



You get the picture. These are people like you, but some have special leadership abilities and some have brilliant business sense in a particular area. They all share a common passion for excellence in serving the customer and non-customer as well. They refuse to be anything but the best, and they are adamant employees be provided the environment and circumstances where they can perform to the best of their personal capacity; the business environment, along with everything else in the pursuit of WCCS, provides meaning in their lives.

2

Companies must possess a human resources element that knows what kind of people to hire, what character traits support a WCCS culture, how to train employees, how to grow and develop personnel, how to maintain a fresh environment and, above all, how to balance work and life in the business environment. They also thrive on the segment of the company vision that states, professes, and promotes "employees' time at work being meaningful in every way possible."

3

The employees take the mission of attaining world-class customer service seriously. They hold themselves and their co-workers accountable. They have the spirit to "do whatever it takes to take care of the customer." Management empowers them to do just that, and with great pride, that's exactly what they do, and do it better than anyone else in the world in their business. They know it, the customers know it, and their competitors know it.

What Does Corporate Culture Have to Do with It?

4

The work environment can be described in one word - "sincere." The walls are more likely to display department performance charts revolving around customer satisfaction measurements than prefabricated, allegedly morale boosting, boring, insincere posters about teamwork, challenges, rewards, workplace safety, or absenteeism. The environment is healthy and fresh, not stolid, boring, conservative, and afraid.

5

There is an open door policy, but more importantly an open mind policy. Anyone can walk into any office with the courtesy of an appointment, formal or informal. The chain of command is respected, but not revered. Everyone knows the frontline is the nerve center twenty-four hours a day, everyday. Everyone knows the corporate office is the nerve center for corporate strategy. The two are not confused.



6

Anyone can utilize an open mind at any time to think of a better way, to point out a flaw, to enlighten a co-worker, to listen to a customer or non-customer, or to solve a customer problem. The company knows that WCCS is not a stopping point; it is not a place to rest on laurels. It is a constantly evolving level of achievements. WCCS is continual change, an infinitely fluid platform to practice the highest standards of customer service you desire, your customers desire and that we presume, are affordable. This level of customer service is full of innovation, both technical and non-technical. Innovation takes the form of, not only R&D, but of "individual innovation" in taking care of and responding to customers and customers' desires, problems, and situations.

7

The company has "discovered" the side effects of happiness in the corporate world. It knows the value of a group of happy people - happy people can make other people, i.e., customers, happy.



Comments



**What Does Corporate Culture
Have to Do with It?**



Chapter Four

How do you culture the culture?



How do you culture the culture?



How does
the corporate
culture get
there?

When you stretch for WCCS and the culture that goes with it, you start with a very comprehensive, detailed plan. You define the WCCS standards you want to attain. You design a path to get there. The work touches nearly every single employee in some way. You eagerly seek input from frontline staff. You include them in the planning along with every other department. You manage the process and manage the outcome, but you get everyone to contribute to your game plan on the way. You know where you ultimately want to go, so you guide the process in that direction.

You create task forces to tackle specific, time-bound projects like:

- 1 Redefining your company vision and mission.
- 2 Researching standards and best practices to be adopted and the timetable to do so.
- 3 Examining existing policies to ascertain their worth and applicability to add value given where you are headed.
- 4 Obtaining customer feedback to give direction to the future.
- 5 Reinventing your corporate culture so it too is world-class.



Search

6 Establishing character benchmarks for personnel.

7 Upgrading training programs.

8 Inviting outside motivational speakers to shape perceptions of personal achievement.

9 Practically eliminating office politics by making the workplace transparent.

10 Adding the words "customer service" to every job title and clearly defining how each job position supports WCCS.

11 Turning the hierarchy upside down to put customer service personnel in the most important spots.

12 Declaring war against and rooting out bureaucracy.

13 Examining the flow of every single piece of "form paper" in the organization to make sure it is necessary and/or to give it the shortest path from its origin to its end.

14 Exploring every conceivable value-added dimension to products and services you can offer (assuring this process is ongoing).



Email

15 Adding the role of "intelligence agent" to all customer contact personnel (they are always on the lookout for valuable customer feedback).

16 Fully utilizing your data base capacities.

17 Launching a WCCS newsletter.

18 Keeping the environment fresh.

19 Developing programs to retain employees.

20 Creating and maintaining a meaningful work environment.

21 Examining where and why you form beneficial partnerships with other agencies and businesses.

22 Using technology to simplify the lives of your customers and to deliver the "human touch."



These are just some of the activities that an organization hell-bent on attaining WCCS undertakes. When these projects are well-defined and ready to go, they are packaged with a very impressive kick-off campaign, short-term and long-term goals, important benchmarks and milestones, and celebrations. The journey begins.

A blue silhouette of a woman with long, curly hair, standing and gesturing with her right hand. She is wearing a long-sleeved top and pants.

How do you culture the culture?

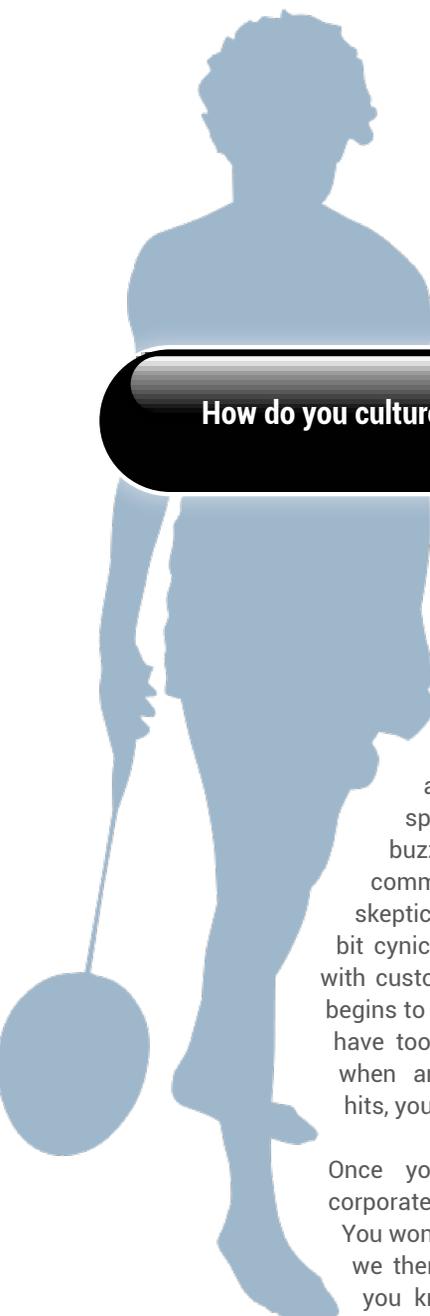
A large, light blue silhouette of a person sitting on a block, leaning forward with their hand to their forehead in a thinking pose. The silhouette is positioned on the left side of the page, behind the text.

How do you culture the culture?

Every category in the preceding paragraph, and then some, is assigned to a specific task force with a fixed schedule and purpose. The group is gathered, the agenda laid out, the purpose defined, the responsibilities assigned, the resources allocated and the work begins. All through the organization, the master plan to recast the organization begins, and the culture begins its transformation.

Once the journey has begun, the organization begins to breathe new life. A new vibe is created that begins to permeate the workplace.

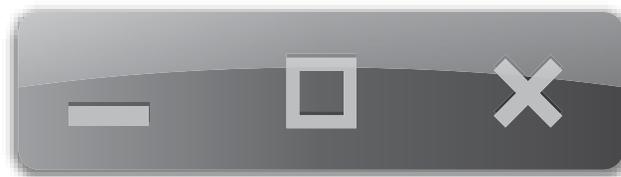
A new attitude begins to form. If planned well and with adequate resources, a passion begins to grow, the drive to attain WCCS. Help up by a strong commitment and sincere leadership, the culture of the organization begins to transform. Stories of heroic customer service feats begin to fill the halls. Employees on the frontlines begin to take the WCCS challenge personally. Other departments do the same and begin to retell the stories they hear of heroic customer service deeds.



How do you culture the culture?

Complimentary letters, cards, phone calls, and emails from customers begin to flow. After a year or two, there is a predictable steady stream. Often specific individuals are named and complimented, and specific acts are retold. A buzz begins to grow in the community, slowly at first, skeptical at first, perhaps even a bit cynical, but it begins. Goodwill with customers and non-customers begins to pile up (and you can never have too much, because one day, when an unplanned catastrophe hits, you'll use a lot of it up).

Once you have reached WCCS corporate culture, you will know it. You won't need to ask anyone, "Are we there yet?" The world will let you know. Your customers will



let you know. Your competition will let you know. You will receive accolades from your industry press. You will receive praise in the local media. You will receive requests from other customer service organizations wanting to know how and why your customer service is so good.

WCCS and the culture that breeds it are in a league all of their own. You can't just buy the latest telephone system, database management tools, or distribute the latest self-help books, the latest manuals on customer service, or the tome of the latest business guru, or customer service master du jour, and expect to have much of an impact. You may improve your ability to imitate customer service excellence, but eventually these tools don't carry the day. You've missed the mark, by a long shot. You may find yourself going backwards even though you have the best tools in the business. What you need to realize is that the best tools in the business, any business, are your people, your employees. The next best tools are your customers. Your customer contact employees and your customers can tell you almost everything you will ever need to know about your business, if you know how to use these two "tools."

This is what the world of WCCS corporate culture is all about. The workplace means something. The job means something. The customer means something. It's not just a job. You won't be just a company. You will be rescued from your deathbed and resuscitated with a new form of working environment, one which embraces business and life, not one that attempts, through ignorance, to keep them apart.

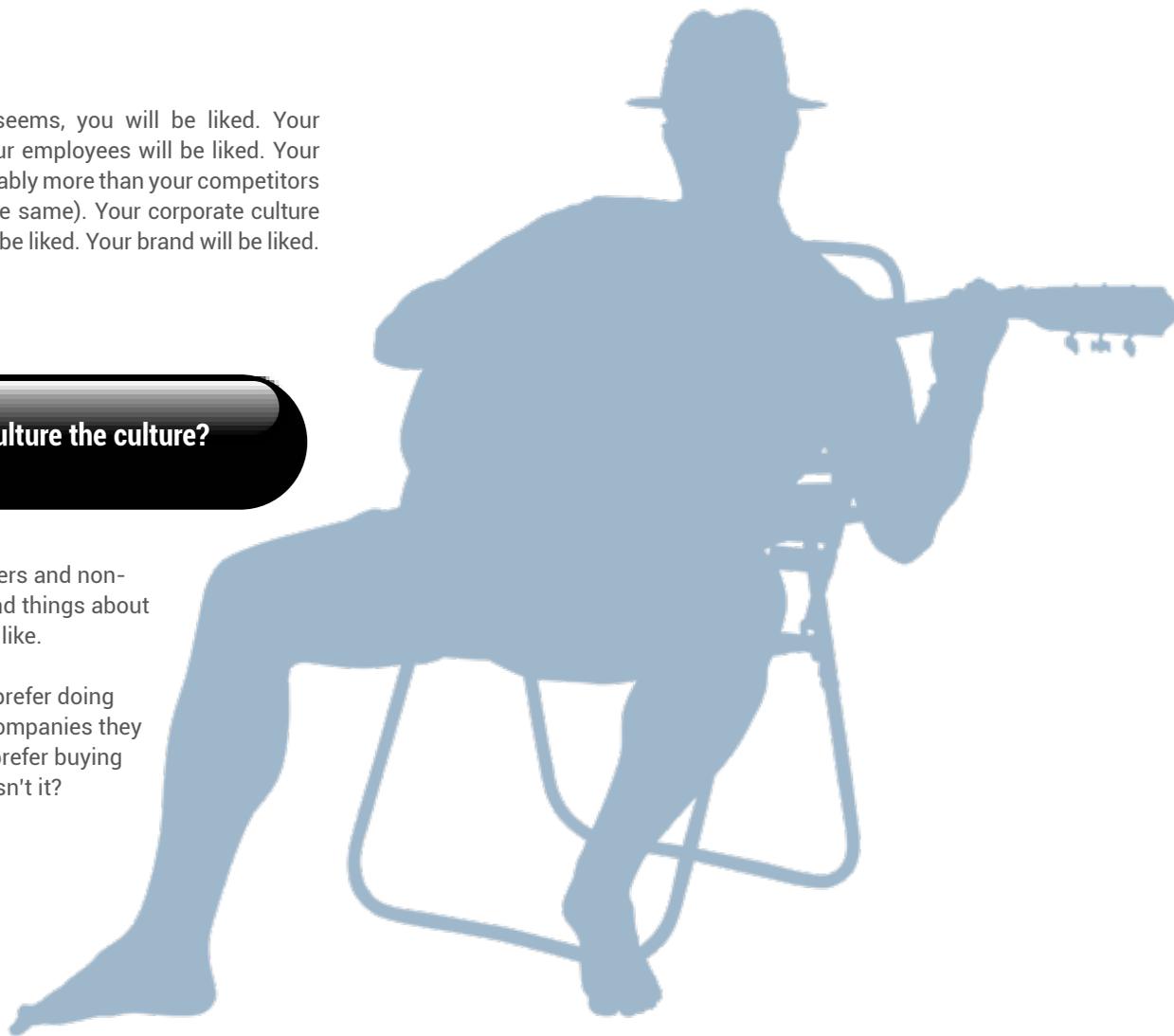


As a result, simple as it seems, you will be liked. Your customers will be liked. Your employees will be liked. Your product(s) will be liked, probably more than your competitors (even if they are virtually the same). Your corporate culture will be liked. Your image will be liked. Your brand will be liked.

How do you culture the culture?

People (employees, customers and non-customers) try not to say bad things about people and companies they like.

Simple as it seems, people prefer doing business with people and companies they like, and, of course, people prefer buying products they like. Simple, isn't it?



Chapter Five



Empowerment: When the Boss Isn't the Boss!



**Empowerment: When the Boss
Isn't the Boss!**

Empowerment can and will make your life a lot easier. It can also make or break your quest for WCCS.

Empowerment, in a nutshell, is about an employee realizing, "They trust me. They really trust me to be the company." That's empowerment. That's giving the frontline staff not only the trust to "be the company," but the authority, responsibility, resources, and information to "be the company." Given the legalities of the business world today, you must get it right.

In the eyes of the customer, which is a perspective every WCCS manager and employee understands, the customer sees the employee, every employee, as "the company." Why in the world wouldn't management realize this is a wonderful opportunity staring them in the face and say, "Gee, if the customer thinks every employee is the company, why don't we?" A WCCS company sees this in a minute and takes it to the full realization; the employee, if empowered to "be the company," can, ninety-nine times out of one hundred, give the customer exactly what he or she wants, when the customer wants it - that's instant satisfaction.

An enlightened management team grasps the power of and behind this equation and empowers frontline staff, indeed, all customer contact staff with the ability to satisfy the customer the first time the customer calls or visits.

Of course, in complicated situations, this may require more than one person getting involved and may take a day or two, but the most important thing has occurred - the customer has been

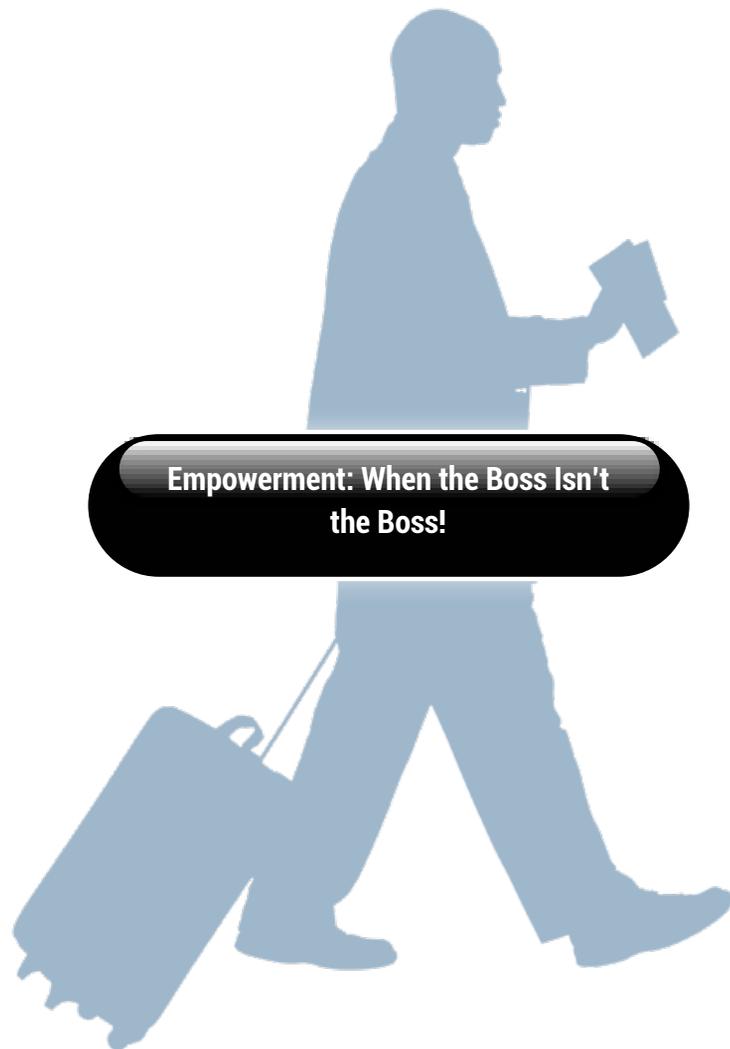




“taken care of,” i.e., a warm body acting as “the company” has taken the customer’s problem personally and is working on solving the problem personally. The key here is sincerity and performance. This is a golden opportunity to deliver WCCS. Because in the WCCS culture, the employee takes care of the problem before the customer expects the problem solved, and the employee has interacted with the customer well enough to gain the customer’s trust, and in the end, the customer’s respect translating into trust and respect for, and perhaps loyalty to, the company/the brand.

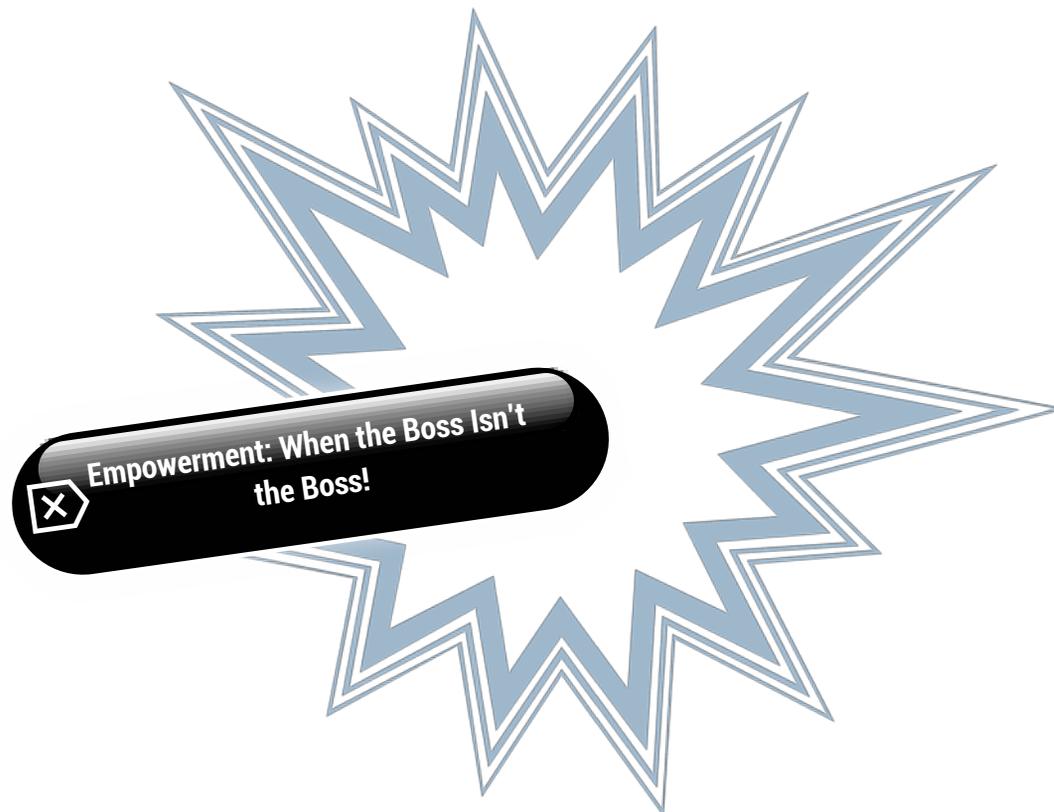
The WCCS empowered employee will rarely abuse his or her power. In fact, employees are typically more restrictive than management when dealing with pleasing a customer by giving a credit or products. The employees make far less money than management. They know the value of a twenty-dollar bill more than a manager or supervisor making twice their salary. Typically, so does a customer who likely has a family to feed and/or bills to pay. Let the customer contact employee do what they do best, which is take care of the customer. Just get the right kind of people in place from the beginning. If that isn’t possible, nurture the qualities you want in the people you have until they can and want to deliver what is needed.

A good WCCS employee is savvy enough to know how to use their empowerment. WCCS employees go through a sophisticated and proven orientation program created by a WCCS savvy HR; through personal development administered by the WCCS savvy training department, and best of all, through personal tutoring, on the job, by your best WCCS customer contact personnel for at least a month.



**Empowerment: When the Boss Isn't
the Boss!**

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Most good employees are also good people who just want "somebody, preferably their boss" to say, "I trust you. I sense you are smart, savvy, and won't abuse your responsibility. This company empowers you."





