

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

HAPPY ABOUT CUSTOMER SERVICE?

CREATING A CULTURE OF CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE



KEN WELSH

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Happy About Customer Service?

Creating a Culture of Customer
Service Excellence

By Ken Welsh



20660 Stevens Creek Blvd.
Suite 210
Cupertino, CA 95014

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Happy About Customer Service?: Creating a Culture of Customer Service Excellence

Copyright © 2008 by Ken Welsh

All rights reserved. No part of this book shall be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without written permission from the publisher. No patent liability is assumed with respect to the use of the information contained herein. Although every precaution has been taken in the preparation of this book, the publisher and author(s) assume no responsibility for errors or omissions. Neither is any liability assumed for damages resulting from the use of the information contained herein.

First Printing: September 2008

Paperback ISBN: 978-1-60005-093-0

Place of Publication: Silicon Valley, California, USA

Paperback Library of Congress Number: 2008921964

eBook ISBN: 978-1-60005-094-7

Trademarks

All terms mentioned in this book that are known to be trademarks or service marks have been appropriately capitalized. Happy About® cannot attest to the accuracy of this information. Use of a term in this book should not be regarded as affecting the validity of any trademark or service mark.

Warning and Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to make this book as complete and as accurate as possible, but no warranty of fitness is implied. The information provided is on an “as is” basis. The authors and the publisher shall have neither liability nor responsibility to any person or entity with respect to any loss or damages arising from the information contained in this book.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Endorsements of 'Happy About Customer Service'

"We've all witnessed excellent customer service in our lives. 'Happy About Customer Service?' challenges leaders to bring out the best in their companies and themselves. If you're looking for a book to inspire you to do better, far better, in customer service, this is the book for you."

Simon Nynens, Chairman and CEO, Wayside Technologies Group, Inc.

"I just read this book and it is great. I love it! It will be a great tool for us and any other company who has the good sense to read it and apply."

Courtney Wight, Customer Service Manager, Headsets.com, Inc.

"Ken speaks directly to us in this book and provides us with all the tools to make a difference in the lives of our customers, and thus enhance our businesses, and consequently our own lives."

Michele Brandenburger, Class Act Productions, East London, South Africa

"Ken Welsh was one of the key catalysts that turned me from a terrified amateur at Toastmasters to a professional public speaker and TV presenter on Channel 9. He helped me to develop my message and then worked on how I could deliver it in a more meaningful way"

Chris Gray, CEO of Red Wealth Creations, a Presenter on "My Home" Channel 9 Sydney and author of 'Go for Your Life'

"Ken Welsh's approach to customer service focuses on getting back to the basics of communication. Our business focuses on selling technology products and services over the phone, so verbal communication is key. Ken has worked with our sales organization for nearly a year now and our sales reps have benefited by applying the techniques and skills he's taught."

Shawn Giordano, Senior Director of Sales, Programmer's Paradise

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Author

- By Ken Welsh
<http://www.letstalkcommunication.com>

Publisher

- Mitchell Levy
<http://www.happyabout.info>

Teclarity

- Teclarity
<http://www.teclarity.com>

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Dedication

Clichéd as it may sound and real as it is -
To my amazing partner Francesca and my parents, Don and Marcia,
for their tireless support, encouragement and faith.

Acknowledgement

This book could never have been written without the trust, support and friendship of Mike Faith and his amazing team at Headsets.com.

To me, this company represents the absolute benchmark in Customer Service—Mike calls it “Customer Love”—and that is exactly what it is. I encourage every Customer-oriented company to aspire to achieve what Headsets.com now takes as second nature.

Without the trust of my friends, for they are much more than mere clients, at Headsets.com, many of my techniques would have gone untested.

Here's to the incredible Customer Service standards set by one of the world's leaders in Service Excellence.

Thank you, Mike & Headsets.com.

And of course, without the amazing assistance, foresight, and tolerance of Mitchell Levy, Tom Pencek and their team at “Happy About”, I could never have succeeded at writing this thank you for making this book possible.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

A Message from Happy About®

Thank you for your purchase of this Happy About book. It is available online at <http://www.happyabout.info/customerservice.php> or at other online and physical bookstores.

- Please contact us for quantity discounts at sales@happyabout.info
- If you want to be informed by e-mail of upcoming Happy About® books, please e-mail bookupdate@happyabout.info

Happy About is interested in you if you are an author who would like to submit a non-fiction book proposal or a corporation that would like to have a book written for you. Please contact us by e-mail editorial@happyabout.info or phone (1-408-257-3000).

Other Happy About books available include:

- They Made It: <http://happyabout.info/theymadeit.php>
- Happy About Online Networking: <http://happyabout.info/onlinenetworking.php>
- I'm on LinkedIn — Now What???: <http://happyabout.info/linkedinhelp.php>
- Tales From the Networking Community: <http://happyabout.info/networking-community.php>
- Scrapy Project Management: <http://happyabout.info/scrapyabout/project-management.php>
- 42 Rules of Marketing: <http://happyabout.info/42rules/marketing.php>
- Foolosophy: <http://happyabout.info/foolosophy.php>
- The Home Run Hitter's Guide to Fundraising: <http://happyabout.info/homerun-fundraising.php>
- Confessions of a Resilient Entrepreneur: <http://happyabout.info/confessions-entrepreneur.php>
- Memoirs of the Money Lady: <http://happyabout.info/memoirs-money-lady.php>
- 30-Day Bootcamp: Your Ultimate Life Makeover: <http://happyabout.info/30daybootcamp/life-makeover.php>
- The Business Rule Revolution: <http://happyabout.info/business-rule-revolution.php>
- Happy About Joint Venturing: <http://happyabout.info/jointventuring.php>

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Contents

Foreword	Foreword by Mike Faith	1
Chapter 1	Using This Book to Create a Culture of Customer Service Excellence	3
	Now It's Your Turn	5
Chapter 2	Start with Your Customers in Mind & Be a Customer Yourself	11
	Consistently Lead from the Top	12
	Do Little Things Early —Rather than Big Things Late.	12
	Our Customers Know What They Want —so Let's Make Sure that We Do, Too.	13
	Choose the Best —and Be Prepared to Pay for It.	15
	Measure, Monitor, and Measure Again	15
	Catch and Reward	16
	Mind Your Language!	17
	Role Playing —Overt and Covert.	18
	Communicate, Communicate, Communicate.	19
Chapter 3	Our Customer Family	23
	Our Customer Family Tree	23
	Strangers	24
	Acquaintances	25
	Friends	26
	Family	27
	Blindly Proud Grandparents —How Fantastic are They?	28
	Nurturing Our Customer Family	29
	Assisting Evolution	32
	Strangers to Acquaintances	33
	Acquaintances to Friends	35
	Friends to Family	37
	Family to Blindly Proud Grandparents	39

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Chapter 4	In the Beginning	47
	What is a Customer?	47
	Who are Our Customers?	48
	Incoming Customers	49
	Internal Customers	50
	Inverse Customers	50
	Interpersonal Customers	51
	(The) In-You Customer	51
	What is Customer Service?	52
Chapter 5	Why Customer Satisfaction Isn't Enough . .	57
	99% Customer Satisfaction —Not Bad?	57
	The Three Customer Service Prompts	59
	The First Prompt: What Do They Want?	60
	The Second Prompt: What Do I Want?	62
	The Third Prompt: How Do I Help Both of Us ENJOY Getting There?	62
Chapter 6	Customer Service Excellence—a Piece of Cake	67
	The Basic Ingredients	68
	Adding Icing and Filling	69
Chapter 7	Mind Your Language	75
Epilogue	Customer Service Excellence: It's Up to You!	87
Author	About the Author	91
Your Book	Create Thought Leadership for Your Company	93
	Why Wait to Write Your Book?	94
Books	Other Happy About® Books	95

Foreword

Foreword by Mike Faith

Ken Welsh has been a mentor, trainer, and most valued consultant to my company, Headsets.com. Soon after we commenced putting Ken's teachings into practice, our Customer service staff started to enjoy their role more and to please Customers like never before. Customers loved the change, and our sales rose consistently.

The accolades followed: We were named in the Inc500 list of fastest-growing companies for three years running, and in 2006, won a prestigious Stevie Award for Best Customer Service Team. Ken Welsh's expertise enabled our company to achieve faster sales growth, more repeat business, happy Customers, increased profits, and a happier staff. Will *Happy About Customer Service* help your company enjoy these benefits as well? I say resoundingly, YES, YES, YES.

This book is an engaging read, and you could enjoy it for that reason alone. Most notably, it gets you thinking, then deciding, and then taking action. Ken leads you through the process, systematically. As you work through the book, Ken is by your side, teaching and asking key questions, helping you plan before you take action. The process is a proven fast-track method that will help you quickly achieve the positive changes that you want.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

A simple, yet essential lesson I learned from Ken is this: “The quicker we get started, the quicker we enjoy the rewards.” So, I recommend that you turn the page, enjoy the trip, *take action*, and start reaping the rewards.

Mike Faith
CEO Headsets.com, Inc.

1 Using This Book to Create a Culture of Customer Service Excellence

A question for you: Are you Happy About Customer Service? Genuinely Happy About Customer Service? If you aren't certain, consider the quality of:

- The Service you receive
- The Service you give
- The Service that your Customers deserve

If your answer is yes, then congratulations. Read no further.