The best kinds of WCCS employees are the best balanced. They are honest, sincere, have the ability to be very dedicated and, above all, have more than their fair share of common sense. These employees have more often than not, known how to “characterize” people and situations all their lives. They are observers of others and always have been. They know when someone is sincere or not. They can tell by the tone of a voice whether it is deceitful or not. They know when to offer assistance, to help, and how far to go. They also know when to say no (typically better than any manager). They are the best customer service personnel in the world. They either have enough life experiences or enough common sense to know what kind of people they have on the other end of the telephone, or across the counter, or on the street, or in the corner store, or anywhere else, i.e., they have a sense and feel for the customer.

**Beautiful Execution with Perfect Knowledge
- incredibly powerful!**

You can teach employees every skill in the book, all the courtesy necessary, all the policies you think you need to manage your assets and your activities, and you can make them as polished as you need, but it is common sense that will bring you your greatest results in empowering employees. You will be well advised to firstly, hire people with the most common sense and/or second, find the best, good, hard-working people you can and train them. Then empow-



er them to deal directly with your customers. Let them solve customer problems when customers want their problems solved, the first time they call, not a week later with a form letter or email, which, more often than not, from the customer's perspective, is an act of insincerity.

Empower good employees to “be the company.” In the customers' eyes, these frontline employees are the company and always will be. Develop a good plan to put WCCS in place, empower your customer contact personnel and you are on your way to responding to customers in real-time.

Then you will answer your own question of “When am I the boss and when aren't I the boss?” In the high-tech world of today, where technology is sometimes blindly pushed to the forefront of customer service solutions prematurely, you will more fully appreciate the meaning of the phrase “fully scalable human machine.”

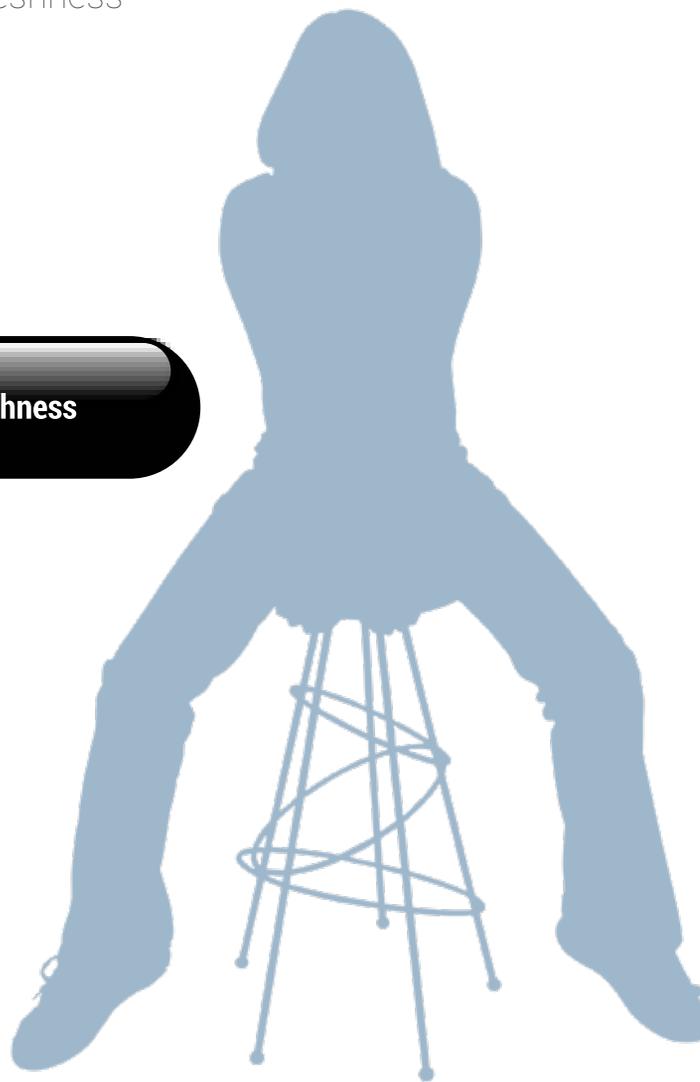


Chapter Six

The Freshness of Freshness

The Freshness of Freshness

There is no need to speak of the benefits of fresh food. There is no need to point out how one's attention automatically and naturally peaks with a whiff of fresh air. But what happened to the work environment? Why doesn't the work environment get the "fresh" treatment? Why are so many work environments stale?



When we examine how much time an employee, management or staff, spends in his or her working environment the numbers are staggering. For simplicity, let's say you start working at the age of 25 and retire at the age of 60 and you live until you are 85. That's a 35 year "work life." That 35 year work life equals 55% of your adult life (assuming your adult life begins at the age of 21). A working life of 35 years means an average of 55 % of your entire adult waking life is spent in a work environment. Think what that was like two hundred years ago, one hundred years ago, fifty years ago, ten years ago, and now. An incredibly small number of businesses have figured this one out, but here comes life again.

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**Those
businesses that
have figured it
out have another
competitive
advantage.
They have an
environment
that is fresh, not
stale.**





The Freshness of Freshness

A fresh environment is far more conducive to a pleasant working environment. It is less stressful. It is more comfortable. It nurtures creativity and innovation.

It compliments WCCS in every respect. A fresh environment doesn't take people for granted. A fresh environment, in a sense, is a platform for development and sustained excellence.





A fresh environment is simply that - fresh. What that means is it doesn't grow stale. This doesn't mean the walls are repainted every two weeks, or the carpet is changed every two months, or new art work is added to the hallways every six weeks, or that fresh flowers are put on every desk daily. Keeping an environment fresh is an art, and it should be somebody's fulltime or part-time job, a written job description with the responsibility to impact employee morale in a positive way, spawn creativity, and attentiveness to the tasks at hand by keeping the environment from getting stale. That somebody must understand the subtleties involved. Keeping the work environment fresh to the highest degree possible means consistently paying attention to the little things, as it is the little things that are manageable. A fresh environment is as much about fresh attitudes as it is about a fresh physical environment.

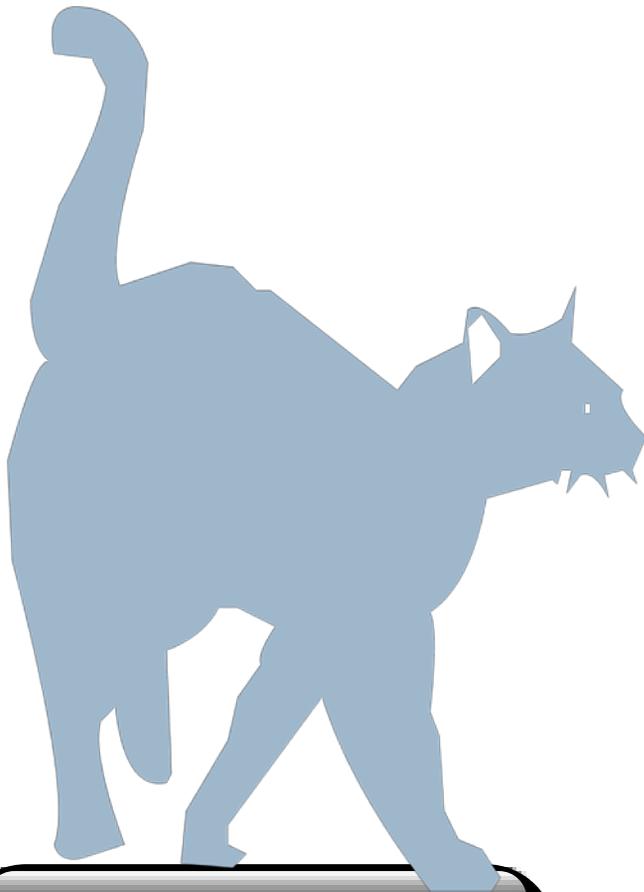
Of course flowers are a nice touch, but they are not always appropriate, but when and where appropriate, adding fresh flowers to the environment is a nice touch, a far nicer touch than rubber, fabric or plastic imitation leaves, plants, flowers and bushes that collect dust and repel freshness. Sure fake plants are easy to maintain and can be tastefully applied, but they become fillers. No one will ever turn their attention to them, in a momentary escape, the way they would to fresh flowers or flowering plants.

Why not an interior or exterior waterfall, in a highly visible location? It's great for settling the spirit. What about the olfactory lobe? Pleasant odors, again appropriately applied, add a touch of freshness to the environment.



The Freshness of Freshness

While corporate culture-oriented posters may be appealing to lazy HR directors, ban them for life. They are boilerplates of boredom. Your employees read when they go up, once, and then they are mentally abandoned. Why? Because what the employee sees is, "Management is too lazy to put in some real thought or creativity." That translates into, "Management doesn't care enough about us or the environment to do something a little more original," i.e., fresh.



The Freshness of Freshness



What about the worn carpet, the dusty curtains, the filthy computer keyboards, the dirt behind the vending machines in the cafeteria? Those are areas that translate into letting the environment slip, maybe not a lot, but enough to reflect a lack of attention to detail. When you set out to keep the environment fresh and tell people what you are up to and why, you can never slip. If freshness of body, mind, spirit, and environment is part of your culture, it deserves the same kind of attention from “management” that anyone with common sense would give it.

Again, common sense and intent rules the day. If a credible effort is made to keep the environment, the minds, bodies and spirits fresh, employees will appreciate the effort as long as it is sincere. Moreover, if a corporate “cheerleader, morale booster, fresh environment master,” is a solid performer in your organization, he or she will make a distinct difference over the long haul. Regardless of the fact at times efforts on freshness may be over-done, or such efforts won’t appeal to everyone, or that not everyone is going to be into “freshness” every day, it is genuine and credible effort that will, at the end of the day, draw positive vibes and healthy attention, which is fresh in itself.

The “new age” or “digital age” work environments are a perfect testaments to attempts to build, create, or maintain a fresh environment that is conducive to innovation, alertness, long hours, and comfort. Bringing pets to the office is a bit of a stretch, but it’s the effort to open up the environment that counts. It’s management working with staff to create a less uptight environment, one that adds freshness and credibility to the team approach and to the building. While

many of these “new age” practices may work in a small environment, they wreak havoc in most customer service working environments.

Many good suggestions on how to keep attitudes and the environment fresh will originate with staff, and so will many horrible ones. Use every good one that comes up, chuckle at the absurd ones along with everyone else, but “save the face” of those who volunteered them. At a minimum, tactfully explain why they may be a bit of a stretch. Among other things, repeated attention to sensitivity will convince employees that you really are sincere.



The Freshness of Freshness





At the end of the day, people are creatures of habit. A work environment is all about habits, work habits. No matter how you cut it the majority of jobs involve a high degree of repetition. It's unavoidable. Everyone knows it. What employees appreciate is that fellow employees and management alike all acknowledge and appreciate the fact that most employees have repetition in their job. It doesn't take much to freshen up anyone's attention or the workplace. At the end of the day, again, it is the human touch that ends up doing the job. It will always work with customers and it will always work with employees. Is there any other touch?

Employees recognize the cost of renovating. They know offices can't be repainted monthly. They aren't dumb. They know the costs in their own lives. Explain to them what you want to do, and they will appreciate it. Moreover, they will be thrilled to know what you want and why you want it. That alone builds the kind of relationship with employees you need to get to WCCS and stay there.

It's a balancing act, a balance of what's reasonable. It should be explained to employees why the company values the action of maintaining a fresh environment. A fresh environment makes perfect sense. Life gives us four seasons. Not only that, it gives us an environment that is never the same on any given day. People instinctively rearrange their furniture, repaint their homes, upgrade their computers, redo their wallpaper, and most of us change clothes everyday. Keeping an environment where we spend more time than we do at home fresh is not a bad idea, and it doesn't need to cost much. A little creativity goes a long way, and keeping a "fresh attitude" is more than half the battle.

Chapter Seven

Character and the Cosmos



*Human capital. Intellectual stock. Human resource.
Employee base.*

Character and the Cosmos

Call them what you want, but try to get the right ones the first time around. Define the character traits you want hanging around your multimillion-dollar assets, your gazillion-dollar computers, your “deep” software, your vehicles and most of all, your customers. Hire the ones with the character traits you must have to construct the culture you need to attain WCCS. Alternatively, if hiring is not the answer, begin to nurture the desirable traits in your existing employees, a task that may be difficult for not only some employees, but for many large, overly organized corporations, or where such “social challenges” are prohibitive.

The desirable character traits are the ones we already know. They are the traits every good mother and father attempts to instill in their children, but usually the ones that life actually ends up installing. The traits are the same worldwide: honesty, fairness, understanding, truthfulness, dignity, integrity, sense of humor, open mind, etc. You know what they are. But special emphasis goes to common sense. It is the one trait that consistently pays the biggest dividends in reaching and maintaining WCCS, particularly when dealing with a wide variety of customers. Common sense combined with a passion for excellence are the two character traits you want in your employees.

Human resources goes under the microscope in this exercise, and as well they should. If you have a human resources component that has an over abundance of self-importance, you are in trouble.



If your human resources personnel talk in buzzwords, you are in trouble. If your human resources directors are cynical and jaded, you are in trouble. The best human resources personnel are masters of many things, but most importantly, of reading people and developing them.

Paying close attention to the hiring and development of your customer contact personnel is a critical issue. It ranks right up there with instilling a passion for excellence. In the effort to create a cohesive customer contact group, you will likely discover some basic personality types.



The ones you want:

"The Natural"

This person is a natural people person, and customer service is a people business. This person can walk and talk with any customer about any problem and make them feel comfortable and taken care of immediately.



"The Common (Sense) Man or Woman"

This person is the best of all worlds, cool-headed and tough to fool. He/she knows which way the wind is blowing from and how hard. Steady as a rock, reliable, hard-working and totally balanced in customer assessments.

**"The Mother Hen"
(sometimes Father Hen as well)**

This person is a natural caretaker and often assumes a "den mother" role with other employees, particularly if the others are younger. They make sure everyone has a piece of birthday cake at the office birthday parties.

"The High-Tech Lover"

This person, most frequently male, is great to have because he is constantly following the latest in high-tech developments, showing off the company's latest gadget, or bragging about the next generation of something the company or industry is up to. Keeps other employees informed.

"The Happy One"

This person is simply happy by nature. Smiles "all the time" even when on the telephone talking to customers. Her sincere ebullient nature infects the office. She only gets emotional on the upside, not the downside. Inside, she has a challenge to make others smile and not take life too seriously.

"The Fair Princess"

This person is constantly on the look out for unfairness with customers. She sticks up for the right thing to do, always, but especially with customers. She wants to make sure her beloved customers get their due and she won't let anyone treat a customer (or anyone else) unfairly if she can help it. She is the ultimate customer advocate.

"The Judge"

This is the male version of The Fair Princess. He is thoughtful, sometimes acting older than his years. He wants to be perceived as the ultimate judge on tricky customer issues and takes pride in offering the same kind of sage advice the CEO would. He will be with you for life.

"The Mountain Climber"

This person is the overachiever, but in a good way. He/she is constantly trying to excel in personal statistics. The good thing is that the personal drive to succeed can be transposed into a "we can succeed" mode.

"The Curious One"

This person is a constant learner. Has a little self-doubt, but not too much. Only enough to create a constant flow of correct questions to gain a constant flow of correct answers which are reassuring to his/her position. However, he/she also questions numerous company practices and in general, is a good addition to customer service. Often they carefully challenge the status quo.

"The Charmer"

This person is outgoing and loves to talk. He/she is always "on stage" and loves it. This person is engaging to all they come in contact with. This is the person the customer will always remember and often come back to see.



"The Quiet One"

This person is exactly that, quiet. But he or she is simply in life's stealth mode. They operate "under the radar," but efficiently and thoroughly. Their only drawback is they typically prefer to communicate in writing or on the phone rather than in person.



You may be lucky enough to have twenty "Naturals and/or Common Sense Man/Woman" in your customer service division, your hotel, your restaurant or your golf course. They instinctively know what to do and what to say in virtually every situation. They typically love what they do and take great pride in serving customers and in resolving customer issues quickly and efficiently. They also know instinctively when a customer is less than honest. The Naturals, the Charmers and The Common (Sense) Man/Woman are the best. Find all of them you possibly can.





The ones you don't want:

The "Confrontationist"

The person who is not mature enough to know when to let the customer talk, and more importantly, win.

The "Know-It-All"

The person who thinks he or she always has the perfect answer, and worse, knows every company policy and applies them without fail and without compromise, or the person who tries to tell the customer what to order.

The "Too Eager Beaver"

The person who is too quick to agree with you, let alone an irate customer demanding more than is fair.

The "Scaredy Cat"

The person too timid to trust their own judgment, let alone to correct a customer or when appropriate, disagree with a customer.

The "Busybody"

The person on caffeine from morning until night who can't keep his/her nose, comments, opinions, or observations out of fellow employees' or talkative customers' faces.

The "Sheriff"

Similar to the Confrontationist except this person always needs get in the last word in every conversation, and worse, arrest the customer, i.e., put them in their place.

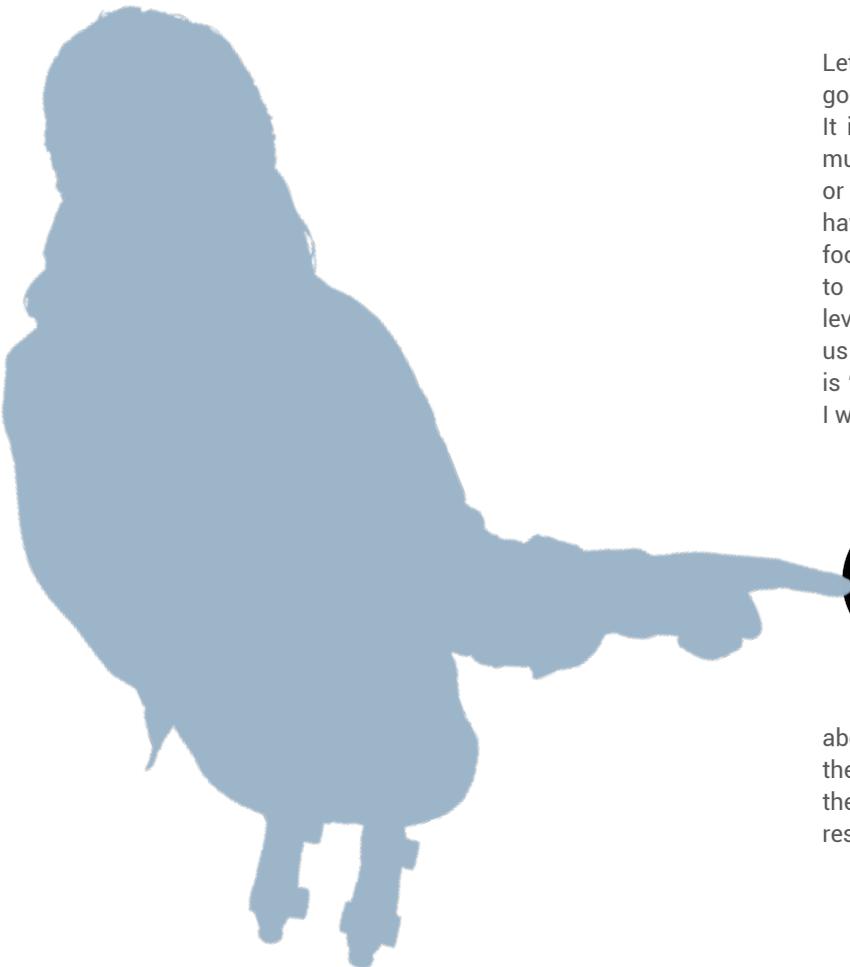
There is no need to spend a great deal of time on this issue. The issue of employee character is driven by corporate character and corporate culture. History books are full of stories where true leadership, applied effectively, has turned around any person or any group of persons, including corporations. It helps to start your mission for WCCS with as many collective characters of a good nature as possible. It makes your foundation that much stronger, but all of this is a two-way street, as the next chapter indicates.

Chapter Eight

What's in It for Me?



Let's not kid ourselves, we live in a material world where goods and services are traded for some kind of currency. It is highly unlikely many people were born to work for a multinational company, or to drive a taxi, or sell computers, or repair automobiles, or work on a production line. We all have this human form, this human heart, our basic needs for food, clothing and shelter, and an individual set of desires to top it off. We work, the majority of us, to survive at the level our individual make-up and priority of choices drives us to. When we consider a job, the most natural response is "What's in it for me? What will I get out of it? Why would I want to be there? Who are these guys? What have I heard



What's in It for Me?

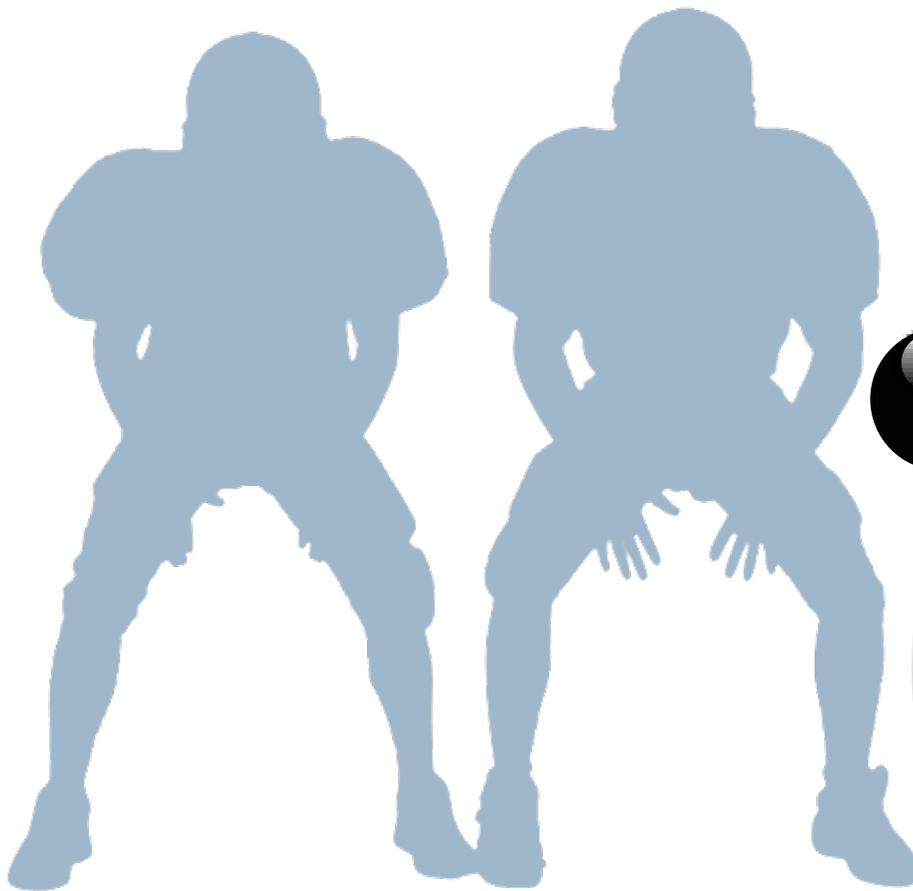
about them?" (These statements are not dissimilar from the most basic customer expectation either when making their purchase decision, or which hotel to stay in, or which restaurant to dine).