If your answer, like mine, is no, perhaps, or maybe—try this question:

Do you want to develop your Customer Service standards so that you consistently, and to the endless pleasure of your Customers, deliver Customer Service Excellence? If your answer to this is YES, MOST DEFINITELY YES, and it's because you want to:

- engender improved loyalty among existing Customers
- attract new Customers

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

- surpass your peers or competitors because no one will do what you do with the level of excellence that you do it
- give yourself and your team a real sense of success and fulfillment
- improve your bottom line

Then you, like me, have the motivation to improve yourself, your team, and your company. So, read on!

I believe that, in virtually every job or career, Customer Service is an essential element. We often don't consider the “big picture” of who our Customers really are. Customers aren't simply the people who buy from retail outlets. In some way, we are all Customers to each other, each day. Most of modern life is about Service, from dealing with our peers to helping our children to negotiating with our boss.

Because Customers are an intrinsic and essential part of our lives, my suggestion is to recognize their significance by making them a proper noun—that is, always put them in capital letters. You always use a capital when you write the name of a city, a country or a person's name, so why not do the same for things that are important to you? These words deserve to be proper nouns because they are essential components of your daily life on them: Customer, Customer Service, Customer Service Excellence. You'll note that throughout this book, I've used capitals to create a few new “proper nouns” for people and actions that I feel are important enough to warrant it.

Let's first consider the impact of Customer Service. How great does it feel when someone goes out of their way to be helpful and friendly? When they perform beyond your expectations?

For me, excellent Customer Service always makes an impression. It makes me feel that someone really cares, and that I am much more than merely “potential for profit.” I leave the experience feeling so good that I want to do something to make someone else feel great.

Now think about the multiplier effect of this, because a Customer Service experience is, literally, more than the sum of its parts. If you deal with, say, 20 people each day, and they deal with maybe 20 people, who deal with 20 people, and so on...

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Based on that equation, in one day you have the potential to affect (directly and indirectly) 8,000 people. This is why it's so important to give and receive the best Customer Service possible—because it makes such a difference in the lives of everyone around us.

Thank you for buying this book and for expressing an interest in improving Customer Service. This book will guide you in your quest to grow, to prosper, and to have fun doing it. Each chapter offers insight and ideas to help you constantly achieve Customer Service Excellence.

Now It's Your Turn

For your first task, I'd like you to calculate how many people you are likely to affect in one week—make it a five-day week, to keep the math simple. (HINT: It isn't $8,000 \times 5$, it's much, much more)

The total number of people that I affect in 1 week is.....

Incredible, isn't it?

So, if you can affect that many people in one week, consider how many of those people are Customers, potential Customers, or know someone who could be a potential Customer. On a more esoteric level, it could be said that Customer Service makes a difference in not only isolated situations, but also in the world. I truly believe that by helping someone improve their day, the goodwill of that act will, undoubtedly, cascade down to others.

After many years as a business voice coach and Customer Service coach, it became overwhelmingly clear that, while there are many complex vocal, psychological, physiological, and other techniques for “dealing” with Customers, the most successful techniques all came down to this basic premise:

*Treat your Customers as you would like to be treated
when you are a Customer.*

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

I like people and I like helping people. In that spirit, you'll find that much of this book is written as though I'm talking with you. Consequently, you'll notice that I use “us,” “we,” and “our,” rather than “you” and “your.” This is intentional. It's the way that I work with a company—we have to be in it together. So, from this point onwards, we are in it together—Welcome Aboard!

I firmly believe that people are a very valuable resource, and, more importantly, that every Customer is a person.

As Stanley Marcus (of Neiman Marcus fame) said:

*Consumers are Statistics.
Customers are people.*

But enough of my quest to make the world a better place. You can decide for yourself to pursue a similar goal, or you might focus on providing stellar Customer Service in order to improve your bottom line. Regardless, one thing is clear: Customer Service is becoming a key “discriminator” for purchase choice. People like being treated well and choose Customer-focused companies over non-Customer-focused companies when other factors are equal.

The purpose of this book is to expand on that premise in a simple, easy-to-implement way, providing a skill set to ensure that you and your team continually differentiate your company from others through the provision of constant and continually-improving Customer Service Excellence. You will discover how to offer genuine Customer Care, because Customers genuinely care.

In this book, I'll guide you through my concept of Customer Service Excellence in the same way I talk to my various clients when working with them face-to-face. If you have a question, turn on your computer, link to the Web, and send me an e-mail, or better yet, give me a call. To help you further, I've included a complementary link to a stand-alone PowerPoint Presentation that can be used as a simple memory jogger and training tool.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

All of these techniques are “tried & true,” with many of them used consistently by one of my favorite companies—San Francisco-based Headsets.com, one of the world leaders in true Customer Service Excellence.

This book can readily be used as a manual to help you create a culture of company-wide Customer Service Excellence. Each chapter concludes with a section (“Now It's Your Turn”) for you to identify specific actions, objectives, or concepts to help you along the way. Write in the spaces provided and then turn these words into actions.

I've also issued a series of “challenges,” asking you to put some of the concepts into practice for a period of time. I'd love to hear about your experiences, so I also invite you to e-mail me at the address below. While you're online, check out the resources available at **The Centre for Customer Service Excellence** (<http://www.c4cse.com>).

Many of the concepts and steps in this book will seem basic and easy to implement. If that is the case, I've done my job. You'll find that I repeat myself—and for good reason—because, clearly, the more often we hear, see, and do something, the faster it becomes habit and the sooner we will be able to adapt it to our unique circumstances.

Ultimately, this book is meant to enhance Customer loyalty, attract new Customers, and (hand-in-hand with good economic management) improve your bottom line—so that you and your Customers will be *Happy About Customer Service*.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Chapter 1 Takeaways

1. This book will guide you in using Customer Service Excellence to achieve the following:
 - Engender improved loyalty amongst existing Customers
 - Attract new Customers
 - Create a company with no peers or competitors, because no one will do what you do with your level of excellence and
 - Give yourself and your team a real sense of success and fulfillment.

Customer Service has an immense cumulative effect. Consider how your contribution is part of the equation.

Always Remember:

*Consumers are Statistics.
Customers are people.*

*Treat your Customers as you would like to be treated
when you are a Customer.*

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN # 1

Let's establish a few starting points:

Who are you? (Please write down five words/short phrases that define who you are)

What does your company do?

What do you do in your company?

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

What do you want to gain by using this book?

What are you prepared to do to achieve Customer Service Excellence?

2 Start with Your Customers in Mind & Be a Customer Yourself

The Secret to Achieving Customer Service Excellence

Treat Every Customer as You Would like to be treated when You are a Customer Yourself.

With that basic premise in mind, let's expand on it together.

I'm often asked how to improve the bottom line of a company. My approach is to immediately direct my energy to improving the "top line": Company Culture, Management Style, and then, Customer Service Representatives.

Fundamentally, it is Company Culture that drives each and every person on our team.

Get this right, and the bottom line will look after itself.

If you ensure that all of your team are Customer Service Experts, (not simply CSRs), then your existing Customers will remain loyal, and you'll also attract new Customers. So, how do we improve your top line?

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Let's review some of the early, big picture aspects of establishing a Customer Service Culture, which will help you enthusiastically retain existing Customers and attract new Customers.

The basic steps (without these you'll be pushing it uphill all the way):

Consistently Lead from the Top

We must remember the significance of relationships within the company. After all, our Customer Service team members are essentially Customers themselves—management's Customers. If we expect our Customer Service Team to respect our Customers, we must show—clearly and unfailingly—the same respect from our Management Team. The goal is to lead by example and insist that middle management and supervisors maintain the same standards.

Do Little Things Early—Rather than Big Things Late

Each step mentioned below this line will help achieve a company-wide culture of Customer Service Excellence. They can be introduced as major initiatives or incrementally through individual cells within the company, depending upon the existing company culture and the receptiveness of the team to change. However, in my opinion, one of the most powerful principles to apply to anything in any situation is to do little things early rather than big things late.

If something doesn't work out the way that we thought it would, look at it, admit that it didn't work, and then take steps to rectify it immediately. This rule applies equally to marketing initiatives, staffing appointments, language ideas, new techniques, and even internal gossip (though there shouldn't be any when we maintain positive communication).

However, I also advise to choose your “little things” carefully.

Imagine a company in which a staff member hasn't turned up at work for a few days. Gossip will start within a day or two if people aren't aware of what is happening.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

So, what should we do?

Ignoring it would be a “little thing.” However, this would simply permit the gossip to continue. Telling our team not to think or talk about it would be another “little thing,” and again, this is likely to encourage people to think and talk about it.

My suggestion would be to get on the phone, find out what is happening, and then to trust our people and tell them what we can (this is covered by “Communicate, Communicate, Communicate,” an item later in this section).

Likewise, if someone's performance in a specific field is lacking approach, follow the above advice as soon as the problem is identified, rather than leaving it until irreparable damage is done.

Our Customers Know What They Want—so Let's Make Sure that We Do, Too

While some of our Customers' needs, wants, and desires are easy to predict (e.g., good value, great service, being treated with respect), other aspects may not be as obvious. Everyone carries their own unique needs. Consequently, it is essential to always look for new and innovative ways to find out what our Customers want.

Their wants will include how they want to contact us (face-to-face, by phone or Web), how they want us to contact them, how often they'd like us to contact them, how they'd prefer to pay us and, of course, how much they're prepared to pay.

And, while you're gathering these details, always remember to establish an understanding of the Customers' expectations (so we can exceed them):

At our disposal are a number of tools to discover what our Customers want, including inquiries by our Customer Service Team and the usual plethora of surveys (online, mailed, telephone, etc). However, the real range of possibilities is as endless as your imagination. I've worked with some companies that simply used online survey forms, while others hold Customer lunches, dinner cruises, office and factory visits.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Regardless of how we do it, it is essential to do it—consistently, regularly, and with some variety in format. And, whenever possible, we should help our Customers feel part of the process, giving them a sense that they are important enough for us to want their input.

Sure, it may cost a bit more to determine our Customers' desires; however, in the long run, we're more likely to increase our bottom line through Customer Retention, Customer Loyalty, and the best marketing tool of all, Customer Referral. As well as this, we'll be able to better gauge what our Customers value, how much our Customers are prepared to pay for what extras, and how long they're prepared to wait for various products and services.

Great examples of this include:

- Airlines that charge more for extra leg room
- Software companies that use web downloads and e-mails for urgent software upgrades, saving large amounts of money on couriers and catering to the urgency of the Customers' needs
- Electronics retailers who courier mp3 players and yet only snail mail batteries because they know that their Customers aren't prepared to pay more for the shipping than the price of the product

It can even mean that we can hold lower levels of stock, when we find that our Customers are prepared to wait a couple of days, while we order less common replacement parts and accessories from the manufacturer, rather than us holding them in our own storage.

An example of this is some of the newer electronic products that give their users advanced warning of an impending battery replacement. Because our Customers' appliance gives them a 10-day warning, we can take 5 days to get them their replacement battery direct from the manufacturer and so reduce the storage space that we need to devote to these batteries.

Ultimately, knowing these types of thing can help us better manage our company by increasing margin and decrease our overheads.

Choose the Best—and Be Prepared to Pay for It

This applies to employees, consultants, and training and techniques.

Remember that our Internal Customers are as important as our External (“paying”) Customers. When we set high standards, it means we need to recruit the best, train with the best, and reward the best performance.

However, if we only consider monetary amounts as measures of performance and if we only establish a monetary-based reward mentality, we will never achieve the ultimate levels of Customer Service Excellence. It is essential that we get feedback from Customers on the level of Service Excellence achieved by our team. Then, we need to reward those who achieve the best of several measures, not simply our best “sales people.” And just as we want our team to be inventive and find unique ways to exceed each Customer's expectations, our rewards also should be tailored to individual circumstances and our team's individual needs and desires.

Measure, Monitor, and Measure Again

Once we've found out what Customers want, we need to gauge our success in catering to their needs and desires. This allows our team to set standards to meet and then exceed. Once we exceed these expectations, can we raise our standards and continually strive to improve our Customer Service?

Never forget, as Jim Collins put it in his book, *Good to Great*: “*Good is the enemy of Great.*” So, once you've established your measures and standards, never settle for anything less than the best. And, always encourage your team to strive to exceed everyone's expectations—even their own. In other words, don't rest on your laurels. Once you achieve a good standard consistently, raise the bar and go for a great standard. And once you're great—go for fantastic.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Catch and Reward

(In contrast to “catch and release”—because we don't want to lose these great people)

This also applies to rewards and praise for our Team and our Customers. The adage, “Catch people doing things right,” should be ingrained as part of our culture in order to achieve Customer Service Excellence.

The quality of Service that can be provided is directly proportional to the energy and enthusiasm of an individual or a team. Consequently, anything that we can do to maintain this energy can result in improvements to our Customer Service.

The catch and reward can be as simple as, “The paperwork you do to schedule our team's annual leave is so fantastic. Our company could never be as successful as it is without that paperwork—how about you take the afternoon off as soon as you've completed it?”

A couple of examples:

A company that I work with regularly has always had good Customer Service and always had a supportive, friendly environment; however, on one visit I found that the energy was down. The team had become complacent about their work, their metrics, and, consequently, each other. Most of the team had been with the company for at least nine months, and they'd lost some of their enthusiasm. Not just for their work—for their fellow workers. This manifested in a relatively quiet workplace with no “buzz.” More importantly, it was also beginning to show in the numbers—their Customer Service ratings had dropped and their sales were starting to be affected ever so slightly.

To stay in line with my principle of doing little things early rather than big things late, I immediately asked if we could try an experiment.

Without the knowledge of any other teams, I asked one team to make a point of complimenting anyone that they passed in the corridor for one week. Within three days, the place was buzzing again and everyone was complimenting everyone else.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

I was asked to “pulse check” a company that I'd previously worked with. It had been a happy, friendly working environment that could easily recruit high caliber people and retain them because of the environment. Suddenly, they couldn't keep staff.

On my first day I simply observed. What caught my attention was a manager who turned a daily “walk-around”—originally designed to “catch people doing things right”—into a “find out what's going wrong” journey, and people had begun to dread seeing her in the morning.

I immediately asked her to compliment three people on each walk-around. Within one week, the energy was noticeably higher, and the Service rating and sales improved correspondingly. And with the next hiring campaign they had over fifty applicants for each position.

A simple step that cost nothing and made a big difference. Isn't that what we all want?

Mind Your Language!

Language is the most powerful tool at our disposal. What we say influences how others perceive us and how we perceive ourselves.

Great Customer Service Language involves a number of basic attributes, all of which should instantly become part of your company's communication culture, both internally and externally:

- **Positive Language.** Use it with our Customers, about our Customers, and among our team. Simple things such as using “absolutely” or “perfect” rather than “okay” can make an incredible difference to how the recipient of our message feels and what they take from our conversation.
- **Welcoming Language.** Never forget to deliver a cheerful, positive “Welcome” and “Farewell” message. Simply put, thank people for calling you or meeting with you, and wish them well when they go.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

- **Believable Language.** Maintain integrity in what you say and back it up with what you do. We must always believe in the language that we use and take ownership of it—customers can detect insincerity.
- **Trustworthy Language.** Make Promises and Keep them—there are no exceptions to this!

Role Playing—Overt and Covert

To ensure that our team has every training advantage available, never underestimate the power of role-playing to prepare:

- our new recruits before they meet our Customers,
- anyone before an important meeting (internal or external), and
- seasoned team members for new initiatives and for regular “fine-tuning” of their work to help them continually advance.

Recognize the importance of knowing what our Customers are experiencing. This version of role-playing is sometimes called “mystery shopping” (usually using professional companies), and it can give us a “feel” for what's happening. However, it will never replace the “feel” that we will get if we can do it in person and share our Customer's experience.

When we call a call center, walk into a shop, eat at a restaurant, or take a flight, we should never underestimate the value of our experiences as a Customer. We can always learn from the great work being done out there in the real world. Write down every great Customer experience that you have, see how you can adapt it to your work environment, and make it even better!

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

Do this internally, externally—anywhere and everywhere.

As Leaders, we need to communicate our ideas, needs, and desires.

Concurrently, we need to keep our team “in the loop,” and help them take ownership of where we are going and how we are all on the journey. A transparency of accountability and responsibility is absolutely essential in maintaining trust, morale, and a sense of ownership among our team.

Train with passion. Lead with passion. Recruit people who are passionate about Customer Service.

Remember: **Passion + Patience = Perfection**

Be Patient—perfection takes time!

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Chapter 2 Takeaways

To be certain of developing a Customer-Oriented Company Culture:

1. Consistently lead Customer Respect from the top.
2. Do Little Things Early—rather than big things late.
3. Listen to your Customers. They know what they want—so, let's make sure that we do, too.
4. “Catch and Reward”—catch our people doing great things and reward them for it.
5. Mind your language—consistently use positive, professional, and friendly language that inspires your team and encourages your Customers.
6. Communicate, Communicate, Communicate. Do this internally, externally, and any other “..... ally” that you can think of!

Always Remember:

Passion + Patience = Perfection
Be Patient—Perfection Takes Time!

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN #2

What can you do to lead our team with passion?

What can you do to find out what your Customers want and expect of us?

What are 5 exciting ways to reward your team?

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

How can you apply “little things early” rather than “big things late”?

When will you start taking these steps?

3 Our Customer Family

Now that you've established your Customer Service Culture, I'm going to join you on this journey, so from now on, in most instances, I'll refer to "our" Customers and "our" Team, rather than "yours."

Our Customer Family Tree

Let's consider the starting point of Customer Service: our Customer Family Tree. Since most everyone that we meet is a Customer of some type, the branches of this tree should be familiar to us. It simply reflects the basic types of human relationships and includes the following levels of familiarity:

- Strangers
- Acquaintances
- Friends
- Family

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

One of our key objectives should be to help our Customers evolve from one level of familiarity to the next (i.e., from strangers to acquaintances to neighbors to friends, and ultimately, to family). In order to do this, we need to understand each level's characteristics, challenges, and desires.

Strangers

Definition

A person that we don't know.

Description

A stranger doesn't know about us, nor us about them. They may not even know that our products or services exist.

Characteristics

Strangers have little or no interest in us or our products until they find that they need or desire what we provide, and even then, they may not be able to find us or our company.

Desires

A stranger's needs and desires may not initially relate to us or our company. However, circumstance often creates a need, desire, or curiosity for our services, which propels the stranger to discover them.

Challenges

1. Introducing an awareness of our services to someone who has never heard of us or what we do.
2. Fostering a stranger's curiosity in our services.
3. Helping a stranger recognize their need for our services.
4. Creating a desire to have and use what we can give them.

Acquaintances

Definition

A person that we know slightly.

Description

An acquaintance has little more than a passing interest in what we do or how we do it. They typically don't know that what we do could help them, or how.

They haven't used our services and will most likely “shop around” if they decide that they need what we offer.