Since we all know the punch line for the question “What’s in it for me?” we need never forget why we work. Money, right? Wrong. Well, half wrong. But that’s not to say it didn’t “start” that way. Think back to your very first job, weren’t you concerned with that question? Name a business situation where it doesn’t apply, at the top or the bottom. Some organizations never take employee relationships past this point. Some do not even know how to get beyond this point, and that’s a shame. That puts them out of the basic, good customer service race, let alone the WCCS race. They draw the classic line between “the organization” and the employees, never mind nurturing something like real customer service. If you know someone in this situation, do them a favor, advise them to quit and go find a company that knows where the world is headed.

An enlightened service corporation knows the answer to the question “What’s in it for me.” They also know the answer to probably every other question an employee (management included) will come up with. This corporation knows how to get and keep everyone on the same side, because in truth, in the world of world-class customer service, there is only one side. In this organization, the management is little different from the rest of the staff. They sincerely want every employee to succeed because they know their own chances of success are enhanced when every employee in the company is on the same page. They wouldn’t hold a single regret if every employee made a comfortable living, had a big house, drove a nice car, put their kids in the best schools, and was well on their way to financial security. Why? Because if the employees are that successful, so is the management, even more so. An enlightened manager means it when he or she says, “I want you to be as successful as you can be.”





What's in It for Me?

Apply this situation to a sports team. The coach wants each player to be wildly successful, but without an attitude. That's where the two-way street comes in. Everyone needs to do their part.



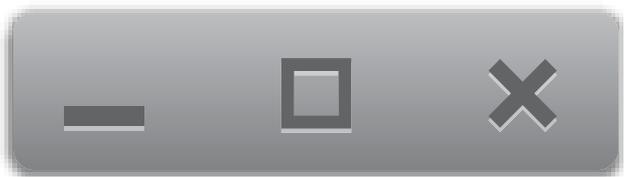
When you get hired, everyone knows you want to start out with as high a salary as possible, but you need to realize some things about the business as well. First and foremost, it doesn't owe you a thing. Whatever you receive from your first day on will be and should be earned. Don't get an attitude because an enlightened company told you your success is important to them. Consider it an honor someone "automatically" supports you 100% at face value. You will have to do your part, and the first part is getting on the same side as everyone else. If you ever begin to create two sides, "us and them" or "you and them," it's time to think about leaving, for the good of both parties. This goes either way, for management or staff; divisiveness is a killer, first with attitude then with performance. It is a virus.

What's in It for Me?

Everyone has a position on the "What's in it for me?" equation. The best organizations take the guesswork away and get the employees on their side. But what about the second part of the answer? What about that something that is about meaning and not money?



But how do you get there? How do you add meaning to the "What's in it for me?" question? Because it really isn't all about money. It's about both; money and fulfillment, or meaning, or value, or whatever name you want to put on it.



Let's go back for a moment and examine the initial steps of getting to the core of this most important question. Imagine you are the CEO and you just realized the truth; that the entire business world is onto this "World-Class Customer Service thing" and you need to get there, wherever "there" is. You scramble and put together a task force of your most trusted managers, huddle in conference rooms for months and come up with your own plan to reach WCCS status.

You waltz into the cafeteria or the meeting room and are ready to make the pitch for total commitment to world-class customer service to your entire organization. You are pumped, and you are excited to tell the troops how great it is going to be to, after three to five years work, to reach the leading edge in the delivery of world-class customer service. You have worked on your plan for months. You are ready. Your key managers are ready to back you up. They think the plan is brilliant, not to mention a necessity. You and your team have assembled the entire staff to roll out the most important strategic plan in the history of the company, the plan to get everyone on board and to reach WCCS.

You put on your show; your managers play their key roles; everyone who's been involved in the planning delivers a terrific presentation. The whole thing takes nearly two hours. You are so happy and excited you can hardly contain yourself. Now you turn your attention to the reactions of your employees. A hand goes up. With your heart pounding, you acknowledge your employee. You don't remember her name, but thankfully, one of your managers does and thanks "Sarah" for being the first to make a comment.



What's in It for Me?

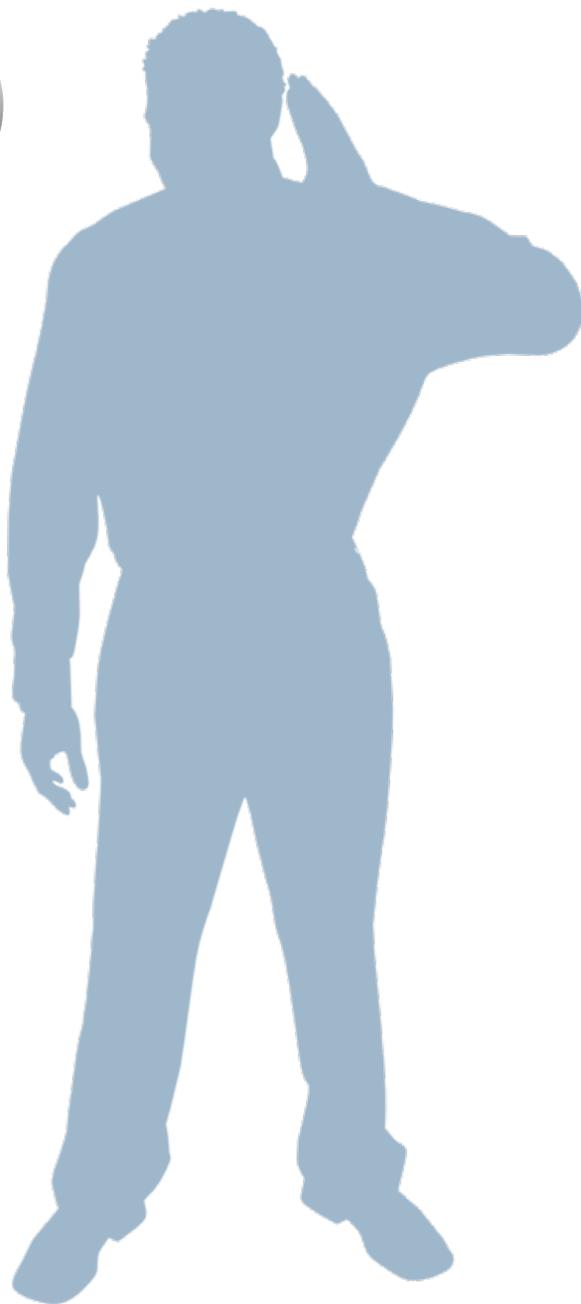
Sarah doesn't even stand. She looks at you and your managers with a confused look. "Your presentation was very good, interesting, and it looks like you put a lot into it." She scans the panel at the head of the room. "But I have to tell you two things: one, what's in it for us? And, two, why didn't you include us in your planning when you started? We know our customers ten times better than you."



What do you do? More importantly what didn't you do? You didn't realize what you were asking, what you were planning, what the nature of business life was, how to position the amount of time spent in the workplace, and how to bring meaning into your employee's lives. Suddenly, you realize you need to dig a lot deeper into your people management bag of tricks, perhaps to the bottom of the bag, to pull this one off. Getting your employees to buy into your plan for three to five years is fine, but you went about it the wrong way. Sarah was dead right when she said you left your staff out of the planning, and more importantly, you didn't address how you would make this big commitment a fulfilling experience for them.



What's in It for Me?



Including your staff in the planning is easy. All you and your managers need to do is to clear your own ego hurdles and go for it. It will be an enjoyable and eye-opening exercise to have your key staff members join in the planning and it will save you untold headaches later when you roll your plan out, because it won't be your plan anymore; it will be everyone's. Remember, one pearl of leadership wisdom is to manage the process and the outcome. You know where you want the plan to go before you even take the first step in planning. If you are a good manager of people, your staff will take the plan exactly where you want it to go, without you "making" them take it there.

What's in It for Me?

Your biggest mistake however was not thinking through Sarah's primary concern, a concern shared by virtually all employees, i.e., "What's in it for me?"

That's where you must prove the value of not wasting your or your employees' work lives, of having a commitment to a goal (world-class customer service, for example) that will add meaning to their lives, particularly their work lives. The bottom line in convincing your staff that this is important is to illustrate with numbers exactly how much time the average employee spends not only at work, but also thinking about work. This can be illustrated very clearly, very graphically, and very persuasively. When you get to the punch line, when you've shown them they spend nearly half of their waking adult hours involved with their job, the conclusion that "it's a lot of time to waste" should be obvious if you've laid the choices out clearly.



Take all the “Sarahs” by the hand and illustrate how much of their life they spend at work, on their way to and from work, and thinking about work. If you’ve done your job, they will realize not only will their work life amount to about 55% of their entire adult working life, but that your plan is about the quality of their own lives as much as it is about world-class customer service. They will realize you are injecting life into the work place, that you are creating something that can be bigger than management, bigger than employees and bigger than customers. When you tell them about your stock options program, based upon the plans success, suddenly the commitment to an upgraded quality of work life takes on dual meaning; in the form of the seeds of an altruistic passion for excellence and the rewards of potential financial security. There is no more powerful combination in the customer service or hospitality industries.

So, when you think about planning your launch into the big leagues of customer service, be sure you know the answers to some pretty important questions your staff will have, but more importantly, be sure you can lead them to a culturally enriched environment, to an better quality working life. You must be able to present the logical conclusion convincingly when it suddenly dawns on them just how much of their life they spend at work. You must bring them to the realization that “My God, if I’m going to spend that much time at work, then work better damn well have some meaning.”



Trust me, WCCS is all about meaning. When you are there, a new level of job fulfillment will have taken root. Done properly, you'll never have to worry about commitment and quality of work life again.

What's in It for Me?

When an employee asks, "What's in it for me?" in whatever direct or indirect manner they choose, they need to hear more than "Your Salary" or "Our Great Benefits." They already know there's a salary. They already know they get vacation and healthcare. What they really want to know is "Is it worth my time and attention to work here? Did they get my attention in a way I'm comfortable with? Are these people sincere? Do I like the people, the vibes, the business, the products, and the environment? Am I willing to be part of this place? Am I getting a meaningful experience for the 10%, 20% or 55% of my adult life I may be spending here?"



Chapter Nine

The Second-bottom Line

For the customer, the equation pops up in a slightly different manner, because the customer is paying for something, something that, in the customer's eyes, must have value and come from a company that must be sincere, particularly if the product or service is meaningful in the eyes of the customer.

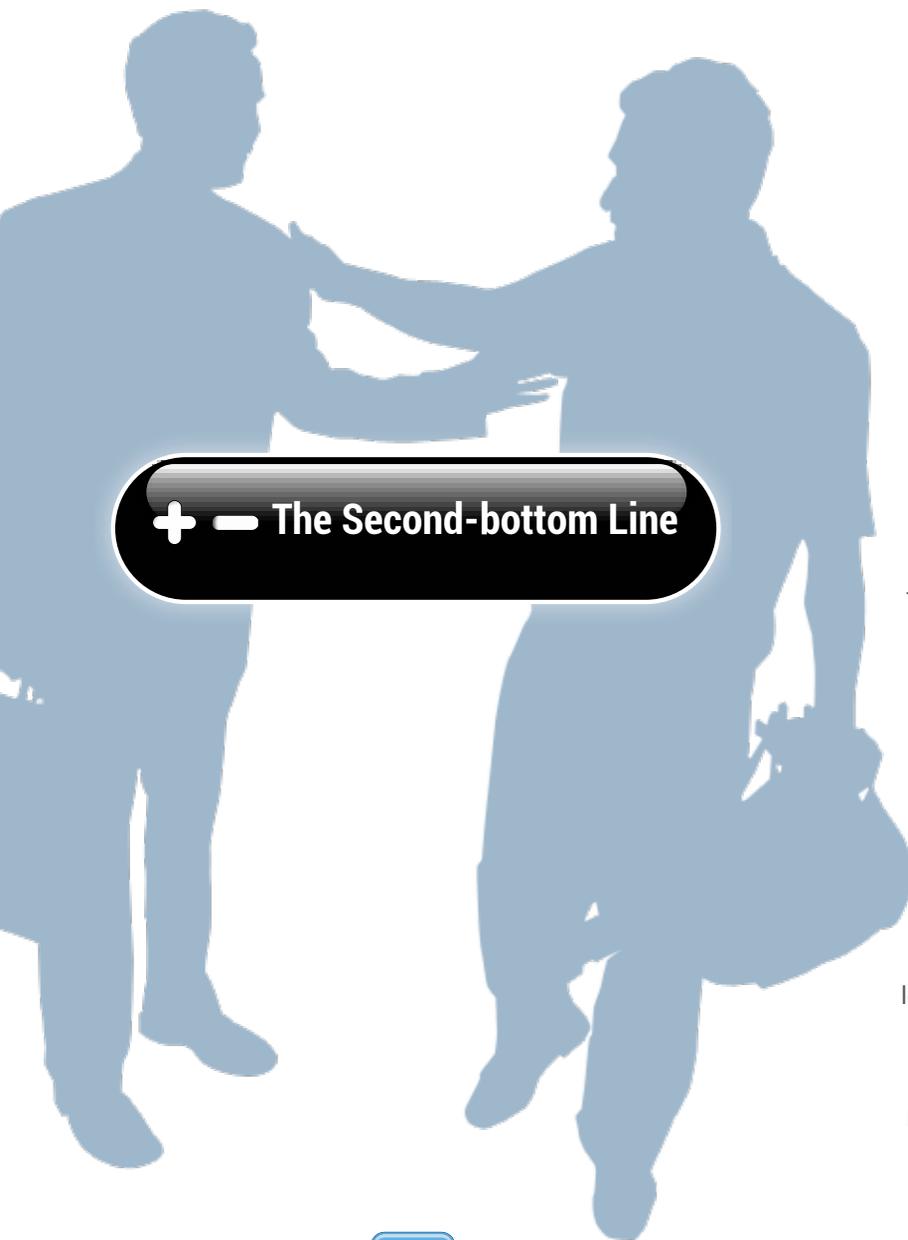
+ — The Second-bottom Line

One thing you can never, ever, ever do is devalue your product or your service. You can never let a corporate culture exist where excuses are given for product performance, employee behavior, management strategy, or the delivery of customer service. Getting employees on your side means they believe in you, your strategy, your vision, your mission, your product, and your customer service. This corporate culture stuff is not a scam, it is not a dream; it is real. If you don't eat, sleep, and drink it, how can you expect your staff to?

At the end of the day, it's about money, meaning and sincerity..

 Don't Like

When customers stop at the "What's in it for me?" question, your employees better be well-prepared to convincingly explain exactly that to the customer, backed up with a long list of attributes and supporting statements that reflect a sincere interest in not only the product(s) and the benefits, but also the company and the customer. Customers are not stupid; they know when an employee is sincere. They know when someone is giving them a line. You'll never get ten feet down the path to WCCS



+ — The Second-bottom Line



unless you get this early step right. It's not hard, but you must answer the question correctly, sincerely, the first time and get your employees and your customers on the same side. In the enlightened company, there is only one side.

When a customer asks, "What's in it for me?" or "Am I getting my money's worth?" the answer better include a lot more than "Our great product." They already know there's a product. What they need to hear is a sincere voice thanking them for asking such a great question. Then they need to hear a sincere and convincing list of features and benefits tailored to their own interests, which hopefully your database will indicate or your WCCS will ferret out in short order.

For the World-Class Customer Service organization of the near future, you will know the answer to this question backwards and forwards, and if you are really good, your employees will feel like "the chosen few" who work for you. That is if you are REALLY good.

For the customers, if you are really good, REALLY good, they will feel like they've got something special, in your product, in your service, in your hotel, in your club house, in your restaurant, and in their relationship with you. They will never let go of you. Somehow, some way, the customer has become sincerely convinced (touched) your company and/ or your product or service, your SOI, means something to them.

But be forewarned, when it comes to the second-bottom line, you must be sincere, because you won't be able to fool your employees or your customers. Meaning can't be faked,



Chapter Ten

Tools: The Intelligent Application of Intelligence.



All the self-help books in all the bookshops in the world are your tools.

All the business courses in all the business schools are your tools.

All the business resources on the World Wide Web are your tools.

All the industry periodicals at your disposal are your tools.

Tools: The Intelligent Application of Intelligence.

All the people in your organization are your tools.

All the equipment your business will ever use are your tools.

All your vendors are your tools.

All the technologies ever invented now or in the future are your tools.

All the customers you have are your tools.

Your "tool box" is quite impressive, isn't it?



Tools: The Intelligent Application of Intelligence.



But we left one out, the most important one, your mind. The first tool to use is your mind, to focus it and to hone its ability to be fixed upon a goal. There is no more efficient tool at your disposal, but be careful, as the famous quote by Paramahansa Yogananda states, "The mind is a cruel master but a beautiful servant." Make it your servant in your quest to, as intelligently as you can, harness all the tools at your disposal to reach WCCS. In doing so, your journey will be the most intelligent path between two points as well as the shortest.

Once you are there, once your tools have facilitated the most intelligent application of the human touch, WCCS will take on a world of its own. You will learn and live in the world you have created. Your toolbox will contain only the tools you need. There will be no wasted effort or time. You won't need to read an entire library of periodicals to tell you what you now know. You won't need LAN, WAN, and integration specialists to tell you how to link your front office with your back office anymore, or your wait staff with the kitchen, or your pro shop and your driving range, or your field maintenance with your engineering management, or your hotel security with the manager's office, or your sales with your inventory, or your marketing with your customer service. You will have done it, the most intelligent way your organization could manage it. Suddenly, YOU are the expert, not "them." All because you single-mindedly stuck to your goal.





Tools: The Intelligent Application of Intelligence.

Not only will you know how all the tools work, you will know the rest of the picture also; how your plans work, how your policies work, how your corporate culture works, how your customer culture works, how your branding works, how your employee development program works, how your employee stock options work, and ironically, what tools won't work. Now you are the master of the WCCS universe.

Now you can see how the goal of reaching the pinnacle of customer service was facilitated by tools, all kinds of tools, all kinds of intelligent tools and all kinds of intelligence. It took intelligence to get your arms around the call center concept you needed for the next twenty years, to realize the marketplace was full of all the intelligence you'd ever need if you could just harness it, that your employees had all the intelligence your organization would ever need to attain world-class customer service if you could only focus it, develop it, put it to use and reward it.

You realize it was important to select the right tools. Sure you made some errors, sure you made some mistakes, but you learned from your mistakes, and became even more savvy.

You realize your tools allowed you to apply the intelligence that every employee could gather, but it took getting practically every employee on the same page to act in concert, to understand what you were up to, to participate in the grand effort, to really gather the intelligence put it to use, and use the tools and technology at their disposal to pull it off.





Tools: The Intelligent Application of Intelligence.

Your employees, particularly customer contact personnel, became intelligent agents, constantly probing, consistently engaging customers, and all the while inputting accurate information on customers and non-customers alike until your database was absolute gold. You could determine the likes and dislikes of any single customer or any group of customers. You could find every mismatch where customers had services their profile indicated would be of little interest to them. You were able to really offer world-class customer service and call those customers, seemingly out of the blue, and rearrange their usage of your products. They were thrilled to be matched with a service or product they would enjoy more, and they told their friends all about it.

You used every tool in your tool box to construct a dream, to build an organization, to hire and train the right kind of people, to develop your plan in conjunction with your staff, to implement enlightened policies, to procure the right technology, to listen to the appropriate consultants, to market the right kind of products in the right kind of way, to fit your products with the customer, to gather customer feedback, to reward your employees, and to use the most intelligent application of intelligence to get where you needed to go.

Now you know how to use your technology to deliver the human touch. You realize your technology must be simple, the simpler the better, in order to deliver the human touch and to make it easy for your customers. Your customers told you a million times to keep it simple. You listened and you did, and you learned that keeping your technology simple was delivering the human touch. Why? Because your customers told you so. Because way back when, from when you began on the road to WCCS, you learned from one of your task forces, how to listen to your employees and your customers. Your customers said,

“Thank you for listening. Now I use your technology. You have made my life easier.”





Tools: The Intelligent Application of Intelligence.