Characteristics

While acquaintances may be aware of our services, they have no reason to show loyalty because they have never used them. They don't even know why they should prefer us to anyone else.

Desires

While a common factor for each acquaintance will be their desire for the best value for their money, each acquaintance's concept of “value” will be unique.

Challenges

1. Determining each acquaintance's concept of value.
2. Convincing an acquaintance that we provide the best value for their money.
3. Encouraging an acquaintance to go directly to us without shopping around, or at least, coming back once they have shopped around.

Friends

Definition

A person that we know well and like.

Description

Friends have used us before and are keen to find out more—and hopefully keen to use us again.

Characteristics

A friend is someone who already trusts us. We've successfully worked with them before (meaning that it's been mutually enjoyable, beneficial, and profitable). If it wasn't successful, it's highly likely that they are no longer a friend, and we've managed to commit the cardinal sin of de-evolving a Customer.

Desires

Like each of us, friends desire love. Friends are by choice—they can choose to stay with us or leave us. Just as in “real life,” this is a relationship that we must always endeavor to maintain and improve. We've invested in them financially and emotionally—we can't afford to lose them. They've bought from us a few times and we've impressed them with our Service and services. They don't want to look elsewhere because they're comfortable with us, and their chief desire is to have their expectations continually and reliably met. They want to be satisfied. If we've done our job correctly, they may even tell their friends about us. In short, they have invested with us, financially and emotionally. And, to our advantage, they don't want to lose us, either.

Challenges

1. Evolving friends to family. The best way we can help them evolve to “family” is to continually, reliably—and almost religiously—exceed their expectations!
2. When we've already been doing our best and set our friends' expectations high, finding new ways to exceed these expectations can be a major challenge. Be creative, be inventive, and ask your Customers how to do things better.

Family

Definition

People who are related to one another.

Description

While we obviously can't literally restrict our Customer base to those who share our gene pool, we can have Customers who share the characteristics of "Family." We love these people because they love us, and they love us because we love them! They will stand by us through thick and thin.

We have deposited so much good will in their "Relationship Bank," that even if we make a mistake, they'll forgive us.

Characteristics

Family knows us and what to expect from us; however, they still love to be surprised when we do even better than they expected.

They will stand by us, even if our services may not be the lowest price, because they see past the dollar value to the value of the ongoing relationship. This may be in terms of the special deals that we give our family, such as individualized Service from a person who knows their background and personal desires, a no-question return policy and on-going product support, or anything else that makes them feel "special."

We've treated them well previously, and they know that we'll treat them well in the future.

Desires

They want us to do well—of course, this is partially because it means that they can do well. No matter how much we like to think altruistically, we are human, and they are human, and to be human means that we often act with self-interest. That may be harsh but true. If we consider things this way, it can give us a completely fresh perspective.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

So, what does that basic piece of behavioral psychology mean in terms of Customer Service? It means that our family Customers want us to do well because:

- our success means that prices to them are less likely to increase,
- they can rely on us being in business for a long time, and they won't need to look around for a new supplier (don't we all like life to be simple and easy?), and
- they can boast to their friends and family that “I knew them when they were starting out” or “I get these great deals—you should see the special offers that I get as part of my loyalty program.”

Challenges

Genuinely exceeding our family's expectations can be quite a challenge, because every time that we deal with our Customers, we're trying to do our best (that's probably how these Customers became “Family”). Now we really have to “raise the stakes” and be creative so they can take pleasure in being our Customer, and become one of a very rare and special group—our *Blindly Proud Grandparents*.

Blindly Proud Grandparents—How Fantastic are They?

As the fifth and ultimate level of Customer familiarity, a blindly proud grandparent is a Customer for whom we can do no wrong. They are unconditionally loyal and sing our praises so strongly, so adamantly, so consistently, that they do our marketing for us!

They are our greatest fans and always will be.

Some people may refer to these Customers as “champions”; however, to me, they are more than that. Here's my account:

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

I remember being in my grandparents' house when I was around five years old, pretending I could juggle (I had no coordination as a child—nor do I now, come to think of it). In my case, three balls and two five-year-old hands tended to mean one thing, and one thing only—one ball too many!

Ultimately, that one ball too many went rogue and hit an antique vase. To my five-year-old dismay, a loud crash left the prized vessel laid out like a jigsaw puzzle beside my grandparents' bed (which, incidentally, I was bouncing on as I tried to juggle).

My parents and grandparents rushed to my aid only to find me attempting to rebuild a porcelain jigsaw puzzle. I was about to be, let's say, severely reprimanded, when both of my grandparents simultaneously acknowledged that their once cherished antique vase was “a dirty old flower pot that they'd been meaning to get rid of.”

That was an act of blindly proud grandparents. Now, do you see what I mean about them being more than our champions?

Nurturing Our Customer Family

In this modern, Internet-based world, our potential Customers have more resources at their disposal than ever before.

Take my services as an example.

I work with a small group of Customers to whom I provide exclusive Service, no matter where they are in the world. Sometimes, I will fly to their country and work with them face-to-face, other times I will coach over the telephone or via webcam. If the work doesn't require the spontaneity of the spoken word, we may even resort to e-mails.

Videoconferencing is playing a larger part in my life. At times, I may ask a Customer to videotape their presentation and e-mail the file to me. Then, we'll review it online or by phone.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Most of my Customers readily use all of the above techniques; however, ultimately, face-to-face is always a great way to ensure that it all comes together. So, regardless of where they are in the world, I can jump on a plane and know that I can be in their office within a day (airlines' schedules and breakdowns permitting).

I don't advertise—people usually find me through family-level Customers, and, because of the level of trust in those relationships, my new Customers usually don't shop around. The principle behind this is that there is no point for them to shop around when we have no competition—no one can do for them what we can, as well as we can. Plus, it doesn't matter if I'm next door or a hemisphere away; I'm the one they choose over anyone else, because, in today's world, they can!

I've told you that a Customer can choose products and services from all over world. I've painted the picture of a competitive world where Customer choice rules. And, specifically, while many of us continually complain that our economies are bleak and that we can't afford “things”—we really can. The average household in the developed world is more prosperous than ever before.

Take something simple, like a cup of coffee. We now have more ways of making a cup of coffee than our forefathers had ways to start a fire.

We can buy:

- Instant Coffee
- Coffee pots
- Percolators
- Electric drip-o-lators
- Manual drip-o-lators
- Turkish Ibriqs
- French Cafeteires
- Italian Moka-Napoletana Stovetop Pots

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

- Electric espresso makers
- “Café Bar” instant espresso machines
- “Mr. Cappuccino” short-cut machines
- I'm certain that you can name several more

So, what's the moral of all this?

Money = Choice

We live in an affluent society with enough money to let us make choices. We are human, and so we like to be able to choose. By exercising our prerogative to choose, we express our individuality, increase our self-esteem, and feel empowered.

How do we access this aspect of human nature to our best advantage? By recognizing the individuality and humanity of our Customers.

Increasingly, in our affluent world, Customers' choices are no longer solely governed by price. Clearly, price is considered; however, Customer choice is increasingly based on Service quality and personalization. This is where we can gain an immediate advantage over the companies who are stuck in the past, that is, companies who are still sitting, relishing their former glory as “the best discounter” rather than exploring the frontiers of Customer Service Excellence. As over the top as this may sound, I firmly believe that this is the new direction of “sales and Service,” and, ultimately, a way that we can all make a difference to everyone concerned. Just consider how amazing it would be if everyone treated everyone else exactly as they like to be treated when they're a Customer!

Previously, Customer choice was largely price-based, and we had to cut costs to compete. Now, we have a tool that costs very little and gives us a major edge: Customer Service Excellence.

If pricing is within an acceptable range, it will be the quality of Customer Service that differentiates between suppliers. And as excellent—even amazing—Customer Service is largely based on our culture rather than

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

our capital, we are immediately in a great place to create loyalty among existing Customers and to attract new ones, through minimal capital investment.

Our Customer Service is what will help us evolve strangers to acquaintances to friends. As a result, we will foster a family of loyal, supportive Customers and a select few Blindly Proud Grandparents.

With this in mind, let's start ensuring that our Customer Service is so amazing that we can confidently proclaim we have no competition—because no one else does what we do as well as we do it!

Assisting Evolution

Back to Darwinism—or helping our Customers evolve to a higher level. Let's see if we can help move everyone up a few branches on our Customer familiarity tree.

To grow and develop in our increasingly competitive business world, survival of the fittest is definitely a consideration. And, like Darwin, we can look at each “species” individually and explore their needs and desires as unique attributes. However, unlike Darwin, we gain little by looking back on history, because our Customers' are searching and longing for more; their needs and desires are constantly changing and developing. We must project forward to help our Customer evolve. The future's truly progressive and successful businesses will anticipate what Customers want—before they know they want it.

To accomplish this, it is essential to recognize that each step in our Customers' evolution poses its own unique challenges, each with many solutions. As Customer Service experts, it is up to us to identify our Customers' needs and desires, understand our own unique set of circumstances, and assess our company culture to choose the most effective solutions.

The following sections provide a brief summary of possible challenges you will face when transitioning Customers from one level of familiarity to another. It also offers a selection of solutions as a template for our

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

own set of solutions. There are clearly as many sets of challenges and solutions as there are Customers, so we need to be prepared to think before we act and to be creative in our approach.

Strangers to Acquaintances

Challenges

1. Introducing an awareness of our product or services to someone who has never heard of us or what we do.
2. Fostering a stranger's curiosity in our products or services.
3. Helping a stranger recognize their need for our services.
4. Creating a desire to have and use what we can give them.