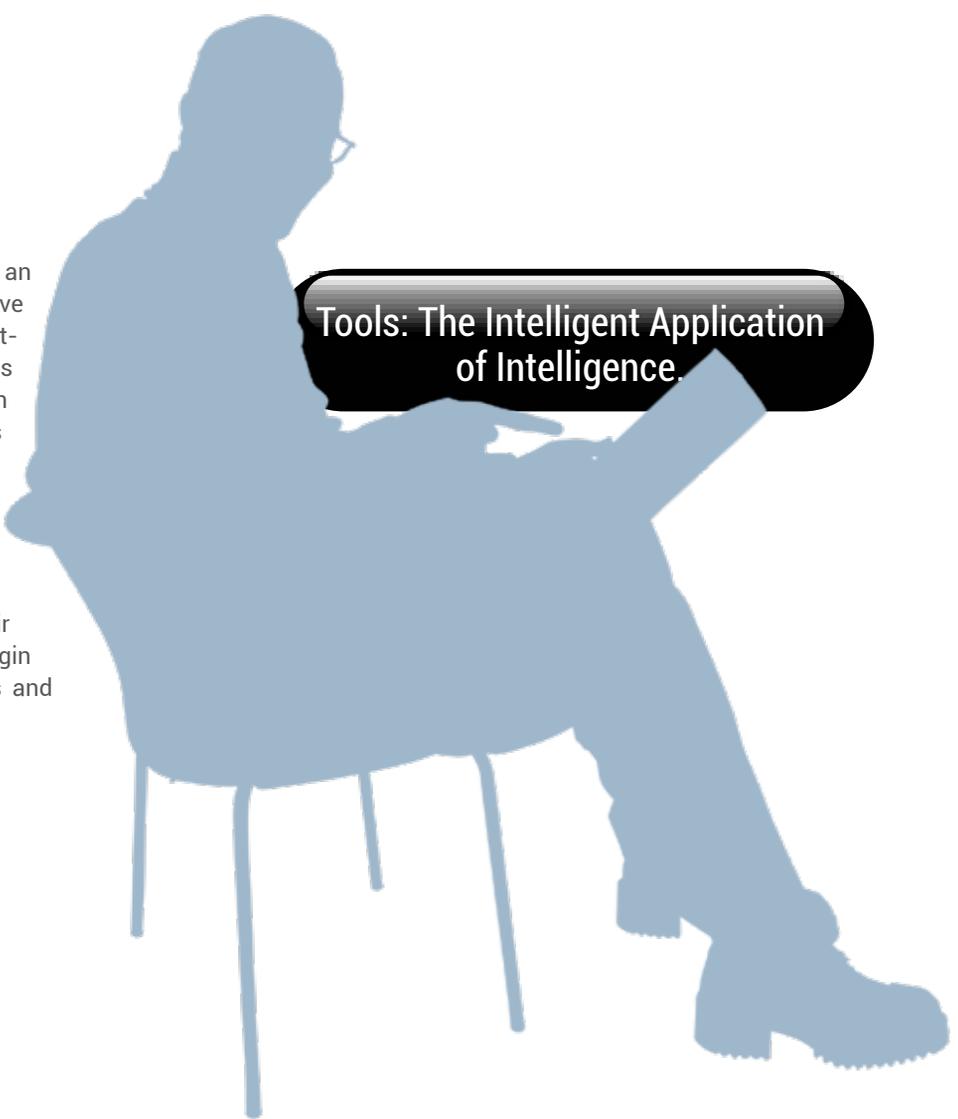
When you reach this point, you will have honed your toolbox to the essentials. Each “tool” has a specific purpose. There is no waste. The energy used to get you there is now focused on one thing, taking care of the customer. The tools are transparent, invisible. It is now all a mix of the life you and your employees have created. The labels are gone. It is now just “The Way”- everybody knows their role. Everybody has access to all the tools needed to deliver. You are on top, and you will stay there.

There is one peculiar “technology tool” you will no doubt quickly become aware of - the “virtual customer contact” tool. This is the mechanism you put in place for the customers who do not want human contact. There is a dichotomy in this age of enlightened customer service. There are those customers who want zero contact with you. Their idea of great customer service is to “do it all through technology” and never talk to you or your customer service personnel, to make a hotel or dinner reservation on their own, on their time, and not be put on hold. There are also some customers who will look upon your constant bragging of practicing world- class customer service as a scam, a sham, or pure public relations. There are some customers who absolutely do not want to be bothered with “dealing with people.”

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For these people, a virtual customer contact tool like an online reservation system is perfect. You don't have to be a large hotel chain or airlines to offer "contact-free" interaction. Even a small restaurant or club has customers who would rather make a reservation online than pick up the phone. These customers couldn't ask for anything more. Leave them alone, let them do their own thing and, over time, you may win them over as fans as well. Just put a nice spin on your "advanced customer friendly, convenient technology" that lets your customer access their account, or make a reservation, and take care of their business on their own terms. Over time, you'll begin to see how popular and economical this feature is and whether to expand it.



**Tools: The Intelligent Application
of Intelligence.**

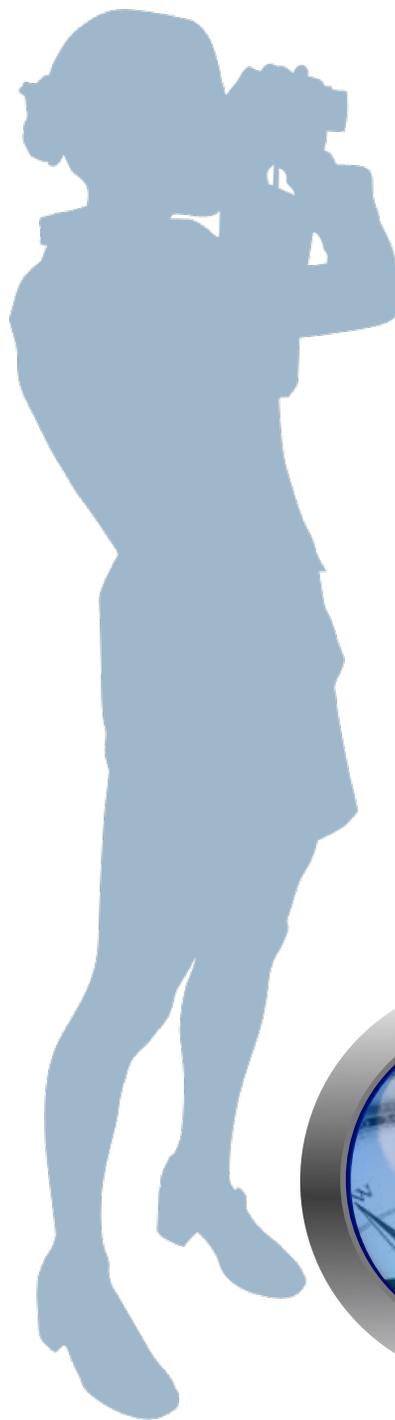
Chapter Eleven

When You Need a Compass...and When You Don't.

When You Need a Compass... and When You Don't

When you get to the leading edge of customer service, you are the compass. Your people are the needle of your compass. They are the nerve endings of your organization. They are your radar, your antennae, and your index finger in the wind. They expect you and your managers to take care of the organization's overall strategy. They expect you to take care of corporate issues, legal issues, and to worry about "el photo grande," the big picture, but they will expect you to let them take care of the customers. In return, they will expect you to take care of them.

When you have reached a sophisticated level of customer service, when you have a database you can trust, when you have integrated virtually every company department to serve the customer, when the customer experience is seamless and solutions are offered as instantly as they possibly can be, when all doubt is erased that you have the best customer service in your industry, then you have everything you need to rest assured that your people are tuned into your customers, and tuned in they must be.



When You Need a Compass... and When You Don't



Comments

The essence of knowing “where to go” in the business of WCCS and staying there is not found in a textbook. There is no map to follow; no business model that guarantees your journey travels along exact and predictable highways and byways. Truth be told, there are more detours than straight lines. As noted before, you can have the best technology in the world and never even get close to practicing world-class customer service. It's what you do with your people that make the difference. It's what you do with your people that give you the direction you need, that creates your compass in this new world.

When you have nurtured a group of sensitive, caring, motivated customer service personnel, and trust them to satisfy customers, you must also trust the information they bring back to you about your customers. That doesn't mean you act on every suggestion, comment, or observation. Truth is you probably couldn't afford to nor would you want to, but your employees will tell you which way the wind is blowing. You'll be saving yourself untold headaches by eliminating any blockades or distance between you, your employees, and your customers.

When you are on the leading edge, you can't possibly remain there using any other scenario. Don't create blockades between your customers, your employees, and you when it comes to customer feedback. Make the effort to keep in touch with your customers yourself. It will keep you honest, your employees honest and, believe it or not, at times, keep your customers honest.





Why? Because it's a people business. You don't sell a single product to a dog. You don't employ chipmunks. You don't hire dolphins. Not a single parrot calls you on the telephone. Not a single elephant visits your website.

At the end of the day, aren't you really in the people business? As long as you have one customer, aren't you in the people business?

You are a person. Your management are people. Your frontline staff are people. Every single customer you have are "people." Doesn't that suggest that people skills are extremely important? It also suggests you should know "people" as well as you can, particularly what they need or want from your business, product, or service. You would be well advised to know yourself as well as you can. You would be well advised to know your employees as best you can, especially your management. You would be even better advised to know your customers.

If you want to know one "generic customer perspective," here's an exercise. Use yourself as the guinea pig. The next time you go to a restaurant, for example, observe yourself. How do you react to the entrance? Is it large enough? Is it inviting? In the winter, is it warm enough? If there are more than six people in the waiting area, is it cramped? How do you react to being greeted? Does the host or hostess strike you as sincere? Does he or she make you feel welcome as a real guest? Does the decor of the room look like someone cares about it or whether it goes unattended? If the restaurant bills itself as romantic, is it? Does the waiter seem sincerely glad to see you, or serve you, or the least bit interested in exploring what you might really enjoy on the menu? When you interact with the manager and staff, do they make you feel like you are the only person in the

restaurant, the only one that matters, the only one they care about at that moment?

If you are observant, the answers to these questions are immediate and very telling. They will tell far more of a story than most customers ever realize. The story can have such a subtle impact that the restaurant may be driving

When You Need a Compass and When You Don't



When You Need a Compass... and When You Don't



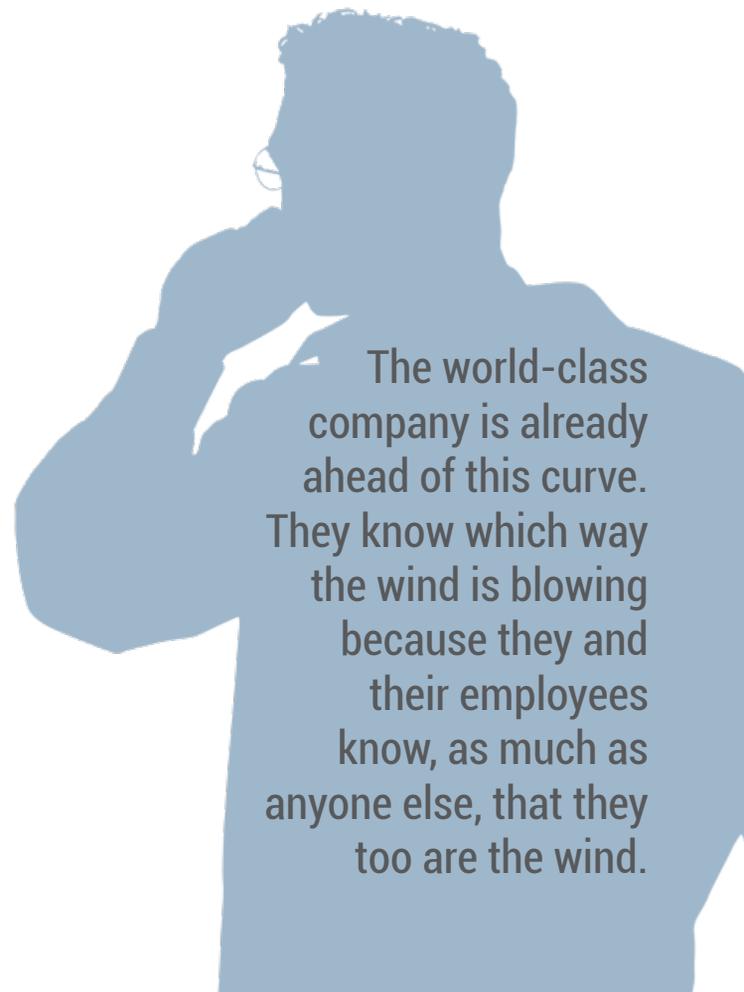
customers away instead of attracting them for repeat visits. The questions reflect the owner, the chef, the hostess, the waiter, the training, the importance of customer service, and perhaps more importantly, the restaurant's collective insight into people. You can use this exercise for every customer service business you patronize.

A good business knows its people - its leadership, its management, its employees, its customers, and its non-customers. It also knows its competitors. A good business knows that no matter what sector they are in, whether they make widgets or sell a service, they are, indirectly and/ or directly impacting the human experience.

For example, a telephone company may think it's in the business of selling talk time and/or leasing bandwidth, or equipment. An "enlightened telephone company" knows it's in the business of impacting the human experience, in this case, by and large, it is supporting relationships. The customers, while using the telephone company's product aren't thinking about the company, and aren't likely thinking about the equipment; they are involved in the nature of the call. As long as a phone company has competitive pricing, competitive products, and is innovative, it is in the game.

The telephone company that knows people, its employees and the customers, is the company to watch - because they know where to focus their attention. Once the internal machinery is in place to keep up with technology, they focus on how to enable and enhance the customer experience, which, in the end, is the human experience. They focus upon human behavior; how customers use their technology, how people want to communicate, when they want to communicate, why they want to communicate and how they want to be treated by their phone company.

They know their customers as well as they can without being intrusive. They know them well enough to serve them better, to anticipate their needs, to facilitate greater expression and to make their lives easier. They know how to positively impact the human experience.



The world-class company is already ahead of this curve. They know which way the wind is blowing because they and their employees know, as much as anyone else, that they too are the wind.

Chapter Twelve

Do Buzzwords Really Make You Smarter?

Customers don't read much in the way of product manuals. They don't read your industry publications. They aren't privy to your company memorandums. They don't sit in on employee training sessions. They don't go through your company orientation program. They don't use your buzzwords. So why talk to them like they are vendors or people familiar with your business?

The rest of the 99.9% of your customers not only do not know your buzzwords, they don't even want to learn your buzzwords. So don't use words and phrases your customers and non-customers don't know. If you must use words peculiar to your business, make the effort to, over time, and we may be talking in terms of years here, educate your customers on a minimal amount of terms, four or five, max. Trust that they may love your product, but they really don't want to know your inside dialect. Only a very small percent want to talk like you.

If you want to lose a customer quickly in a conversation, use buzzwords. If you want to frustrate a customer, do the same. If you want to engage a customer, probe a little and talk to them in their language. This means if you hear a frustrated tone, don't get bubbly. If you hear a happy customer, go ahead, be happy with them. If they are dead serious, use your best skills to determine whether you've got a dead serious experience ahead of you or whether you might be able to add a little human touch and enrich the experience.



Do Buzzwords Really Make You Smarter?

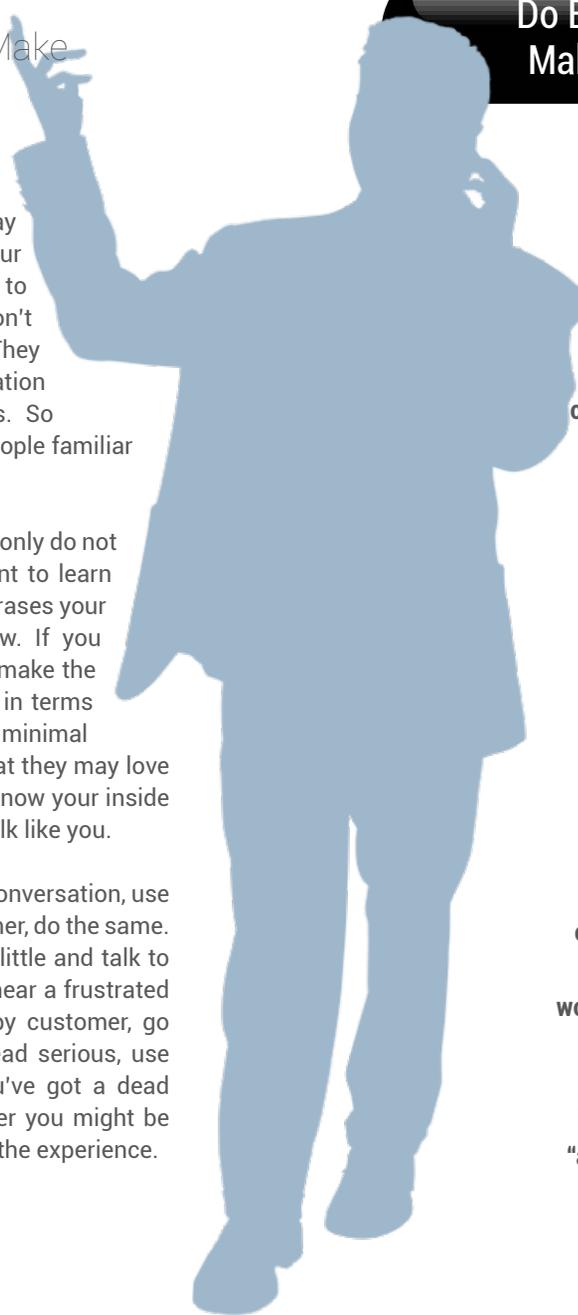


Match the tone you are dealing with and then enhance the experience, If the customer will let you. Instill this quality in your employees, you will be amazed with the results. You must build up the confidence early on in your employees to give them the strength to pull it off.

Over time, they will become quite masterful at producing an enriched experience for the customer. That is the power of the human touch.

An enriched customer experience has nothing to do with buzzwords and everything to do with satisfying the customer. And when the customer (virtually all customers) realizes he or she has a real, live, sincere, caring, sensitive professional on the other end of the telephone, or in front of them, you will trigger the kind of attention all your world-class customer service training was meant to create.

You will be steering delightfully close to "automatic" delivery of the human touch.



Chapter Thirteen

The Human Touch and the CEO



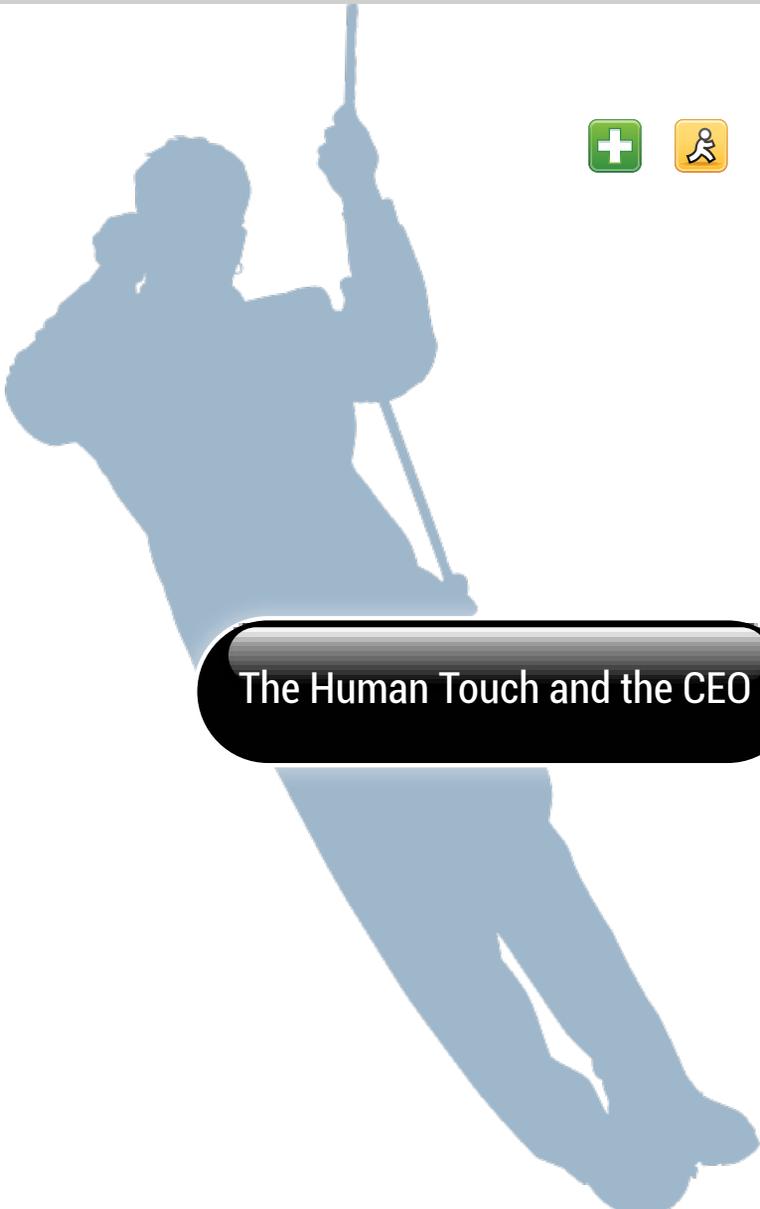
Your CEO must have it. He or she must feel at ease picking up the phone and calling a customer and engaging them in conversation. Your CEO must feel comfortable in the cafeteria, at the annual company picnic or holiday function. He or she must be secure in feeling pain, joy, outrage, confusion and have genuine pathos for the business, the employees and the customers. It's true that it all starts at the top.

The owner of a restaurant must have it; he or she must be comfortable and totally natural in stopping by a patron's dinner table and engaging them in conversation.

The owner, CEO or general manager of a hotel must have it; he or she must be totally comfortable frequently walking through the lobby and spending several minutes talking with guests.

The same goes for the chairman, CEO and all the vice presidents of an airline, of a telephone company, a cable TV company, a yacht building business, a car company, in fact, any owner or manager of any company which is in the business of serving customers. If they don't, your employees will always know your commitment is not all that it can be, that your understanding and insight into your customers will never be all it could be, and perhaps the CEO is not as sincere as employees have been led to believe when he says, "world-class customer service is our number one priority."

For some, the human touch may sound like a strange topic for the CEO to spend time on, but it is the quintessential element of World-Class Customer Service. WCCS is created and delivered by management and employees in a SOI; it is *facilitated* by tools, **it is made sincere by the human touch**, it is *reinforced* through messages, and it is maintained by a *continuity of excellence*.



The Human Touch and the CEO



Of all the traits an employee, management or otherwise, could ever have or develop, it is the ability to deliver the human touch sincerely and appropriately. It is the absolute number one trait for your staff to have and for you to nurture. The human touch is what makes the world go round. It is what comes with human form. It is the one thing we all intrinsically respond to. It is the one thing that naturally seduces us, and gains our attention. If ever there were a genetic magnet, it would be the human touch, the ability to “touch” another human being. That’s leadership of a special kind.

The Human Touch and the CEO

What is touching another human? It is captivating their attention in a certain way. The attention becomes a feeling. That feeling is the feeling of being human. It is usually a fleeting moment neither party is conscious of at the time or thinks about, but over time becomes “an experience.” In this case, a world-class customer service experience. In the WCCS context, you have interacted with a customer, non-customer, or fellow employee in such a way that your action or words “put” the other person in the most exclusive and natural of positions of feeling what we are...human.

This is one of those things no one ever stops to ponder, and perhaps for good reason. When you have “delivered” the human touch, you trigger an effortless response of someone naturally giving you their undivided attention because you “touched” them. They, in turn, feel “touched,” i.e., human. It’s that simple, and deserving of no further analysis.





Once you start “touching” people, you should never stop. Once you decide to head down the road to World-Class Customer Service, you should never stop, pause, or turn back. Once you decide you are totally committed, you cannot move back. You create a set of expectations that require total commitment. There is no shortcut and there are no half attempts.

The Human Touch and the CEO

But there is a reasonable balance to strike between this touching business and simply a good customer experience.

Not every customer contact can or should result in “the touch.” Many customer contacts can be mundane, at least from the employee’s perspective. It may not be necessary to try to touch a customer on every occasion, but that’s also where reading the customer comes into play. For example, a group of restaurant customers in a rush simply want their food delivered quickly; they could probably care less about a nice “Hello, how are you? How has your day gone so far?” A talented employee could pull off the human touch by noting the customer is in a rush. “I can see you and your friends are in a hurry today, Mr. Lee. Let me go into the kitchen and personally ask the chef to put your order at the very head of the queue.” Bingo! That restaurant just made half a dozen fans, and if the restaurant gave the group a coupon for a free desert on their next visit, because

they didn't have time today, that restaurant just made fans for life. If it was the owner or manager who handled the exchange, the customers have now “bonded” with him/her. How easy it can be.

Most customer contacts will result in a good, positive customer experience. Perhaps fifty to sixty percent will result in “the touch.” Just make sure the corporation/ business knows where the balance between a good customer experience and touching a customer is.

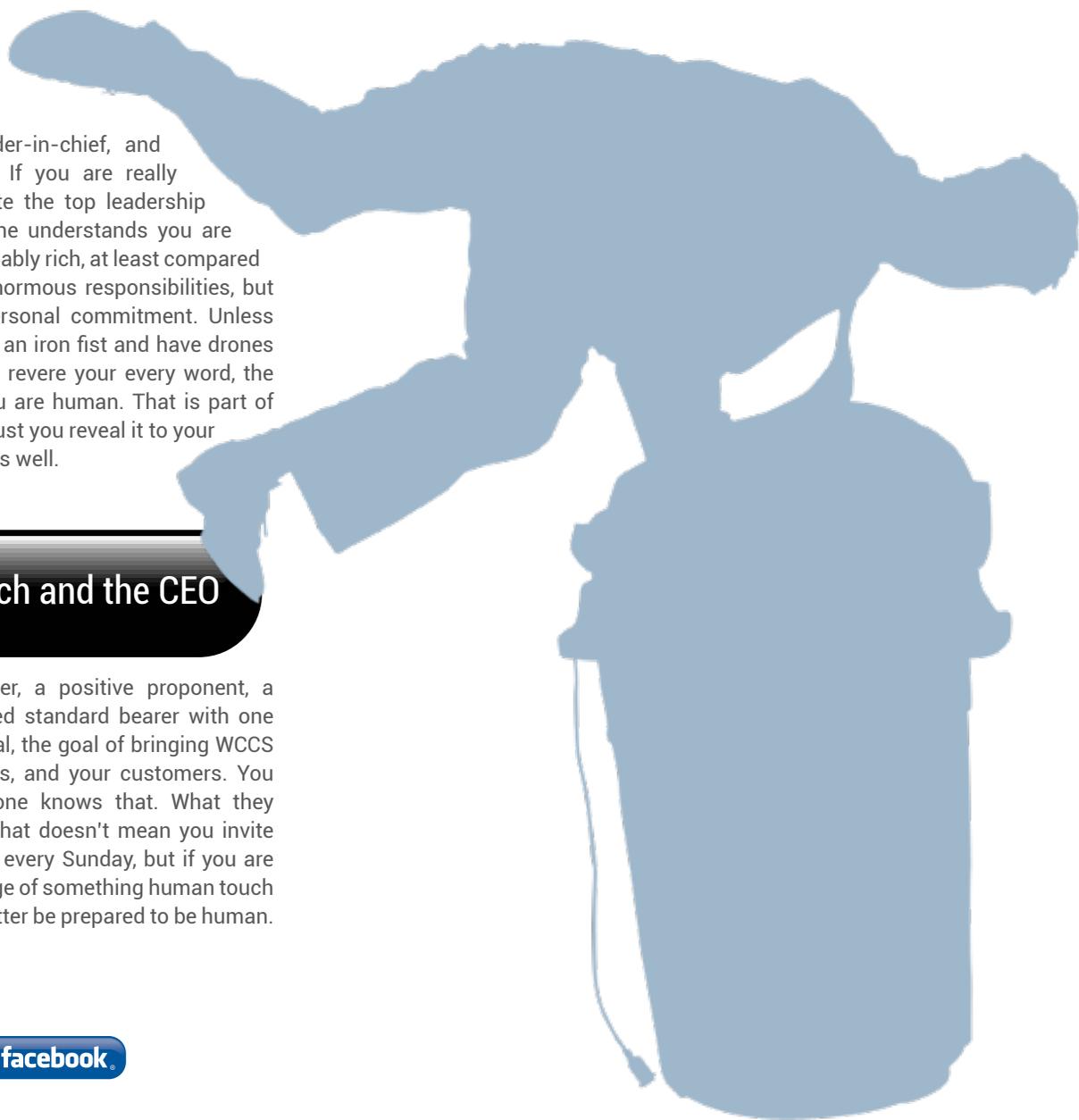
So what is the job of the CEO in this pursuit of WCCS? First of all, make sure WCCS is what you want your organization to achieve. Second, make sure it is what you want to achieve. The more involved and visible your personal participation, the greater the chances of success, and the greater the opportunity to instill passion in your employees.



WCCS demands a commander-in-chief, and it damn well better be you. If you are really committed, you won't delegate the top leadership role to someone else. Everyone understands you are busy, powerful, smart, and probably rich, at least compared to them, and that you have enormous responsibilities, but it is critical they see your personal commitment. Unless you rule your corporation with an iron fist and have drones for employees that follow and revere your every word, the deal here is to show them you are human. That is part of your human touch. Not only must you reveal it to your employees, but to customers as well.

The Human Touch and the CEO

You must be a visible leader, a positive proponent, a supporter, and a single-minded standard bearer with one thing in mind, reaching the goal, the goal of bringing WCCS to life for you, your employees, and your customers. You already run the show, everyone knows that. What they probably don't know is you. That doesn't mean you invite your staff over for a barbecue every Sunday, but if you are serious about leading the charge of something human touch is really responsible for, you better be prepared to be human.



The Human Touch and the CEO

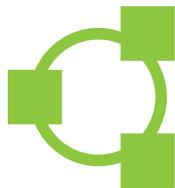


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Look at the character traits of great leaders. They all had/have characters that people naturally follow. Look in the mirror. Do you honestly think you can truly inspire other human beings or do they do what they do because they need a job, it's an okay place to work, they are treated okay, they get stock options, sick leave, and don't have to fight too much traffic to get to work? Or when you roll out your WCCS all-company plan of the millennium, are they going to naturally follow you? Or are they going to roll their eyes and moan? Or are they going to wonder where in the world you cooked up such a plan or where in the world did you, Mr. Stuffy Corporate Type, come up with such an out-of-character plan?

What is your personal internal image? What is your personal external image, with the public, with vendors, with customers? If you suddenly get WCCS religion and become the centerpiece for more than one public relations or customer relations undertaking, can you pull it off? Where is your credibility with your employees first and your customers second? If you think customers won't expect you to personally back up your words (or your company's or even your company spokesperson or individual employees for that matter), you are dead wrong. In many instances, customers may want to speak to no one else but you, and you must make a sincere effort to communicate with them. If they demand to talk to you because of a controversial customer service experience, you need to be prepared to speak with not only the employees involved, but maybe the entire company, and maybe even the public at large.

Getting to WCCS is a lot of work and a large commitment, and it begins with the man or woman at the top. You must "catch the fire" yourself. You can't fake it, particularly with your employees. They know a stuffed shirt when they see one and they know a sincere and committed leader when they see one. Your job is to lead them where they haven't been before and very likely where you have never been before. So admit you don't know exactly where you are going or exactly how you will get there, that together you'll draw up the plan, roll up your sleeves and get started.



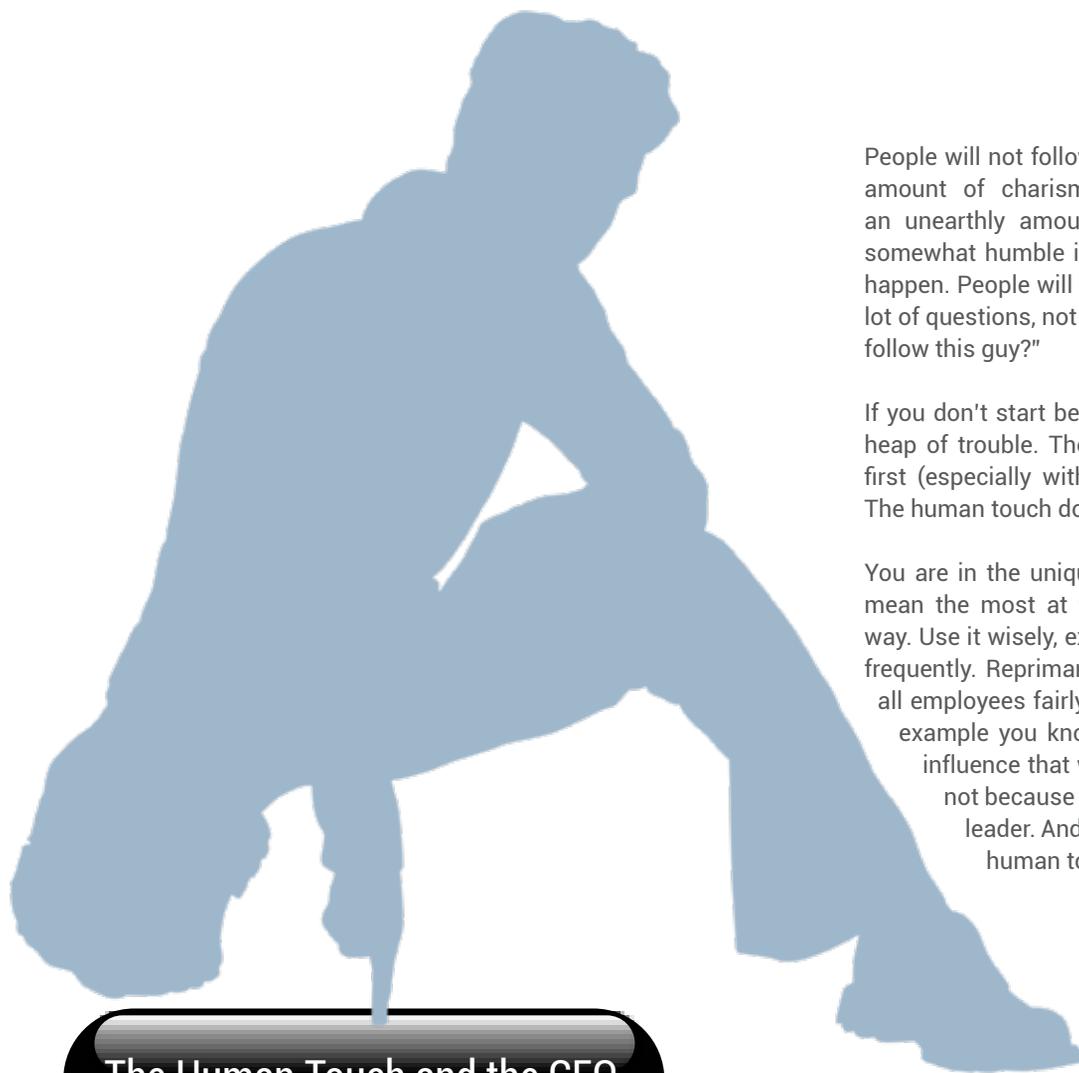
The Human Touch and the CEO

One element of your job to bear in mind as you guide your organization towards WCCS is that of power/authority. Your perception of your power is probably quite different from your employees' perception of your power. In going down the WCCS path, you must realize how much influence you can have on employees and the reason you may have such power. In truth, your employees give the power you have to you. In truth, you don't have an ounce of power unless they "give" you that power by recognizing your authority. True you have undoubtedly earned your level of responsibility, but that does not mean others will automatically "give" you power over them. This can be a very subtle equation to recognize, for both parties, and the recognition must be sincere.

True, in the average corporation, the power equation goes without question. Employees "automatically" yield to every level above them, but that doesn't mean you need not treat this issue with the sensitivity it deserves. Remember, the road to WCCS is no ordinary road. You are going to add meaning to people's lives. It would be a mistake to assume because you issue an order or tell a string of managers to put meaning in the lives of employees that somehow it will just happen.

WCCS, putting meaning in the work place, making the environment fresh, making stock options available, asking people to rethink how they work, to rethink their commitment to the job, to the company, to themselves, and to be engaged in a SOI is not an everyday occurrence. You should not assume people would follow an "order" to march along.





The Human Touch and the CEO

People will not follow arrogance unless it has an unearthly amount of charisma attached to it. Unless you have an unearthly amount of charisma, you will need to be somewhat humble in your personal efforts to make WCCS happen. People will be asking themselves and each other a lot of questions, not the least of which will be “Why should I follow this guy?”

If you don't start before your competition, you may be in a heap of trouble. Those who establish a good relationship first (especially with customers) are usually the winners. The human touch does that too.

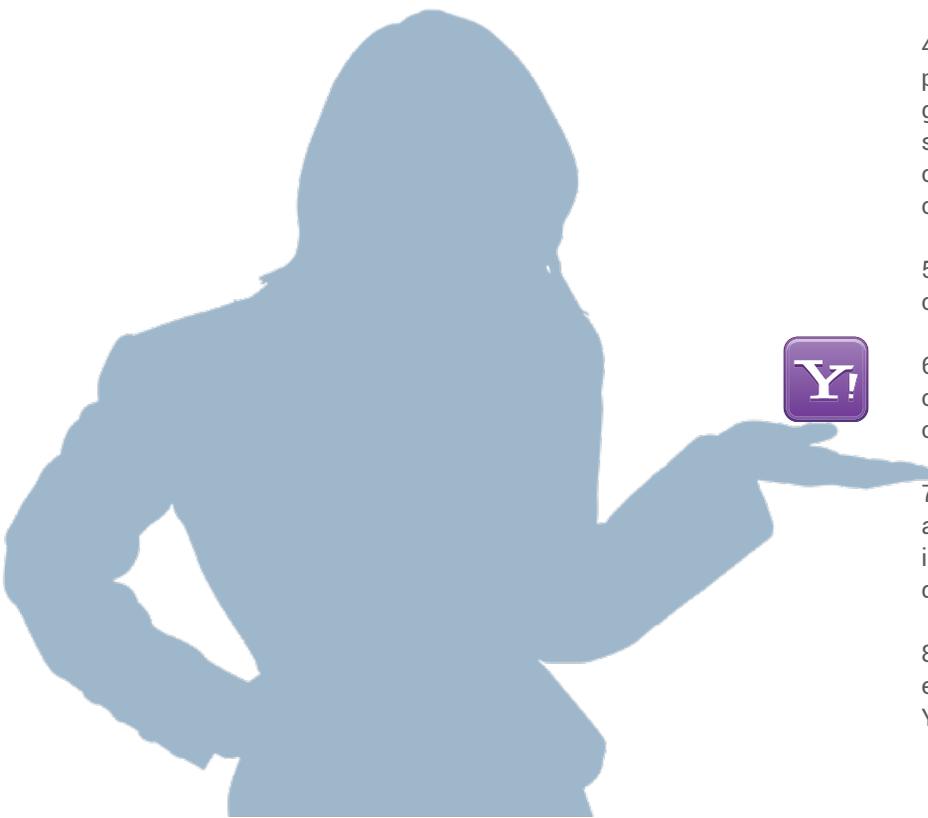
You are in the unique position to have your human touch mean the most at the most number of points along the way. Use it wisely, expeditiously, and frequently, but not too frequently. Reprimand in private, commend in public, treat all employees fairly, treat every customer like gold, be the example you know you must be, and you will exert an influence that will draw others into your personal SOI, not because you are the boss, but because you are a leader. And after all, leading is your job. That's your human touch.



Chapter Fourteen

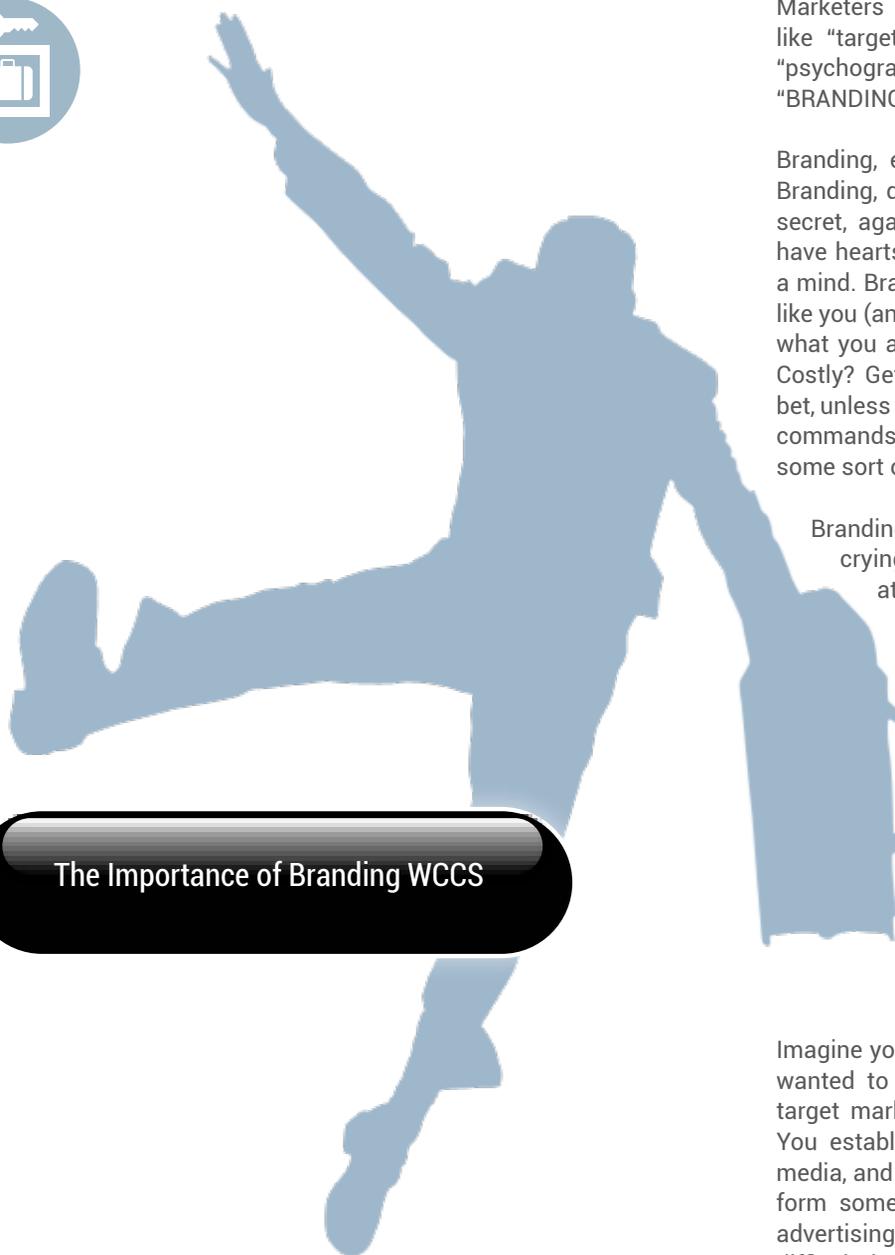
The “Eight Keys” to Success and The Importance of Branding WCCS

The following are the eight keys you must realize to reach World-Class Customer Service. Any one or combination of them is good, but it won't get you there. Doing half of them won't get you halfway there. If you embrace all eight you will, over time, rise to the top of your field. Your competition won't be able to overtake you. You will have unstoppable momentum in your favor. Your SOI will be impenetrable.



The “Eight Keys” to Success and The Importance of Branding WCCS

- 1 Instill the passion for customer service excellence in virtually every employee but particularly in customer service personnel.
- 2 Cultivate a meaningful corporate culture that is virtually 100% customer oriented.
- 3 Cultivate a sincere “customer culture” that brings new meaning to branding and nurtures a greater level of customer loyalty.
- 4 Hire, nurture, train, and develop an employee base, particularly customer service personnel, into a cohesive, galvanized, motivated, and consistently performing group singularly focused upon the achievement of world-class customer service. Ensure they know how to share the customers' perspective.
- 5 Establish world-class performance standards and consistently surpass them.
- 6 Via a well thought-out media, PR and promotions plan, consistently and repeatedly “tell the world” your world class-customer service success stories as they unfold.
- 7 Create and maintain internal communications and departmental relationships that are mutually interdependent and supportive. Make organizational divisions transparent and have them cross-pollinate.
- 8 Make your customers “love” dealing with you, i. e., their experience with you and your employees is outstanding. You touched them.