Solutions

- Advertise and market.
- Create a unique profile for ourselves.
- Create a “presence.”

Advertising and marketing will provide incentives for strangers to develop into acquaintances, and for acquaintances to evolve into friends. There are numerous experts in these fields who have written books and given workshops specifically on these topics. My suggestion is that you check them out, look them up, and see what they have to offer. I also strongly suggest that you choose companies that you admire for their branding and marketing strategies, learn from what they do, and adapt them to our own unique circumstances. There's nothing like learning from other people's experience.

Customer Transition Examples

Because the transition from Stranger to Acquaintance is all about awareness, the typical approach for these transitions is through marketing and/or promotional initiative. Consider the Restaurants on Lygon Street in Melbourne, Australia, noted for their ability to transition Strangers to Acquaintances through their own specific type of marketing.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

As you walk along Lygon Street day or night, waiters and waitresses will stand outside their restaurants waiting to pounce on the unassuming stranger. They are trained to spot non-regulars to the area and to solicit them with descriptions of the “Dish of the Day” and the chef’s specialty for the evening. Their mission is to entice passers by to be aware of their restaurant, to come in now, and if not now, to ask, “What are you doing for dinner later tonight?” or “Perhaps, supper after a show?”

In several areas of the Middle East this is taken even further. I can remember arriving by bus in Hurgahda, by the Red Sea in Egypt. (This is before it became today’s major tourist resort.) The tourists were obvious, as they alighted the cross-country bus tired, dirty and dusty.

Throng of local men touting the value of adjacent hotels greeted you with: “Warm shower, my friend—clean sheets, no bed bugs—very cheap.” They were even delegated authority by the hotel owners to offer “A discount on the spot.” Within two minutes, there would be a simple, efficient transition of this tired and dirty Stranger to an Acquaintance.

There is an even more interesting transition technique used in Middle Eastern cities when a tourist is spotted standing around, looking at a map. (Even without the map, I stood out as a tourist.) A man greeted me with, “Hey, mister, where you from?”

“Australia,” was my simple reply. It was immediately met with:

“Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide—maybe, you know my cousin—you want direction?”

Before I knew it, my newfound acquaintance, who had one cousin in Melbourne (or whatever city I wasn’t from) had walked with me, guiding me to wherever it was I was trying to go, and suddenly, completely by chance (of course), we had stumbled upon his brother’s perfume shop, and, of course, it would be an insult if we passed without having a cup of coffee.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Talking with other travelers, you realize that there is no offense here—it's simply part of the game in transitioning Strangers to Acquaintances. These acquaintances may never come back; however, they are likely to make that one-off purchase.

While I'd prefer not to fabricate cousins in far-off places, I mention these techniques to illustrate the broad range of approaches. We don't always have to stick with conventional advertising to reach new markets.

I would encourage slightly more subtlety and veracity in our approach to this transition because, ultimately, we'd like the opportunity to help our Strangers evolve all the way to the top of our Customer Family Tree.

Acquaintances to Friends

Challenges

1. Determining each acquaintance's concept of “value.”
2. Convincing an acquaintance that we provide the best value for their money.
3. Encouraging an acquaintance to go directly to us without shopping around, or at least, coming back to us once they have shopped around.

Solutions

- Bond with our acquaintances.
- Develop a keen understanding of their personal needs and desires.
- Make it easy for our acquaintances to deal with us—let them choose the method.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Customer Transition Examples

For this transition to work, we are taking someone who has met us (and used our Services) once or twice, and now we're helping them to get to know us more. Personally, I would want to build my trust in the person/company. I'd want to know that they value me and remember me.

Let's look at an example of this type of transition that I experienced in San Francisco.

I'm fussy about coffee. I like my latte the way that I like my latte. In many parts of the U.S., it can be challenging to find espresso, let alone a good latte.

I spend a lot of time in San Francisco and have found some reasonably good coffee shops there. One day, a new coffee shop called "Dolce" opened near my apartment. I thought, "Hey, another coffee shop. At least, it's handy." That was all. Then, I walked past one day and noticed them installing an espresso machine and later a sign with the word "Illy." That was enough to say to me, these people are at least worth trying. They know a good brand of Italian coffee. So, try it I did. It was good.

A second time, and still good. This time "Steve" noticed my accent, asked me where I was from and what my name was. Now, every time I come in, they know me and that I'm Australian and they call me "Ken."

One time, on my first day back in San Francisco after being away for several months, I went in for a coffee and was greeted with a smile, a "Good to see you, Ken," and "You're back already."

I'll be back there again next weekend.

Friends to Family

Challenges

This transition represents two key challenges:

1. If our Customer Friends want their desires to be satisfied and their expectations to be met, the best way that we can help them evolve to Family is to continually, reliably—and almost religiously—exceed their expectations!
2. We must encourage our Internal Customers to continually put in the extra effort when they are already giving incredible Customer Service.

Solutions

- When we've already been doing our best and have set our Friends expectations so high, finding new ways to exceed these expectations can be a major challenge—we need to be creative, inventive, and ask our Customers how we can do things better for them.
- Spend time with our Family.
- Talk with our Family—share experiences with them.
- Show trust and show that we can be trusted too.
- Put ourselves into our Customer Friends' place and try to find things that would please and surprise us, if we were them.

Customer Transition Examples

We're really starting to raise the stakes here; however, there are still lots of examples of successfully transitioning Friends to Family.

On a small backstreet in Dubai, there is an Arab sweet shop. Great Arabian coffee scented with cardamom and a selection of sugary, syrupy sweets to make a dentist's wallet smile.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

I was taken there by a local friend who frequents the shop. Through this introduction, I very quickly leapt through the lower branches of the Customer Family Tree. Being introduced by someone already at the Family level is a big plus, so always remember the power of the personal referral.

Within one day, I was Mr. Ken, and the whole team knew my taste in coffee. Then, a seemingly simple thing happened. Mustafa was busy when we arrived, and he had business to talk with my friend. He simply beckoned me past the counter and, pointing to the kitchen, said, “See what’s fresh.”

Suddenly, with that extra trust, I had jumped all the way to Family.

Continuing along the theme of coffee—referring back to my coffee shop experience in San Francisco—recently, I returned to Dolce. I was greeted, as usual, with a smile and a: “Hi, Ken! Are you still up for a double latte in a single cup?” Not only did they remember my name, they made a point of remembering my strange taste in coffee after 3 months of being away.

They asked if I was busy: my reply was that I would be soon. Not right now, though. Noting this, Steve brought my coffee around to my side of the counter and began to tell me how nasty the storm had been while I was away. “Water up to here. You should have seen it

I’m definitely one of the Family now.

Recently, my coffee obsession reached the stage where I travel with my own small stove-top espresso maker. When I’m in San Francisco, I make a stove-top espresso each morning with breakfast. However, on weekends, I make a point of going and seeing Steve and his team to get my double latte in a single cup, a great greeting, and some news on the coffee shop and the rest of the Family.

Family to Blindly Proud Grandparents

Challenges

1. As with the friends to family transition, genuinely exceeding our family's expectations can be quite a challenge, because we've already established this as our modus operandi—now we've really got to “raise the stakes,” so that they can take pleasure in being our Customer and become our Blindly Proud Grandparent.
2. Choosing on which of our Customer Family members to spend the extra time, energy, and money to transition to Blindly Proud Grandparents is difficult. This can present a significant challenge, because often the Customers who become Blindly Proud Grandparents have their own unique (and often personal) reasons for giving us boundless love and support.

Solutions

- Increase their sense of ownership in what we do for them and how we do it, by providing them with opportunities to offer suggestions, and when they come up with a good suggestion, apply three simple sub-steps:
 - a. Thank them and tell them that we're going to try their suggestion.
 - b. Try their suggestion.
 - c. Tell them that we are trying their suggestion.
- Keep them informed and help them feel extra special.
- Give them reasons to be proud of us. When we win an award, refer to our Customers in the publicity and send something to our Family Customers thanking them for helping us get there.
- Be there for them—remember their birthday, and their wife's and children's names.
- Give them time, trust, and more time—make them your priority.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Customer Transition Examples

This is clearly an incredibly powerful transition and, probably, the most challenging. We're never quite sure what will make a Family Customer a Blindly Proud Grandparent. Sometimes, it's a big thing; however, more often than not, it's a seemingly little thing, and there are as many transitions as there are Customers.

My own personal examples of Blindly Proud Grandparents vary enormously. One Customer that I consider a Blindly Proud Grandparent is a person that I met many years ago, when we were introduced by a mutual friend.

Jim (my now Blindly Proud Grandparent) was then starting out in a new field and didn't have a lot of experience or capital. We talked about my experience in the field, and how I had approached things (both my successes and my challenges). When he left I gave him copies of a few documents that I'd put together to help me now that I was more established (checklists, tender documents, etc). Over the next year or so, I gave him a few more pieces of friendly advice. I wouldn't charge him for my services, because I liked him and he was just starting out.

A couple of years later, I received a phone call that began with, "I've got a big job and I need help." From that time onward, I've worked for and with Jim on many projects. He has sung my praises to more people than I can imagine, introducing me to some key clients with phrases like, "Ken's the best there is." These clients who are now Friends or Family and are referring me to other people, though never quite as passionately and supportively as Jim.