The Importance of Branding WCCS

Marketers love buzzwords. They particularly love words like “target marketing,” “segmentation,” “psycho-barrier,” “psychographic,” “demographic,” “income group,” and “BRANDING.”

Branding, executed well, is a wonderful thing to behold. Branding, done poorly, is a corporate embarrassment. The secret, again, is who you’re dealing with...people. People have hearts and minds. You are imprinting on a heart and a mind. Branding is really quite simple. You want people to like you (and your product) and to know who you are, and or what you and/or your product stand for. Simple? You bet. Costly? Getting more so. Takes time to accomplish? You bet, unless you can do something that almost “immediately” commands attention, which is rare and which is usually some sort of marketing gimmick.

Branding is the “attention game.” We all did it as kids, crying, laughing, and making trouble...all to get attention. If we did it enough, we were branded, as cry-babies, happy babies, or troublemakers.

Branding in the corporate world is also the attention game. Unless you were there “day one” with a unique product, i.e. Coca Cola, you must play a different game. Today, getting attention usually means paying for it. Today, there aren’t many products without competition, so the game of easy attention is over. Unless you are in the most unique of situations, meaning you have a product that everyone “must have,” you pay to acquire your mind share. This is easy to understand conceptually.

Imagine your product was new to the marketplace and you wanted to establish your brand. You already know your target market and have properly established distribution. You establish your advertising campaign, purchase your media, and sell your message and your product. Maybe you form some key partnerships or strategic alliances. Your advertising agency may try to convince you it is far more difficult than this, but in truth, it really isn’t.

The result will be that a degree of branding takes place in the marketplace. How much depends upon the same factors that would affect most products, i.e., popularity of product, attention-drawing power of your advertising, word of mouth, utility of product, repeat advertising, freshness of repeat advertising, product innovations, pricing of the product, and of course, what the competition in the marketplace is like.

So, is branding important? You bet it is, extremely important, perhaps right after customer service, product quality, and strategic execution. But in the world of customer service businesses, there is a hidden element to this branding business, the people side. Specifically, your customer service can make or break your brand.

A company practicing world-class customer service has a unique opportunity in the world of branding. They can distinguish themselves by branding something which, nine times out of ten, will be unique to them, their customer service. Not only can they brand WCCS, but they can back it up with proof of performance. While numerous companies claim excellent customer service, and while many companies attempt to win customer favor by backing up their product or their pricing, the WCCS opportunity is better, and here's why.

The WCCS company can literally put its money where its mouth is. Not only that, it can put its money where its employee's mouth is. Not only that, it can put its money where its CUSTOMER'S mouth is and do so in a sincere manner instead of a paid-for, insincere, phony, rehearsed testimonial or re-enactment. There is something intrinsically believable when a company can sincerely put its money where its, and/or its employee's, and/or its customer's, mouth is; when it can honestly say "We deliver. We do what we say we do. We are who we say we are. Our service is as good as we say it is, and if you don't believe us, ask them." Done correctly, sincerely and tastefully, this is a powerful message. Firstly, how many companies really offer true WCCS and how many can make this claim?



The Importance of Branding WCCS

When you can back up your branding effort with WCCS, you will be in a class of your own.



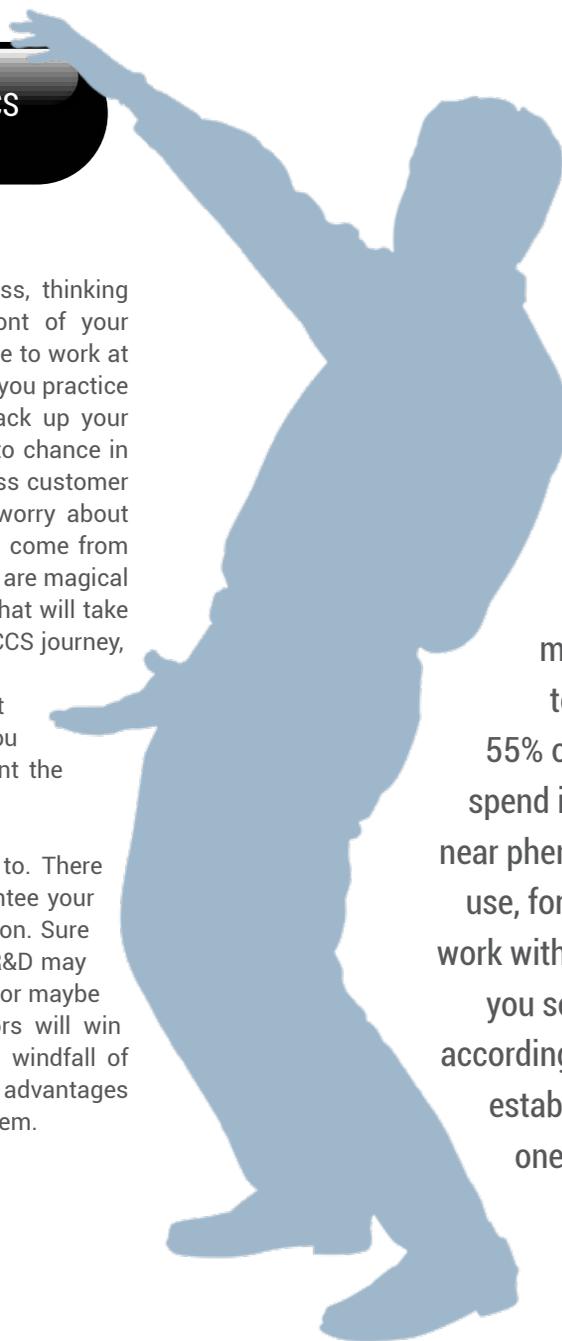
The Importance of Branding WCCS

However, you must not be cavalier or careless, thinking WCCS automatically puts you in the forefront of your customers' minds. This won't happen. You have to work at keeping your WCCS image alive, but as long as you practice WCCS, you will always have the fodder to back up your world-class claims. While you can leave little to chance in the execution of your effort to brand world-class customer service, rest assured you will never have to worry about where the next great customer experience will come from that you will want to tell the world about. There are magical moments, hundreds, even thousands of them that will take place between all the people involved in the WCCS journey, particularly with customers, but they should and will happen of their own volition. You must make sure you never try to force them, but you should also make your best effort to document the most magical of them, as soon as they occur.

There is no God of customer service to pray to. There are no mystical charms you can buy to guarantee your success. No part is left to chance or superstition. Sure there may be a stroke of luck here and there; R&D may invent something customers just have to have, or maybe the local sports team your company sponsors will win the national championship and you receive a windfall of goodwill. These types of events have inherent advantages to your business, but you can never count on them.



What you count on is yourself, your employees, and a lot of hard work. Because at the end of the day, it is hard work that will carry you there, hard work, commitment, and meaning. We were not put here to waste a single day let alone 55% of our adult lives. The time we spend in the working environment is near phenomenal. Put it to meaningful use, for yourself, for all of those who work with you, and for all of those who you serve and you will be rewarded accordingly. You will have no difficulty establishing your brand as number one. In fact, your customers may just do it for you.



Chapter Fifteen

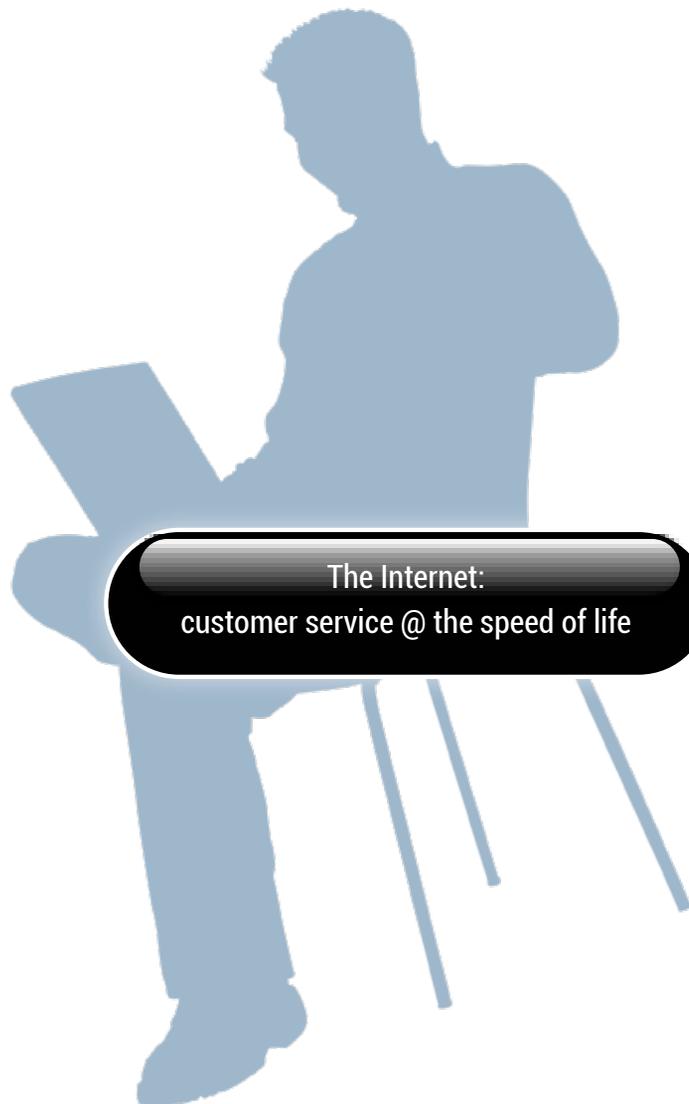
The Internet:
customer service @ the speed of life



The Internet: customer service @ the speed of life
Given the pervasiveness of the Internet and mobile phones, and the momentum of technological applications for customer service solutions, special mention should be made of the impact of technology.

The impact of the Internet has gone beyond the scope of a network of computer databases accessible to customer service personnel and, in some instances, customers. It is not difficult to imagine a time in the near future when PCs, laptops, hand-held devices, and mobile phones will facilitate two-way interactivity for customer service applications including video.

Imagine, for example, you are sitting in a restaurant waiting for your lunch; you call the customer service number of your cable TV company using your voice recognition mobile phone and on the screen of your mobile phone an image of the customer service representative appears. You place your handphone upright so the customer service employee can see you. Within a few minutes, your question is cleared up, the customer service employee smiles, waves and says, "Goodbye," as your lunch arrives.



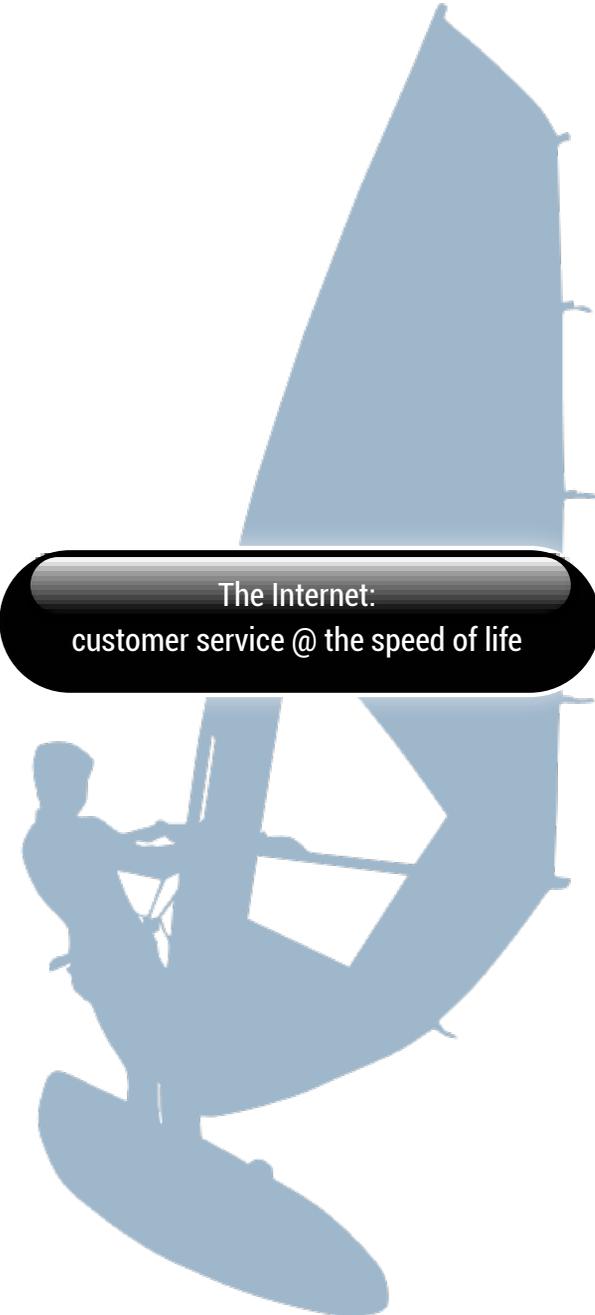
find us on **facebook**

follow us **twitter**

Imagine the same scenario from any location in the world, from any number of Internet “appliances” or computers. In fact, when you make your calls from your home PC or laptop, the screen is large enough to not only accommodate a picture of both you and the well-mannered, empathetic, customer service employee, but several pages of documents, including your latest statement. Again, within minutes, and with a few movements of your mouse, you and the customer service representative have not only cleared up your problem, but in response to a statement you made about a personal interest, added a new service to your monthly subscription.

Imagine being on vacation on a remote island in Asia. Before you leave, you send your mobile phone company an SMS that you really want to try a new handphone with new interactive, two-way audio and video services they have just brought to market. You arrive at your holiday destination, fire up your laptop and see the company has sent you a VIP message to contact a specific customer service representative at a special website. You go to the website, log in using the customer service representative's name, and immediately the smiling customer service representative appears on your laptop. On the screen, the words “Hope you're enjoying your holiday in Phang Nga” scroll by. You are impressed they are so on the ball.

The customer service representative quickly and efficiently demonstrates the services and features of the phone you are interested in. You give her the address of your hotel, and the phone is delivered, the last leg by fan-tail boat, with real time and real visual geostationary positioning, from the Asian distribution centre within twenty-four hours. You call the customer service representative back using your new phone, thank her for the prompt service, and show her what the beach looks like.



The Internet:
customer service @ the speed of life



Two way audio and video has been around since Skype landed on our PC's. But enhanced two way audio video services will always be in the pipeline. And many more advancements in how we communicate are in the pipeline, some you will love, some you will hate. Imagine being barraged daily with tiny little advertisements on the screen of your handphone or mobile device. We won't want that or like it, but it is already here. Also imagine a nice birthday song (sung by your favorite cartoon character you identified when you bought your last phone) from one of the businesses you patronize and an invitation for a free dinner. That part we won't mind. The mobile phone ads we sign up for we will probably like; the ones that are uninvited we won't like.

The Internet came into our lives at the speed of light and quickly moved to the speed of life, adapting to one lifestyle after another and this will continue all over the world. The term "being plugged-in" has taken on an entirely new meaning but it will have its drawbacks as well, and the term "plug-out" may become just as popular. The impact upon customer service is both good and bad. The speed of the Internet is both good and bad. The experiments in how to utilize the Internet to impact customer service will also be good and bad.

Imagine the following conversation at a service company that discovers your email address and wants to solicit your business.

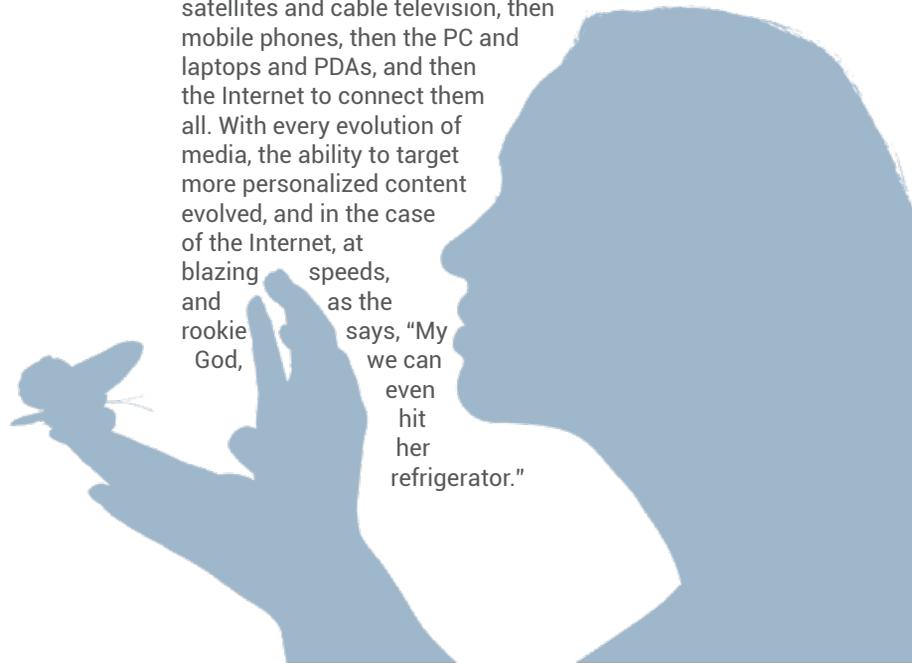
**The Internet:
customer service @ the speed of life**

Rookie Employee: "It's incredible, we can send messages to every Internet device she has. We can hit her laptop, her mobile phone, her PC, her car, her personal digital assistant. My God, we can even hit the device on her refrigerator."

Naive Boss: "Great, do it."

Wise Boss: "Do you know what a mistake we could be making? We don't even know who she is, what she likes, or which one of our products she might like. What if she thinks all these messages are intrusive? She may hate us from day one. Let's think this through first."

You can see the trend to personalization that the Internet medium perfects, especially by looking at its predecessors; first, there was print, then radio, then television, then came satellites and cable television, then mobile phones, then the PC and laptops and PDAs, and then the Internet to connect them all. With every evolution of media, the ability to target more personalized content evolved, and in the case of the Internet, at blazing speeds, and as the rookie says, "My God, we can even hit her refrigerator."



But again, after you use the technology to create all the business efficiencies you can, the most noble, most impactful and least intrusive use of technology in the customer service business will be using technology to deliver the human touch, which demands you know who you are touching. Delivering the human touch, in all its nuances, from making technology simple to use, to sending electronic birthday cards to the kids, to live video house calls should be the application that has the most visibility and impact, and that requires careful thorough thought and planning. To be most effective, you need to know whom you are talking to, because a misguided personalized message can be disastrous. You can “un-brand” your brand in an instant, and have the luxury of doing it one customer at a time or in any combination you may choose.



The Internet: customer service @ the speed of life

Because, while the customer service organization has the ability to deliver messages or solve a problem almost instantly, it can also frustrate or even lose a customer just as instantly. Just because you can deliver a message instantly to every digital device of a single customer doesn't make it magical. How the technology is used to create the good customer experience is the magic. Speed can work in reverse just as easily as it can be a positive. Consider the speed of email for example. An expectation of immediacy in communication on the Internet was created day one. “Instant gratification” can be a very difficult expectation to deal with for the customer service organization. It is likely that some problems can be solved instantly “by email,” But others might take a bit more time. The volume of email can be staggering, often far more than can be answered correctly, let alone “personally” within twenty-four hours.

Sure, for some applications, instant ordering for example, email and online exchanges can be accomplished simply, conveniently, and automatically; A perfect use of technology. However, when a customer is irate and wants attention, the “cerebral only” experience of an abbreviated, key-word-generated, automated email response can be exasperating. Form emails, triggered by key words, are the email equivalent of being put on hold, without the option of anyone ever picking up the phone. You'd better alert your customers ad infinitum that there is no organization on earth that can adequately respond to the volume of email this wonderful technology called the Internet can deliver, but in the same breath, let them know you are sorting out how to best use the technology...from their perspective and to their benefit.





The WCCS company works very hard at managing the expectations the customer develops regarding the Internet and in particular, customer service problem solving. General inquiries, friendly email reminders, and notices of policy changes are one thing and are mostly one-way, but real customer service interaction is another, particularly over the Internet, and particularly before every owner of a PC on the planet equipped with two-way audio and video allowing participants to see each other. When audio and video customer service exchanges become commonplace, it will be a lot easier to inject the human touch into your customers' online experience. Until then, expectations need to be carefully managed. There are a zillion companies, press releases, media stories, and journalists creating the kind of expectations that will continue to make the job of implementing WCCS online difficult for some time to come.

The Internet can cut both ways all too easily, especially when there is no tone to the communication, at least in text form. It is the wise company that communicates with its customers well ahead of the fact and educates them on exactly how the company utilizes the Internet for customer service. And it is the wise company that spends a lot of time thinking this premise through and then carefully orchestrating its implementation, from the customers' perspective of course. And it is the wise company that will get to know its customers well enough not to make the most basic of mistakes of sending the wrong message/content to the wrong person. Many companies have and will continue to be burned by, not only poor planning, but also poor management of customer expectations regarding the online experience. After all, the Internet is a tool, a means, not an end.



Even today, years after implementing Internet technology, untold numbers of companies still have not figured out how to let the customer get what he or she wants in three easy steps.

The Internet:
customer service @ the speed of life

The best customer service organizations build sites that are very user-friendly, with clear navigation options, search features that are effective and simple, the ability to initiate click to chat with a customer service representative, or to track account progress, or to access personal account data, or make a reservation, or make a transaction. Above all, the best companies keep it all amazingly simple. World-class customer service at the speed of life.



SOCIAL NETWORKING

Hot on the heels of the boom in the Internet comes the world of Social Networking. Let's not be lulled into thinking a revolution of sorts has taken place. Get out your history book. Go back to the US Wild West, back when the telegraph was invented; the world's first social networking medium. How, you may ask? There were times when social networking-like messaging was employed on the telegraph wires...an example of a prospector sending a telegraph message to his friends in New York... "There's gold in California; spread the word."