The flip side of developing amazing Blindly Proud Grandparents through longer-term relationships, like Jim, is shown by a Customer of mine in South Africa. In this example, time didn't permit a longer-term relationship to be built, because it was my first visit to South Africa, and I was only there for 2 weeks. And yet, a similar level of trust was developed in a short time because of a series of circumstances—I came highly recommended, this Customer needed exactly what I could provide at exactly the time that I could provide it (he was receptive and I was giving), and we "hit it off" immediately.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

This Customer was a Stranger until he attended a half-day workshop of mine. The workshop included some new techniques I'd been developing that struck a cord with him. He immediately successfully applied several of these techniques, and, suddenly, people would meet me at events and say, "Yes, Alan mentioned you; I understand that you're one of the best coaches in the world. Thank you for coming here."

In short, four hours lead to an incredible reputation in one city.

We never know when, or how, we'll create a Blindly Proud Grandparent—my best advice for this transition is to keep applying all of our Customer Service Excellence techniques in every way that we can and to keep being creative by finding new and interesting ways to captivate our customers.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Chapter 3 Takeaways

1. In the developed world, we value being valued.
2. The degrees of Customer/Company familiarity reflect levels of familiarity we have with the people we encounter in our daily life.
3. It is our goal to help every one of our Customers transition through the levels of familiarity to become family.

Always Remember:

*Blindly Proud Grandparents are our most valuable resource—
they are our mobile, high-credibility marketing department.*

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN #3

Who are your strangers?

Who are your acquaintances?

Who are your friends?

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Who is your family?

What can you do to help strangers evolve into acquaintances?

What can you do to help acquaintances evolve into friends?

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

What can you do to help friends evolve into family?

Do you have any blindly proud grandparents? If so, how did the relationship evolve?

Now, set yourself a time frame to initiate the actions that you've listed above.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

4 In the Beginning

For a start: Always be prepared to go back to basics.

Let's look at a few simple questions that you will, undoubtedly, know how to answer; however, occasionally asking ourselves these questions can remind us of things we may have put in the back of our mind, because of the “important” things that we have going on. They may even open our eyes to a few new possibilities.

These are questions that may seem obvious, yet very few companies ask them on a regular basis. In fact, only the very successful ones do.

When they get new answers, they adapt their approaches to suit them, or they re-visit their current approach to see if they can improve on what they already do.

What is a Customer?

Here are a few well-known quotes, generally attributed to that well-known, universally-renowned expert “Anon,” about what constitutes a Customer:

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

- A Customer is the most important person in this office ... on the phone, in person, by mail or e-mail.
- A Customer is not dependent on us ... we are dependent on them.
- A Customer is not an interruption to our work ... they are the very purpose of it. We are not doing them a favor by serving them ... they are doing us a favor by giving us the opportunity to do so.
- A Customer is not someone to argue or match wits with. Nobody ever wins an argument with a Customer.
- A Customer is a person who brings us their wants. It is our job to handle them profitably for both the customer and ourselves.

Who are Our Customers?

Basically, everyone that we come into contact with is one of our Customers.

The basic principles of Customer Service are exactly the same as the basic principles of dealing with other people. By adopting the concept that every situation is a type of Customer Service event, life starts to become amazingly simple, because we can start to break our relationships and interactions into simple, predictable categories. For instance:

There are only a handful of Customer categories (five, to be precise). They are the “In” Customers:

1. **In-coming** Customers
2. **In-ternal** Customers
3. **In-verse** Customers
4. **In-terpersonal** Customers
5. **In-You** Customer (YOU)

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Try to find someone that doesn't fall into one of those categories. If you can, contact me at **The Centre for Customer Service Excellence** (<http://www.c4cse.com>), quote this reference in the book, and I'll give you a free telephone coaching session.

Now, let's talk about these in more detail.

Incoming Customers

These are the Customers with whom we are most familiar. They are the “traditional” Customer—someone who walks into our store or office, telephones us, writes to us, or in some other way contacts us, because they want our services.

Great. We're all clear on In-coming Customers. These are the Customers on whom we concentrate the majority of our effort and rightly so—they're the ones that are closely linked to our bottom line, which is the profitability of our company. And let's face it, that's ultimately why you bought this book—to increase your bottom line.

Never hide from that fact. You want your company to make more money!

Still, you're thinking, there must be more to it...otherwise, why would Ken even mention the other four Customer Categories?

Great Question!

Each of the other Customer categories will help us achieve even higher levels of excellence for our In-coming Customers, which, in turn, will:

- make them happier,
- encourage their loyalty,
- help them buy more from us,
- encourage them to spread the word to other potential Customers, and
- make us happier, because our bottom line will continue to increase.

Internal Customers

While fairly obvious, they sometimes slip under our radar. These are our team. Everyone within our company—our Customer Service experts, our managers, supervisors, team leaders, or the person right next to you right now (if you're reading this at work!).

How does this help us? By appointing the right people and treating them with the respect that we expect them to have for our In-coming Customers, not only do we have a happy team of people who enjoy working with us, we lead by example, and set the standard that we expect of our people when they deal with our customers.

Inverse Customers

This one could start you thinking, or, at least, I hope it does. By “inverse,” are we talking upside-down, inside-out, or transposed?

It's sort of “yes” to all of the above.

Our inverse Customers are the people and companies that most people think of as our suppliers, people to whom we are Customers.

So why should we apply the same Customer Service standards to these people as we apply to those who pay us money for our products?

First, we want to know that they will have loyalty to us, that they will treat us well and respect our business. Take, for instance, a situation in which we need something, and we genuinely need it with urgency. If we were “just any Customer” to our suppliers, we'd get the product if and when they were ready to give it to us. (Unless, of course, they've read this book, too!)

On the other hand, if we've spent time and energy fostering a relationship with our supplier and we've treated them the way that we treat our highly-valued In-coming Customers, they'll most likely prioritize us. They may even give us (amazement of amazements) a genuine estimate of the product's delivery time, rather than a plucked-out-of-the-air ballpark figure.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Our supplier may even try to apply one of our key concepts: “Set a realistic expectation and then exceed it.”

Additionally, by treating our inverse Customers with respect, we're probably going to experience the following:

- Reduced delays
- Better pricing
- Special deals and opportunities

So, why not try it?

Interpersonal Customers

Now this is where Customer Service can really become interesting—our personal life!

Customer Service doesn't need to stop with monetary gain—why not try to gain emotionally, intellectually, spiritually, and romantically? All of these Customer Service concepts can be applied to our friends, family, acquaintances, and people that we meet on a daily basis.

For example, dealing with others could become much easier if we simply asked ourselves three questions before we talked about making an important decision:

- What do they want?
- What do I want?
- How do I help both of us enjoy getting there?

These are *The Three Prompts*. More of this later.

(The) In-You Customer

This one is REALLY important!

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Never neglect the Customer within yourself. If we do, and don't enjoy what we're doing, none of our other Customers will enjoy dealing with us—so why would they keep coming back?

This rule applies to every category of Customer:

- The people who buy from us.
- The people who work with us and for us.
- The people who supply us.
- Our family and friends.
- Everyone that we come into contact with.

A final question for this section:

What is Customer Service?

Customer Service means caring, “going the extra mile,” being friendly and helpful, not “pushing” or “selling” in an aggressive manner. In a nutshell, it is treating our Customer with the respect that we all desire.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Chapter 4 Takeaways

Basically, everyone that we meet is a Customer in some way and they fall into five easy to remember “IN” categories:

1. Incoming Customers. These are the people who buy from us.
2. Internal Customers. Our co-workers.
3. Inverse Customers. These are the often—overlooked Customers who consider us their Customers.
4. Interpersonal Customers. These are the Customers who see us when we don't want to be seen. They are often our Customers twenty four hours of every day, through sickness and health.

Always Remember:

(The) In-You Customer.

Give yourself the care, love, and respect that you deserve. If you don't, you won't be capable of giving it to any of your other Customers.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN #4

Who are your In-coming Customers?

Who are your In-ternal Customers?

Who are your In-verse Customers?

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Who are your In-terpersonal Customers?

Now, for the tricky one, tell me who you are?

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

5 Why Customer Satisfaction Isn't Enough

99% Customer Satisfaction—Not Bad?

How would you feel if you (and your company) had a 99% success rate with customers?

Let's Look at Some Numbers.

What does a 99% success rate mean?

For perspective, in the US alone:

- 96 aircraft flying to San Francisco would land at the wrong airport every day.
- 40,000 babies would be given to the wrong parents every year.
- 131,000 telephone calls would be misconnected every minute.
- 7,458,000 people would get lost on the way to the supermarket every day.

No, those figures don't equate specifically to Customer Service; however, they serve as an example of the consequences of a 1% error.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Let's think more realistically about Customer Service and Customer satisfaction. As you already know, I'm an advocate of achieving a lot more than simply "satisfied" Customers. Here's part of my reasoning:

How would you feel about achieving a 95% Customer Satisfaction Rate? It requires a bit of effort, yet it is achievable with the right people in place and an appropriate company culture.

Let's look at what 95% Customer satisfaction could mean when coupled with the consequences of having 5% of our Customers unhappy.

In a recent sample of Customers (from the US, UK and Australia), I found that:

Only 5-6% of unhappy Customers come back to us to complain. That means 95% of unhappy Customers go away and never come back.

The average unhappy Customer tells ten other people and some tell thirty or more people about their experience. What does this mean to us? If we have a 95% satisfaction rate with our Customers and serve an average of sixty Customers each day, three people may go away unhappy and at least one of them could tell between ten and thirty people. Based on these numbers, over a year, between 2400 and 7200 potential Customers could be told that we don't satisfy Customer's needs. If this was the average for every CSR in a company with, say, thirty CSRs, that's upto 216,000 Potential Customers, each year, that could be told that we don't satisfy Customer's needs.

Here is a personal experience to demonstrate the point. I had flown with a specific airline, mainly because several of my US clients preferred to use it; it was the cheapest carrier between Australia and the US at the time. I reached the stage where I had many frequent flyer points and received automatic upgrades and other privileges. However, ultimately I became dissatisfied. Out of twelve consecutive flights, nine had been delayed by more than two hours (two of these by more than twelve hours) and one flight was diverted to Hawaii en route to San Francisco.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

This particular flight was the last straw for me, as it commenced with a loud bang on take off, and still we flew over the Pacific, only to end up diverting to Hawaii as a consequence of excessive fuel burn. We were then gradually re-booked onto other flights. To this day, I have not received a verbal apology from anyone that I dealt with, and when I checked my frequent flyer points, I was only credited with a Honolulu-San Francisco flight. According to the airline, my flight from Sydney was cancelled—and yes, it was—however, how do they think I got to Honolulu?

To date, I have told this story—with much more detail including the airline's name—in many of my workshops, so I imagine that this unhappy Customer has told well over 1,000 people that this particular company most definitely didn't satisfy my needs.

However, various studies also show that a happy Customer may tell between six and nine people how happy they are with the Service they receive, and if we consider our Customer Family and Blindly Proud Grandparents, who knows how many people will be told how great we are.

That's what achieving Customer Service Excellence is all about.

The Three Customer Service Prompts

One of the most useful tools that I have found for achieving Customer Service Excellence, along with the five Customer categories (The IN Customers), is The Three Prompts. These are three simple questions that I encourage you to ask yourself before all important interactions:

1. What do they want?
2. What do I want?
3. How do I help both of us ENJOY getting there? (Note: It is a journey.)

The Prompts apply equally well in any environment from a high-level business meeting to dealing with a Customer buying a pair of shoes, through to negotiating with your teenage daughter about using the family car. They lend themselves well to any situation that includes two or more people who want something from each other.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Most of us ask ourselves these questions subconsciously; however, occasionally it helps to consciously ask yourself these questions.

I refer to them as “prompts” because I'd like them to prompt you to action in response to your answers.

The First Prompt: What Do They Want?

They definitely want our product or service.

It is almost certain that they will also want reassurance. This is usually the first want or need of any Customer. They want reassurance that they have the right company, the right person in the company, the attention they deserve, and the product or service they need.

After they have received our reassurance, a whole new set of wants can develop, and it is how we cater to these psychological needs and desires that can make the difference between Customer Service Satisfaction and Customer Service Excellence.

Let's consider how this Prompt applies to our In-coming Customers:

When someone calls us or walks into our office or store, what do they want?

First, as we just mentioned, they want to be reassured.

Step one - Reassurance - We should be friendly and positive, thank them for calling or coming in, introduce ourselves by name, and use their name (early and often).

We've now made them feel welcome—and we've put ourselves on the line by giving them our name. This immediately reassures them, because they know we wouldn't freely give them our name if we felt they were likely to use it to lodge a complaint.

This only takes a few seconds, which is great, because numerous studies have shown that between five and ten seconds is all we have to win or lose the “first impressions game”!

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Reassurance applies to all of our Customer Categories.

Once reassurance is established, we can progress to our Customer's various other needs, wants and desires.

Step two of this prompt will vary slightly dependent upon the Customer Category:

- **In-coming Customers.** They may want to be dealt with quickly, to be given options, to feel in control, to fully explain their feelings or circumstances. The list is as long and varied as our Customer base. It's up to us to determine the most powerful and urgent of their needs and to try to accommodate them as fully as possible, while still selling our product or service and recognizing our Company's needs.
- **Internal Customers.** This can provide leverage in an "I can do this for you if you do this for me" negotiation (although, I trust that you'll say it more subtly than that!) An example from my own work: In my days as a transportation planner, I had a relatively young team member who could have easily found some of our work dull and uninspiring. I knew that one of his ultimate goals was to live and work in the U.S. So, I pitched tasks to him in light of how they would look on his resume, and how that could help him broaden his experience in a manner that would ultimately make him an attractive candidate to an overseas agency, school, or employer. I wasn't manipulating the situation so much as I was finding a way to make these tasks more palatable—and thus, helping him achieve a new perspective.
- **Inverse Customers.** Another way of looking at this is, "How can we help our suppliers help us?" Maybe our Inverse Customers want us to deliver on Tuesday, because they have an adjacent delivery on Tuesday or maybe?
- **Interpersonal Customers.** If we don't know what our family, friends, children or spouse want, we're in deep trouble from the very start.
- **The In-You Customer.** Knowing what the inner you really wants can make a significant difference in your life. Without this, it's hard to respond to the Second Prompt.

The Second Prompt: What Do I Want?

This is the simplest prompt to answer, because it is a personal response based upon the direction of our own individual drives (i.e., do we want to increase our unit sales, our margin, our total sales dollars, or do we want to create solid, reliable, long-term Customer relationships. It's up to you to know where you're coming from and what you want to achieve. If you know that, and you should before you walk in the door and sit down at your desk, then you've already nailed this one.

The Third Prompt: How Do I Help Both of Us ENJOY Getting There?

This Prompt is such a critical component of the overall Customer experience that the first two prompts will have little impact if not used in conjunction with this one.

Your response to this Prompt will be adapted to each Customer and will include various combinations of the techniques discussed in the next chapter.

This Prompt has two components, the journey and the enjoyment, and if both parties don't enjoy the journey, why should either bother?

Let's consider how these Prompts can be applied to a perfectly normal Customer Service situation.

While I was in college, I drove taxis. It was a wet afternoon, pre-Christmas. I was flagged down by a woman loaded with her Christmas shopping. As I drove her home, we established a rapport. She had been shopping for her three children and had some great presents, though, according to her, she had spent a tad more money than planned.

What did she want? Reassurance that she would get home safe and dry with her children's presents, before they arrived back from school.

What did I want? I wanted to enjoy what I did. My university degree was my focus, and taxi driving was simply a way to make extra money in the meantime.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

How did I help both of us enjoy getting there? I reassured her that the timing was fine, I'd been listening to the radio traffic reports and there weren't any delays out there. She was in a festive mood, so I talked with her (as a cabbie you always try to read the "talk" or "don't talk" signals, as soon as possible). Finally, she told me that she lived a few blocks further along, but this was as far as she could afford to travel with me.

Hey, it was Christmas, school was already out, and she'd been a nice passenger. I took her home for free. "Merry Christmas" and her smiling "thank you" was more than enough to pay for the extra minutes.

A Customer calls in with software issues on their computer.

What do they want? Reassurance that we can help them, so immediately we say something like, "Let me help you with that" or "I can definitely help you with that." Even if we can't be certain that we can resolve their issue immediately, ultimately there will be something that we can do.

What do you want? For this example, let's say you want to meet your Customer Service rating metric.

How do I help both of us enjoy getting there? I immediately reassure the Customer (as above). I find some common ground to ensure there is a bond, and at the same time, keep them focused on providing me with the information I need. I keep a friendly, pleasant tone of voice, so the Customer knows they have done the right thing by calling on me and that I enjoy helping them. I smile, use the Customer's name, and stay positive.

It's not too hard for any of us to accomplish this. We just have to be ourselves, enjoy our work, and enjoy dealing with our Customers.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Chapter 5 - Takeaways

Why isn't satisfaction enough?

1. 95% of unhappy Customers go away and never come back.
2. The average disgruntled Customer tells nine other people.
3. Some disgruntled Customers tell more than twenty other people.

Always Remember:

Use the three Customer Service prompts.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN #5

What are the implications of unhappy Customers?

Please list three “answers” to the Second Prompt.

What are the key components of the Third Prompt?

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

6 Customer Service Excellence—a Piece of Cake

Customer Service Excellence can be looked at as a cake.

Let's take a moment to think about cakes.

As with the coffee makers we mentioned earlier, there is a plethora of types of cakes—virtually one for every type of Customer. And even if we all ate only sponge cakes, each of us could still have a unique cake by adding cream or jam, marzipan or sugar icing, wedding type icing, or sloppy sweet fruit flavored icing.

Essentially, basic ingredients might make a basic cake; however, we can work wonders with the right icing & filling.

In this section, we'll discuss various Customer Service tools and techniques that will help us add flavor and variety to our Customer Service cake.

The Basic Ingredients

This section provides a brief overview of the key ingredients that will make every Customer Service transaction palatable. It is up to us to decide on the proportions to use with each Customer in each unique situation:

- **Active Listening.** Through active listening, we can encourage our Customers, validate them, and clarify their meaning to confirm that we are receiving their message.

Active listening phrases can include:

- “Could you please tell me more about that?”
 - “Could you explain that in more detail for me?”
 - “How does that affect you?”
- **Common courtesy.** Never forget the power of a “please” or “thank you.” They can go a long way in cementing a Customer relationship—especially, “thank you.”
 - **Names.** Use ours initially and theirs as frequently as is practical.
 - **Open friendly and close positively.** Those first and last moments are always critical. First impressions are the strongest, and we can destroy all of our great work with the wrong close of a transaction. Keep our energy and enthusiasm up at all times and always stay focused on our Customer's needs.
 - **Smile.** Always. Before, during and after the call. I know it sounds clichéd; however, people can hear it in our voice as well as see it on our face. Smile genuinely—it'll make us feel good, too.
 - **Positive language.** Use words such as, “absolutely,” “certainly,” “excellent,” “perfect,” or “yes.” Positive language, and the language that we use in general, is so important that the next section of this book (“Mind Your Language”) is devoted exclusively to it.