Fast-forward to the invention of the telephone and the central operator, the person sitting at the switchboard redirecting (and listening to all the calls). As a result, she was often the superstar social networker of her times. "You won't believe what Mrs. Smith just said to the company she bought her car from. Spread it around that Ed's Car Shop has been ripping people in Elmsdale off for years." You get the idea; she was a central clearing house for her local network of friends.

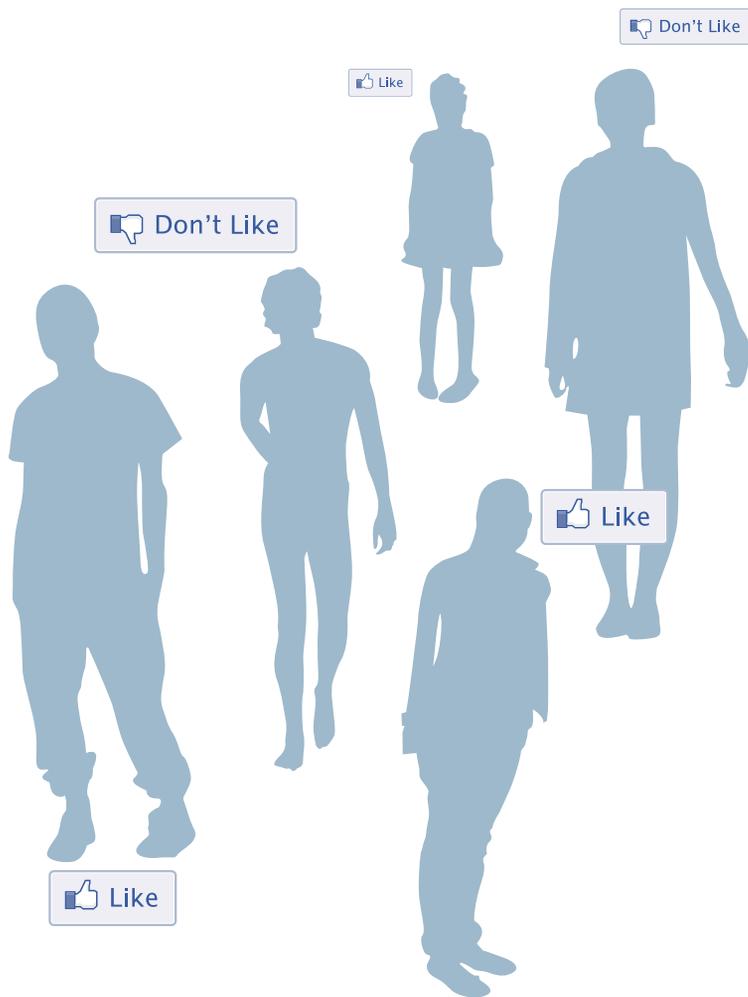
Fast-forward again to radio and television. On a small town scale, these mediums were also predecessors to social networking with announcements about small community events that impacted audiences, which at the time consisted of no more than a few neighborhoods. It wasn't long before gossip shows became popular, again on a small scale. Here again we see a precursor to modern social networking.

The bottom line is this. It is human nature to want to plug one's friends into the stuff friends talk about. Now, the Internet facilitates this capability to the endth degree. Not



only can we make comments about people, places, things and, products, we can identify the people, places, things, or products by name, location, and show the product and name of the company president. It is human nature to want to pass on an experience with a company we received good or bad service from. Consumers have never had such power. Media was limited to placing an ad or article on a radio or television program, which had all kinds of implications, not to mention a price tag to purchase the time or space.

The internet has given anyone or any company the capacity to write anything they want about a product or service and post it for all to see. Whether it gets read or not depends on the size of the social network, the popularity of the network,



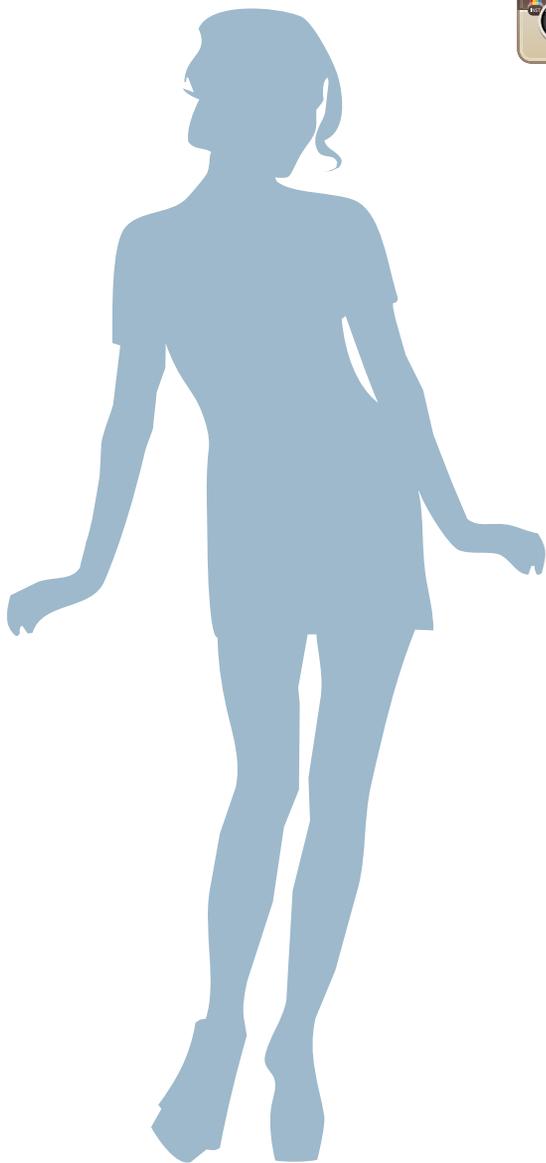
Comments

how appealing or interesting the content and the relevance and timeliness of the post.

The post can reach an exponentially larger audience if the person has a twitter account or personal blog and if the topic of the post is a popular trending across all Internet media.

The popularity of online postings, especially when companies or their products or services are involved, has created new headaches as well as new opportunities for them. A company which is on the ball will find mentions of their brand, service, or product as a pitch right down the middle, one to be turned into a home run. The dullard company will not develop a useful Internet social networking strategy and will lumber along along, with social networking fallout having as much or more influence on how their company is perceived than their own marketing and branding efforts.

People love to gossip; people love to tell people about a company they feel ripped them off; people love to pass along friend's horror stories about company's they have dealt with; people love to gossip about other people... always have, always will. The Internet is all these things on steroids. Companies are now up to speed on how to monitor social networks and track comments about their company or services. It makes sense for any company worth its salt to know what "the buzz" is "out there in the world," about their products and services. Same is true for any politician worth his or her salt. It also makes sense for the president of the company to find a vehicle to communicate directly



with consumers. A “President’s Blog,” would go a long way to establishing credibility and warding off rogue company detractors. There’s nothing like hearing it from the horse’s mouth.

Many years ago, when I headed a Cable TV company in St. Paul, Minnesota, I hosted a live, weekly TV show. Anyone who wanted could call in and ask me anything on their mind. The calls were never screened. Because our service was as good as it was (we received the highest honors in the cable industry for customer service), the “good calls” far outweighed the “bad calls.” The pranksters or negative callers were so few they got lost in the numbers. The positive callers always overloaded the lines, and the reason they overloaded the lines was because we did what we said we would do and delivered our service better than anyone else. Today, in addition to having a TV show to talk directly to customers, I would have a President’s Blog and a Twitter account as well.

People, consumers are now empowered. For centuries their comments fell on deaf ears; no company presidents gave “the little guy,” or “the chronic complainer,” or “the consumer,” the time of day. They didn’t need to. The damage a single person could do was limited to telling a few friends. That equation has been turned on its head. Now, via social networking, and through posting videos, consumers can “Tell the world.” Now, those companies who didn’t listen, are listening. People have a voice, a giant voice, a voice larger than the company’s ad campaign, and the voice of the people is global. People, for the first time in history, have a very easy method to almost instantly evolve to one mindset

and amass, in thought or in action; that was never the case in the history of the planet. Finally, businesses are beginning to realize, "Life is Bigger than Business!"

Governments are afraid of this new form of "people power;" corporations are afraid, the military is afraid, even religions are afraid. They can see these early amateurish attempts to energize large groups are working. The Internet may one day facilitate encouraging more than "your small group of friends who are demanding their money back for poor service rendered." One day ninety percent of the tweets in the world might be about how to get rid of a government that just slaughtered a million people. Social networking is cute today; tomorrow it will become an incredibly powerful social tool. We have seen examples already, in the Middle East, in times of natural disaster, and those certainly won't be the last times. Galvanizing on a global level is not that far away. All it will take is a very giant issue or a very giant personality.

But in the meantime, in the world of world-class customer service, the simple commandments for any company are: It is called social networking, so, number one, be sociable and be likable. Be transparent. Be upfront and keep the messages light. People aren't all that into you if you are ranked high on the social networking meter. But if you screwed up, fix it immediately and sincerely. Otherwise you will get lambasted.

Social networking offers numerous opportunities to illustrate you are a company with "the human touch,". But don't overdo it; don't make it too obvious. Just do it sincerely, as it is meant to be.



follow us 

DO'S for Your web SOI/presence/site ! (FB, Twitter, YouTube, etc.)

1. Realize you are in the people business and socialize accordingly;
2. Make it easy on the eyes (& ears);
3. Make it likable;
4. Make it sociable;
5. Make it informative & if appropriate, entertaining;
6. Keep is simple;
7. Make it responsive;
8. Keep it fresh;
9. Apply the human touch;
10. Reflect the human touch;
11. Acknowledge the human touch;
12. Carve out a friendly spot for the top dog, the CEO;
13. Let testimonials back up your claims (note: testimonials must be sensitive, appropriate and credible);
14. Give customers enough space to not feel ignored, shoved to the corner or left out;
15. Thank your customers in as many ways as possible but don't overdo it;
16. "Test drive" new products with manageable social groups;
17. Use social media for every avenue of customer feedback you can create; (and manage effectively).
18. Make your YouTube videos entertaining, short and to the point.



DON'TS for Your web SOI/presence/site !

1. Don't overtly brag about anything;



2. Don't "SELL" (hard sell or soft sell) unless it is appropriate;



3. Don't preach;



4. Don't knock the competition;



5. Make it too big and complicated;



6. Make it hard for customers/site visitors to provide feedback;



7. Don't bury "Contact Us," information where visitors are unlikely to find it;



8. Get cute;

DON'TS for Your web SOI/presence/site !

9. Let it go stale;



10. Organize it in an unorganized fashion;



11. Use it as a political platform unless you are about politics;



12. Don't unnecessarily or knowingly offend any individual or organization;

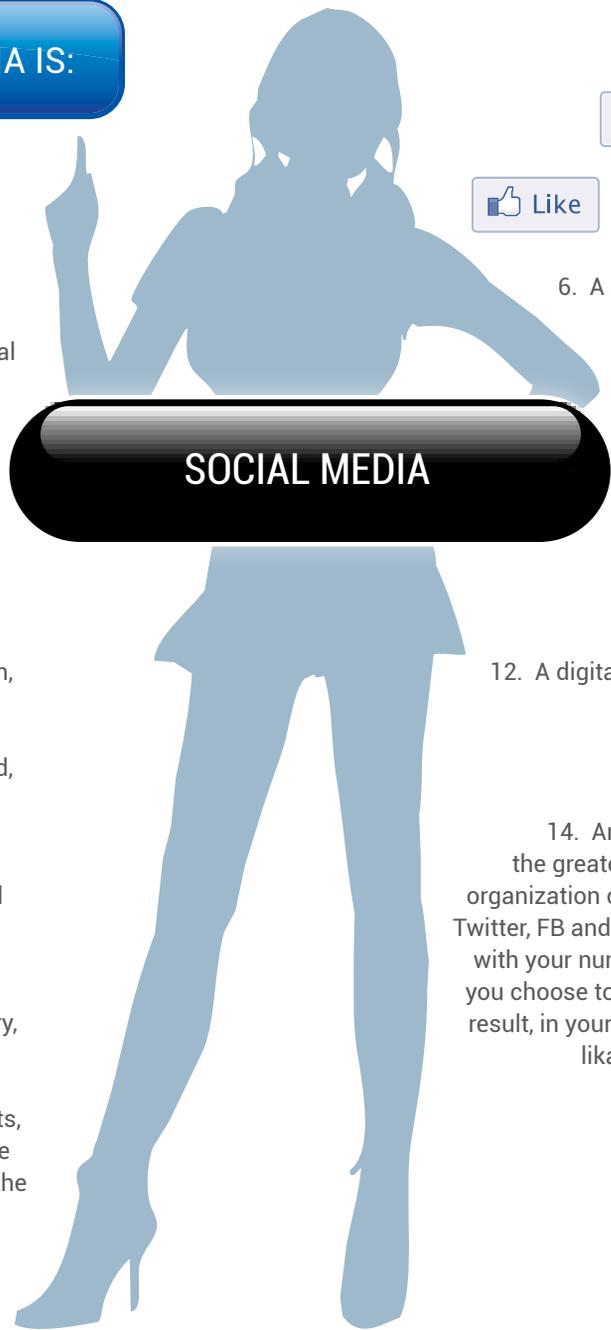


13. Don't use your site for revenge in any way, shape or form; it will only come back to haunt you;



Agree

SOCIAL MEDIA IS:



- 1. A digital cocktail party;
- 2. A personal or semi-personal digital diary with sound and pictures and "guest comments;"
- 3. A "Guest Comment" book;
- 4. A small town, one person gossip column;
- 5. A small town, digital, one-to-one-hundred-million people alarm system, poster board, small town newspaper, directory, time capsule, message board, advertising space, game board, Ouija board, confession booth, black book, rumor mill, mourning medium, mind bender, entertainer, chatterbox, family tree and family newsletter and ...travelogue, psychiatrist's couch, casting couch, critics corner, library, reference tool, personal lifestyle investigator, curiosity shop, art gallery, bookshelf, music album...involving every type of character on the planet with the exception of loners, drop outs, those too lofty and those who choose on-line privacy. Rolled into one, it is the human mind in text, sound, pictures and video;

- 6. A digital company annual meeting...everyday;
- 7. A digital corporate social laboratory;
- 8. A digital corporate R&D project;
- 9. A digital corporate distraction;
- 10. A digital corporate giant opportunity;
- 11. A digital corporate HR fertile field;
- 12. A digital corporate "in-house" communication and employee engagement tool.
- 13. A digital demographic goldmine;

14. And on and on and on...rolled into one, one of the greatest world class customer service tools your organization could ever have ! Social Media goes beyond Twitter, FB and YouTube. It is your forefront for socializing with your number one asset, your customer, for however you choose to do so. Do it smartly and only positives will result, in your customer service performance, your brand likability and awareness and your bottom line.





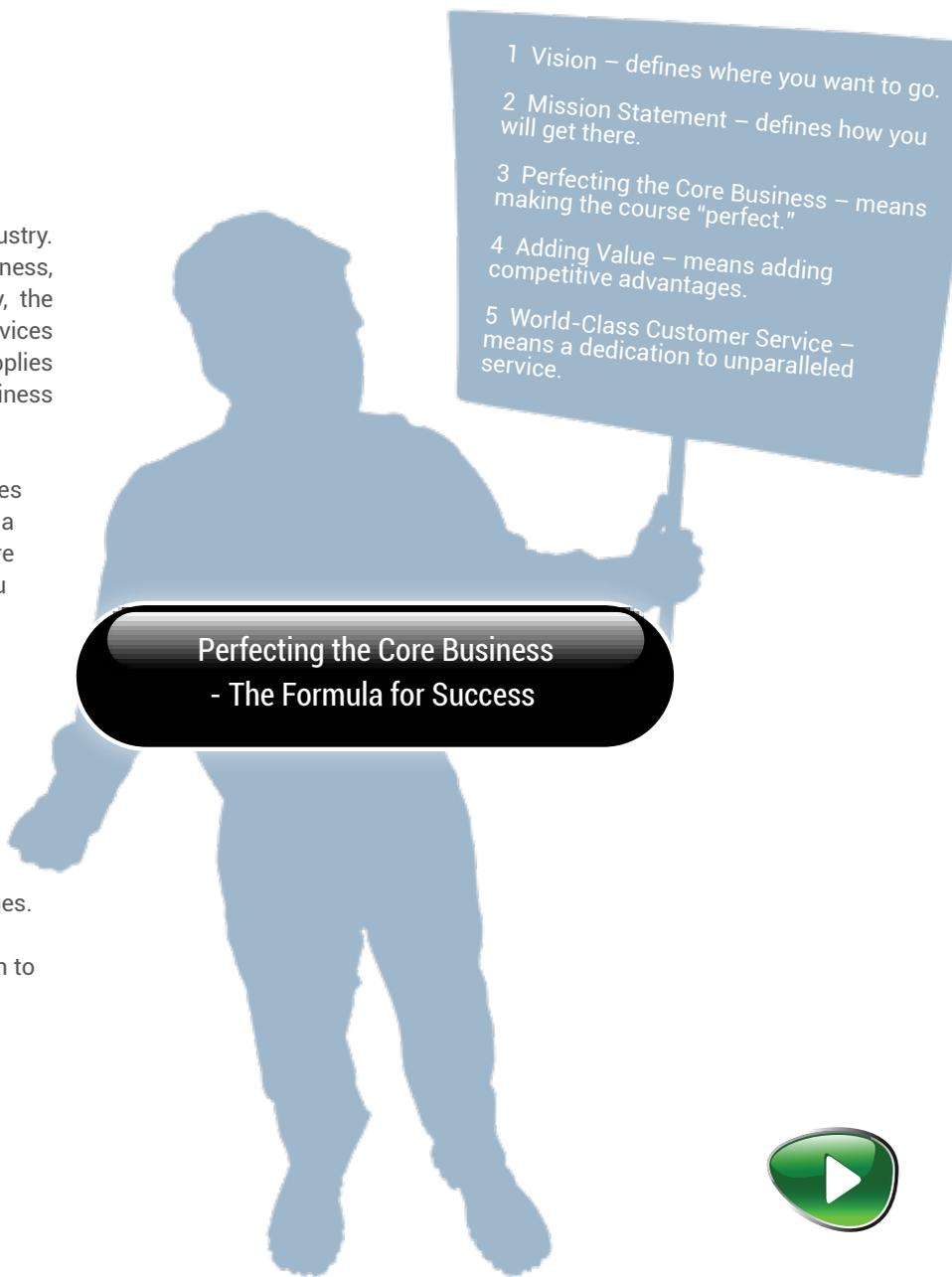
Chapter Sixteen

Perfecting the Core Business - The Formula for Success

There is a five-part formula for success in the service industry. It can be applied to any customer service related business, whether the hospitality industry, the airlines industry, the yachting industry, the travel industry, the financial services industry, or as in the example used, the golf industry. It applies to any business serving customers directly or any business servicing the customer service industry.

The formula for success is fairly simple and involves five steps: One, you need a Vision; Two, you need a Mission Statement; Three, you need to Perfect the Core Business; Four, you need to Add Value; and Five, you need to stretch for World-Class Customer Service.

- 1 Vision – defines where you want to go.
- 2 Mission Statement – defines how you will get there.
- 3 Perfecting the Core Business – means making the course "perfect."
- 4 Adding Value – means adding competitive advantages.
- 5 World-Class Customer Service – means a dedication to unparalleled service.

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Perfecting the Core Business - The Formula for Success





A golf course is a customer service business. State-of-the-art service philosophy dictates that a golf course should provide the highest level of golfing experience possible. This is the best way to enhance the golfing experience and maximize revenues, but to provide the highest level of golfing experience; the core business must first be perfected. Perfecting the core business in the golf industry (or any other service industry) is perhaps the most important part of the formula for success.

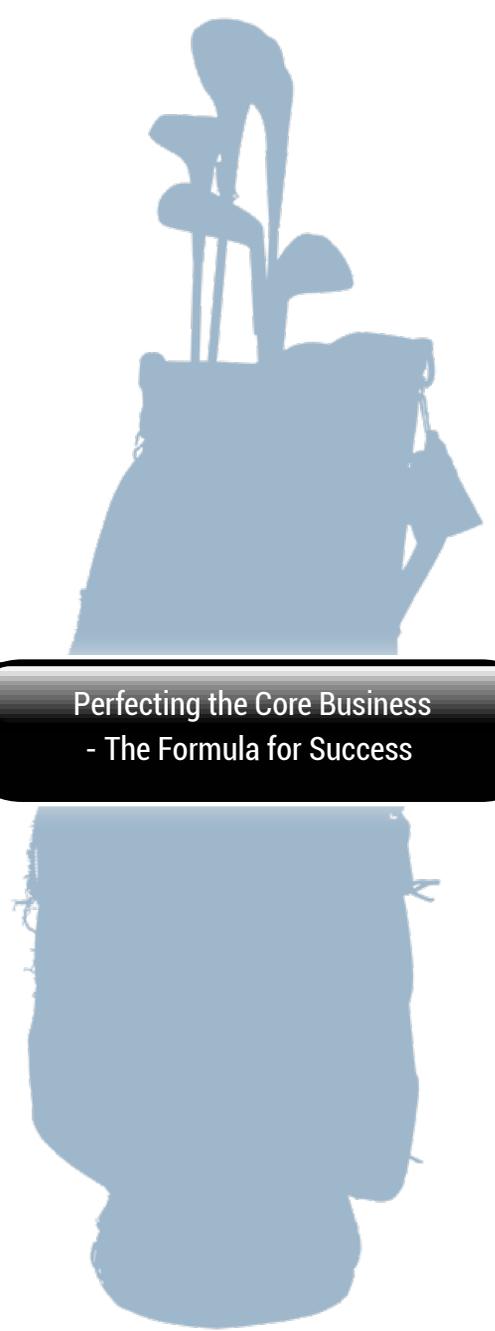
What does this mean, to perfect the core business? In a customer service business, which a golf course is, the core business is the essential service offered, the service the business is built around, in this case, the course itself, the playing field.

The golf course owner has accumulated the necessary elements (everything that makes up the golf course) to offer a service (the venue) to customers. The net result is the customer pays for the "product," which is an experience, in this case, a golfing experience. The quality of the experience is directly related to the quality of all the components that make up the experience, with the most important component being the course itself. What every golfer desires is "the most enjoyable golfing experience" whenever he or she takes to the tee.

Thus, the core business is the course itself, the backbone of your business, and of course, it is supported by everything else from F&B, to the caddy program, to the quality of the locker rooms, to the friendliness of the pro shop staff, to the water pressure in the shower room, to the quality of



Perfecting the Core Business
- The Formula for Success



Perfecting the Core Business - The Formula for Success



the merchandise in the pro shop, to the attention to detail in setting the dining room tables; but at the end of the day, the core business is the course. Your business plan can never be all it can be until your core business is all that it can be. **The closer you get to perfecting your core business, the closer you get to providing the maximum experience for your customer, and the closer you will get to maximizing your revenues.**

Let's use another example, an airline. An airline offers travel as its core business. Thus, its core business is transporting people. The best airline is the one that has come closest to perfecting their core business. What would perfecting the core business look like for an airline? It would mean safe planes for starters. It would mean a well-maintained fleet. It would mean modern technology. It would mean a simple and easy reservation system. It would mean competitive prices. It would mean a highly trained and well-disciplined staff to make sure the planes left on time and arrived on time. It would mean impeccable on-board service by professional flight attendants.

Now think about which airlines are best at these things and you will know who has come the closest to perfecting their core business. Not surprisingly, this airline will also have the best bottom line and the greatest customer loyalty.

In the golf industry, the core business that is "perfected" produces the best golfing experience. Imaginative design, high standards of construction, impeccable fairways, beautiful landscaping, memorable holes, lovely features, fast and consistent greens, and an "invisible" maintenance staff



add up to a core business that is reaching for perfection, translating directly into the ultimate golfing experience the course can provide, which translates into customer enjoyment, which translates into loyalty, which translates into repeat business, and increased customer demand for the product.

Golfers develop strong loyalty, sometimes a near obsession, to a golf course that has been “perfected” and that provides an unbeatable golfing experience. We all know courses like these, and not all of them are blessed with splendid natural surroundings. Many are world-famous, many more are only known to those in the region who play them, but the desire for an “ultimate” golfing experience that only a “perfected” course can provide is universal; it is the common denominator of the golf business. It is the essence of why we all enjoy the game so much. And it is why millions of golfers will travel many miles to play such a course.

Golfers develop even more loyalty when the “perfected” course has added value features like frequent play discounts, free or discounted range balls, golf tips from the club pro, free yardage books (produced at breakeven by including advertising), reciprocal playing arrangements with clubs of the same caliber, weekly skills contests, monthly medals, monthly newsletters, juniors’ programs, a patron or member appreciation tournament, expert caddies, a creative menu, a well-stocked pro shop, free shoe cleaning, towels with carts, greeting golfers as they walk off the eighteenth tee with a cold towel, and a locker room that adheres to high standards of personal care among other things. Added value means added competitive advantages for the owner.



Perfecting the Core Business - The Formula for Success

Golfers will develop an unbeatable affinity for the golf course with not only the above, but also with world-class customer service. The competitive advantage world-class customer service brings does more than create loyalty; it breeds a commitment to your course, your business, and your people. That translates into a commitment to the total experience you (your business) provide, every time, without fail. World-class customer service means service that is beyond the expectations of your customers or guests. It means service so good it acquires a reputation all by itself, your customers are treated like kings and queens, made to feel welcome, and taken care of while enjoying the best possible golfing experience your perfected core business can produce.

Golfers develop little, if any, loyalty for a poorly maintained course, or a course with poor amenities, or a course with poor management, or a course with poor service.

Of all the elements to give priority to, perfecting the core business, whatever your core business is, has to be number one. If you can only manage or afford to undertake one step of the success formula, making your core business “perfect” will bring the greatest return.

Appendix

A Simple Quiz: Where Are You?



How would you and your management team answer the following questions?

1 *Do you have a definitive corporate culture? If yes, what is it? How do you describe it?*

2 *If you were to ask every single employee that same question, what would they say?*

3 *If you do not have a precise answer to the previous two questions, you have a lot of work to do. If you can answer number one in the affirmative (every company has a culture whether intentional or not) with positive attributes, you have work to do. If number two is anything other than 'yes,' you have work to do. Read this handbook carefully.*

4 *Do your employees have a monetary stake in your company other than their pay check?*

5 *Do your employees have a visceral, cerebral, vital, emotional, or simply a passing interest in your company's future?*

6 *Do you ever spend time in the field with your best sales person? With your worst sales person?*

7 *When was the last time you took five customers to lunch just to listen?*

8 *When was the last time you visited the mailroom, the warehouse, the billing department, the kitchen, the factory, the boatyard, the maintenance facility, the clubhouse?*

9 *When was the last time you personally picked up a customer complaint and called the customer to resolve the issue yourself?*

10 *When was the last time you asked a customer service manager, the restaurant manager, the course manager, or the hotel manager to give you the most irate customer of the day?*

11 *When was the last time you spent a day monitoring customer service by sitting with a customer service employee all day on the phones?*

12 *Do your employees share the same understanding of the following terms: teamwork, leadership, customer service, quality, commitment, revenue, expenses, operating income, cash flow, profit and loss?*

13 *Do you have a mission statement? If you have one, do your employees not only know it, but know what it means?*

14 *Do you have a vision for the business or corporation? Have you shared your vision with every employee? Is the vision put on paper or is it in a video presentation? Is it on a static web page or an interactive presentation? Is it boring and cold? Or is it dynamic, bold and full of life? Does it pick people up or put them to sleep?*

15 *Have you ever sent a birthday card to every single employee signed by you personally? Do you send your customers a happy birthday greeting?*

16 Does your website enhance your relationship with your customers? If yes, how?

17 Is your website user friendly? If not, how will you simplify it?

18 Does your Internet strategy support your customer service personnel or distract them and take up way too much of their time?

19 Do you answer emails within an hour? The same day? Within two days? Within a week?

20 Do all of your employees go through basic common sense training?

21 Do all of your employees know your customer retention strategy?

22 When was the last time you reinforced the idea that all employees look at the company through the customers' eyes? When was the last time you vehemently insisted they look at your customer service practices through your customers' eyes?

23 When was the last time you lost a good employee to a competitor? Why did you lose the employee? Have you done everything in your power to keep your good employees? Do they know this? If not, why?

24 Does every employee in your company know your customer service standards of performance? If not, why?

25 Does every employee act as an intelligent agent, providing feedback from interactions with customers and non-customers to improve performance?

26 Is there a "ruthlessness" to your industry or your corporate culture?

27 Does the senior management sincerely care for employees? If put it to the test, would employees agree? If so, would you include "corporate compassion" in your mission statement?

28 Is it second nature for your employees to perform "heroic customer service acts?" Would any of your employees go so far out of their (the company's) way that the general public would think the action was incredible? Would any of your employees stop on the road and assist a stranded motorist? Alternatively, would they telephone for assistance and wait until help arrived? Would any of your employees deliver a parcel to a customer at 3 AM if that was the only time the customer could be home? Would your employee stick up for you in a chat room of ten others, all of whom are overreacting to negative rumors about your company? Would your employees work any time of day or any day of the year, within reason, without being "ordered" or begged to do so?

29 To what degree have you nurtured internal transparency between departments or divisions within your corporation? Are there bureaucratic, political, or personality-based boundaries separating divisions? Or is "the customer" the focal point of all direct and indirect company activity?



A Simple Quiz: Where Are You?

30 Is "common sense" a prerequisite for hiring any new customer service employee?

31 Do you spend an inordinate amount of time on negative generators like delinquent accounts, employee discipline, inside industry gossip or developing policy and bureaucracy?

32 Do you generously hand out praise, rewards, incentives and accolades to reward acts of customer service excellence or positive suggestions for improved service? Do you sincerely perform these acts?

33 Do you have at least one person close to you (or yourself) who has excellent radar/intuition to use as a beacon for "good" human policy?

34 When was the last time you went through your company orientation program? Or reviewed it to make sure it hasn't gone stale?

35 If you stopped ten people on the street and asked them who your company was or what they thought of your company, do you know the real answer? Do you care?

36 Are your most senior managers afraid to show that they are human? Are they comfortable with your lowest level employee? Would they have a sincere conversation about your company with that person or the employee's growth prospects?

37 Do your most senior managers take the initiative to spend time with customers and/or non-customers to test how your service and image are fairing in the marketplace?



38 Have you built up a reservoir of goodwill in the marketplace?

39 Do you encourage quantifying goodwill?

40 Would the president of your company accept customers calling him/her at home at one in the morning?

41 Do you empower frontline staff to do "whatever it takes" to take care of the customer?



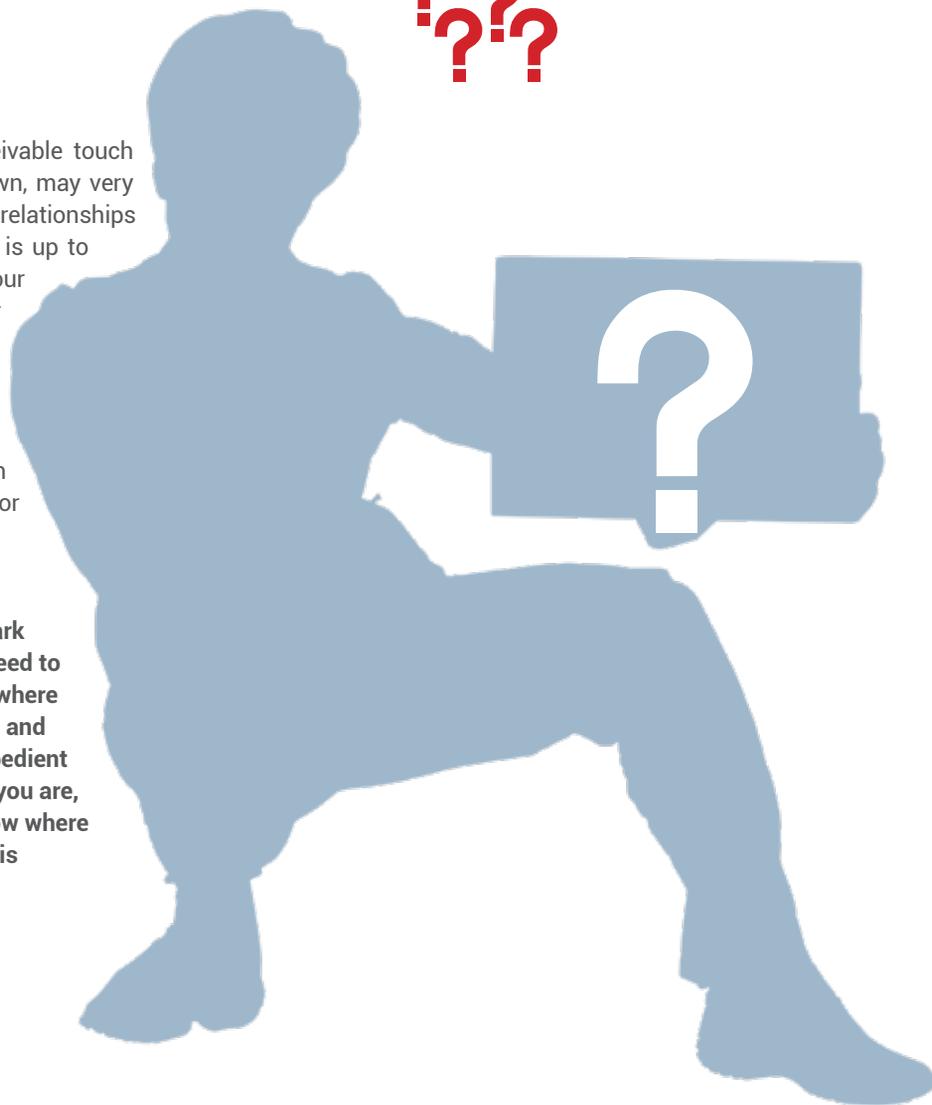
You get the idea. The preceding is a test for you to determine how close you are or aren't to practicing WCCS. Here's the real test though. If you have already reached WCCS, you already know the correct answers, and can anticipate all of the questions. Reaching WCCS is not rocket science, it's not a science at all; it's an art - the art of watching, reading, observing, and managing people, and those people include you.

The preceding list of questions is by no means all-inclusive. It is merely a litmus test of sorts for you to hold up to your own organization and compare. The race has started, spurred on even more so by the sometimes perceived and sometimes real immediacy of service created by the Internet. If you have not joined this race to deliver WCCS, the clock is



ticking. Real WCCS, delivered at every conceivable touch point, by sincere employees, from the top down, may very well be the tool that starts and maintains the relationships with customers that keeps you in business. It is up to you how good you get at it, particularly in your own industry and your market. You and your service will be compared, by word of mouth, in the media and/or online, by one means or another. The leaders in WCCS will begin to pull away from the rest of the pack, and the world will quickly know about it; good for those whom embrace WCCS and perhaps not so good for those who don't.

So, use the test in this chapter to benchmark yourself against where you either think you need to get to or know you need to get to. Rephrase where appropriate and have all your management and employees take the test. It will be a very expedient way for everyone to “instantly” know where you are, how you might compare to the best, and show where you need to go and how much work is ahead of you.



Tips and Hints



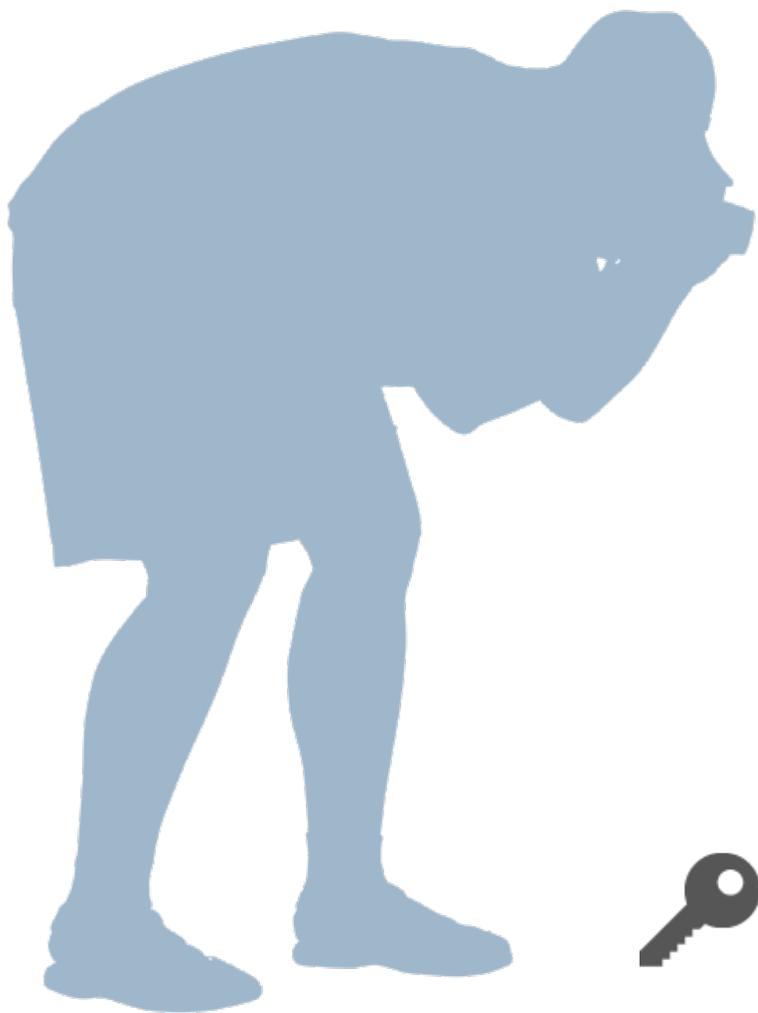
- 1 Never let others, particularly the media, define who you are to your own customers.
- 2 Never let others, particularly the media, have the last word on your business, particularly to your customers.
- 3 Talk to your customers regularly. As you talk in life to those you know, talk to your customers. They, after all, pay your salary. Isn't it a good idea to let them know you're one of the "good guys?"
- 4 Build up a sizeable reservoir of goodwill. You're going to need it someday.
- 5 Never, ever, mislead a customer or an employee.
- 6 Never, ever, lie to a customer or an employee.
- 7 Make your organization transparent. Tear down division walls and get virtually all employees to buy into the one common element- serving customers. All departments, regardless of what they do, serve this purpose.
- 8 Consult your frontline staff before you propose customer policy changes, product changes, marketing campaigns, and promotion campaigns.
- 9 Tell your CEO, senior VPs, executive VPs and board members to take a few customers to lunch once a quarter. (If they do it once a year, that's more than most).



- 10 Tell your CEO, senior VPs, executive VPs and board members to spend time with customer contact personnel once a month. (If they do it once every six months, that's more than most).
- 11 Never underestimate the value of as many people as possible knowing who you (your company) are. Never underestimate the damage that you can do if you or your company becomes arrogant.
- 12 Never, ever, ever let unfairness creep into any level of your organization, in any way, shape, or form.
- 13 If your employees don't know the answer to a customer's question, make sure they say they don't know, but make sure they also say they'll find out and get back to the customer personally ASAP.
- 14 Try not to let a customer get too close or involved too quickly with an employee during business hours or in a business situation, in either a positive or negative circumstance.
- 15 Never manage your customer service world based upon the 5% of "bad" customers and negative customer experiences. Manage your world based upon the other 95% of customers.
- 16 Not all your employees will buy into your dreams or customer service plans. As long as virtually all your employees do, you are fine.
- 17 Every time you contemplate a policy change in customer service, if it will affect customers, think it through from the customers' perspective first, the customer service employees' perspective second, the shareholders' third and yours last.
- 18 Only substitute the bottom line when you must. World-



Tips and Hints



Tips and Hints

class customer service will support the bottom line more than you will want the bottom line to support world-class customer service. Hold yourself back if you can. The payout is worth it.

19 WCCS can be reached by any sized organization, as in two people or two hundred thousand people. Regardless of size, the common denominator is the same - people.

20 Reaching WCCS status is a tremendous challenge. Staying there is a tremendous challenge. Remaining humble is a tremendous challenge. But when the culture is finally cultivated, and the right mix and balance of life and business is found, the road is seemingly effortless.

21 Talk to customers in their language, not yours.

22 Put your list of desirable employee traits in your employee handbook and other as well. Don't be cute, self-serving, insincere, or patronizing in how you do it. Get the message across more than once.

23 Never underestimate the power of a SOI.

24 Never underestimate the reach of a SOI.

25 Every company and every employee and every customer has a SOI.

Agree



About The Author:

11: 28 PM



Creativity, in life, in business and the arts, has always been Randall Coleman's personal and professional hallmark. It was his creative drive and desire to deliver the best service possible that led him, at the mid-point of his career, to pioneer the field of world class customer service. The Handbook of World Class Customer Service is his testament to that effort, now in its second edition.



11: 30 PM

He started a professional creative career in the early 70's in Toronto with Rogers Cable TV, now the largest telecommunications company in Canada. Then, what was called cable TV, became his professional creative palette. There, he pioneered local cable TV programs. He created the first music VJ format and cable's first music videos, well before MTV, when he produced the award winning show, "You Can't Do That On Television." Continuing as a creative music video producer and cable TV maverick, he pioneered digital effects in music videos and national Cable TV satellite feeds with stereo sound. At the same time, he began writing songs. In 1978, he was the first cable TV producer featured on the cover of the cable industry magazine, Cable Communications, for his breakthrough documentary, "A Point of No Return."



About The Author:

11: 35 PM



In the 80's, his creativity moved from television programming to cable franchise development in the U.S. where cable was about to be unleashed. There, along with fellow Rogers colleagues, and later with Continental Cablevision, he developed cable franchise proposals that became the templates for today's high tech cable networks, conceiving "blue sky" concepts that today are proving visionary.



11: 49 PM

He spent the 90's applying his creativity to building and operating cable systems from the ground up in North America and Asia. These businesses were leaders in creative management and received the highest national awards and honors in customer service, marketing, programming and branding. ***In 1994, Continental Cablevision of St. Paul, the cable system he led in Minnesota, was selected by CIO Magazine as one of the top 20 customer service organizations in the world in the category in which it was judged, "Serving the Customer."*** That same year, his accomplishments in St. Paul were acknowledged when then mayor, Norm Coleman, (no relation) declared August 26 as "Randall Coleman Day." Also, in 1994, he was awarded the "Outstanding Service Award," by the Minnesota Cable Communications Association.



About The Author:

11: 50 PM



In 1994, while a vice president with Continental Cablevision, he became the first non-Asian CEO of an Asian media corporation, Singapore Cablevision, (SCV, now StarHub), and pioneered the development of cable TV in Asia. He has been a featured speaker and telecom panelist from Beijing to Boston. Randall has penned several books, including THE HANDBOOK ON WORLD CLASS CUSTOMER SERVICE, 2nd Edition, THE ADVENTURES OF THE PASPORTO MAN, THE ZEN CLUB, THE DREAMERS, THE LITTLE BLUE BOOK ON LIFE, THE STORM PROJECT, A BOOK OF SONG LYRICS and KING OF THE WORLD. Several more manuscripts are in the works.



11: 54 PM

In 2012, he founded The Moon Above Pte. Ltd., a Singapore publishing company. His books and creative products can be found at www.themoonabove.com.



About The Author:



12: 10 AM



Like