Adding Icing and Filling

In the list below, is a series of techniques that can be applied to various Customer Service transactions. It is up to us to consider what combinations will really put the icing on the cake for each of our individual Customers:

- **Acknowledge challenges without encouraging.** Acknowledge our Customer's feelings, then immediately refocus the dialogue back to the actual issue and away from the emotion.
- **Allow venting.** Listen. Let people “get things off their chest.” People need to be “heard,” even if we can't always fully accommodate their challenge.
- **Anticipation.** Listen, as our Customer speaks, and consider the direction they are likely to take the dialogue. This will help us work with our Customer more efficiently by answering some likely questions in advance—that is, by including several key points in one statement.
- **“Because.”** Explain our reasoning by using the word “because.”
- **Chain questions.** Use questions that relate to the answer our Customer gave (immediately) prior to our response.
- **Common ground.** Assist in creating a rapport find “common ground” with our Customer.
- **Distraction.** Use a physical or verbal “device” to momentarily break Customer's emotional focus long enough to disengage the emotional elements of the dialogue. The distraction technique uses an item that is related to the topic, such as asking our Customer to look at the Web site or a catalog.

When we use this technique, it's also essential to refocus the conversation onto the topic or information that will best help us help our Customer.

- **Empower.** Feel free to give power without relinquishing our own. Let our Customer make informed choices.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

- **Exceed customer expectations. ALWAYS.**
- **Expert recommendations versus personal recommendations.** Personalizing a call is always helpful. For example, say, “I use that [product name] and I really like it.” Remember, too, that our personal recommendation is often taken as a professional or “expert” recommendation because of our role as a CSR/E for our company.

To differentiate these recommendations, use phrases like “in my personal opinion” or “in my professional opinion.”

- **Listen: Talk ratio.** Our focus on active listening and using questions to prompt customers to provide information can occasionally lead into a situation, where we are talking more than our Customer. In order to help customers feel special, it is essential that they are encouraged to talk and that they feel “heard.” To do this, I suggest that we try to maintain a 70:30 listen/talk ratio.
- **Offer alternatives.** Be prepared to offer alternative solutions to our Customer's needs. While we know that the Product X is generally the preferred solution, always listen to our Customer (sometimes price, color, size, or even place of manufacture may be a consideration for them).
- **Plain language.** Don't confuse Customers with acronyms and numbers, when we can use plain English. There's no need to impress our Customers with technical jargon unless they ask us for it, or speak to us with it.
- **Refocus.** If the conversation tends to drift away from the information required to help the Customer, be prepared to refocus the conversation. This is also an important technique to master when dealing with product support inquiries and Customer Service recovery (complaints).
- **Saving face.** Always be prepared to let our Customer “save face”—if they have made a mistake, give them the opportunity for a gracious “out.”

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

- **Silence.** Silence is an extremely powerful tool. It comes in two forms:

Short Silence, which allows a count of “one, two” to ensure that we don't interrupt a Customer; this can be applied to most Customer types and situations.

Long Silence, which should be used carefully and sparingly. A key time to use this version is when we find a Customer, particularly a “fast talker,” who gets into an information loop and doesn't permit us time to provide them with the information they need—or for us to obtain the information that we need—in order to help them.

- **Softeners.** These are words that soften an otherwise “abrupt” statement. For example, rather than saying, “You've made a mistake,” try, “I think that you may have misinterpreted ...”
- **Summarize.** “Read back” information to re-confirm that we have everything we need to know. In the case of product support calls, this can be subject to a role reversal where we ask our Customer to read back information or instructions that we've provided to them— “a ding and a dong.”

When summarizing, we also have the opportunity to reinforce an offer, for example, “That's 3 CS 55 on a 60 day free trial. Would it help you, if we included three handset lifters in that free trial?”

- **Topic timeout/brain break.** If a transaction gets into an information loop, where we and/or they are repeating the same information for the third or fourth time, there is an opportunity to use a “time out” or “brain break” by taking the conversation in a new direction (unlike the distraction technique, which uses a related item or topic). For example, we could try to find common ground on an unrelated topic.

The “time out” should be brief, quickly and clearly refocusing the conversation to the starting point of the information required to accommodate our Customer: “... that's great ... May I ask you a couple of quick questions?...”

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Chapter 6 - Takeaways

1. Customer Service Excellence can be looked at a little like baking a cake—basic ingredients will make a basic cake; however, we can work wonders with the right filling and icing.
2. Basic Ingredients:
 - Common courtesy.
 - Names—give our Customers ours and use theirs.
 - Open friendly and close positively.
 - Smile.
 - Positive Language—use it consistently and mean it.
3. Always add a Unique Icing to each individual cake.

Always Remember:

Every Customer Service Transaction has its own unique dynamics based on you, your Customer, and all of the baggage that is brought about at that specific moment in time.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN #6

What are three things you like when you are a Customer?

What are three positive words/phrases that you can use regularly?

How and when can we use a personal recommendation?

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

What is our preferred listen/talk ratio?

When should we exceed our Customers' expectations?

7 Mind Your Language

Our greatest tool for achieving Customer Service Excellence is language.

Many scientists argue that the use of tools made man “different,” leading to man’s development, and, ultimately, to mankind’s dominance over all other species on Earth. In my opinion, the advent of language was the key catalyst of human development, and we are obliged, or rather, privileged, to be able to use it.

Let me explain my position on the importance of language.

Before language, and even in its rudimentary forms, we could not pass on information. To this day, 40,000-year-old paintings on cave walls tell their story of a brave quest for survival, of the struggle of our ancestors to cope with their daily needs. They tell the story of life, beliefs, and frailties.

While rudimentary, these images are clearly a language. Without a simple language, early man could not have passed on the techniques essential to life, such as the building of the first wheel. Language literally meant that we didn’t have to continually “reinvent the wheel.” Through

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

language, each generation could grow from the finishing point of the previous. No longer was knowledge lost with the passing on of an individual—either by dying or by simply moving to a new hunting ground.

Eventually, language developed into our current myriad of forms, and the complexity of information conveyed became almost limitless. This is the state of language that we have inherited, and it is our privilege to help our Customers by using it in a positive, helpful manner. It should also be our pleasure, because our knowledge of the power of language (both conscious and subconscious) is the greatest it has ever been.

So let's use it—and use it to its fullest—to create the best possible Customer experience and, ultimately, make the world a better place!

Okay, you may find that a bit of an exaggeration; however, if we apply the following principles in our daily life, rather than simply while we're helping our Customers, the ramifications can be astounding. I issue you a challenge: apply these principles consistently for a month, then objectively examine the results (and ask your friends and family as well).

While I am saying that the use of the best possible language, which generally refers to positive language, is essential in achieving Customer Service Excellence, I do recognize, as I ask you to, that it may take a while to transition the more cynical members of our existing team to active practitioners, let alone believers. It is essential that they become believers, because Customers have well-tuned detectors that will immediately tell them if the words are only “lip Service.”

So, if we need our teams to both adopt and believe in the power of language, it is imperative that our managers and supervisors become believers first.

Positive words. This is possibly the easiest step to take to improve our Customers' Experiences through language. Simply replace negative or neutral/non-committal words and phrases like “uh-huh,” “okay,” and “mhhm” with words like “Absolutely,” “Perfect,” “Great,” “Excellent,” and “Definitely.” I'm certain that you can think of some more positive words.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Words with emotional weight. (The Emotives). In the English language, expletives are well recognized. They are generally words we can place a great deal of emotive value on and emotive expression into. In most cases, their structure is basically a word with three sounds, a central vowel sound, and a “plosive” ending.

This structure allows a great deal of emotive or passionate energy to be transmitted.

Let's try a simple exercise to explore these words.

First, say a couple of common expletives that we all know, though, being well-educated and emotionally-mature people, never use. Say them with as much venom as you like—really sink your teeth and emotions into them.

Now, try to put that same emotive energy into a word with five, six, or even seven sounds.

If you're like most of us, it should have been much easier to sound angry using those short, sharp words rather than the longer ones.

Now, choose a couple of those expletives again. Remember what it felt like to use them with venom (say them again, if you need to), then try using them in a soft romantic or soothing context.

It just doesn't feel right does it?

Try the soft romantic context and the fairy tale with words like “mesmerize,” “fascinate,” “beautiful,” or “absolutely.” They should carry the romantic or soothing intent a little easier for you.

The point is that some words work well in one context and others not so well. We've been absorbing this knowledge since we were children and often place psychological value on certain sounds or combinations of sounds.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Within the average vocabulary, there is a number of non-expletive words that exhibit the same composition as expletives (three sounds, a central vowel, and a closing plosive). These words can, and often do, carry emotive weight (consciously or sub-consciously). This category of words includes don't, won't, can't, etc.

Challenge: Find a few more words of your own.

Redundant negators and correctives. Scattered through the English language are words that are generally redundant and, depending upon personal experience, carry a negative value. A great example of this is “actually.”

Actually, we often use the word “actually” when it isn't actually needed and, in fact, no word is actually needed. Do you, actually, understand that?

The negator aspect of words like “actually” is associated with the psychological baggage that our Customers may, unknowingly, attach to it. For example, children are often corrected with this word: “Actually, Johnny, that's a zebra (not a donkey).”

Welcoming language. We should put ourselves in our Customer's place. How great is it when someone greets us with a smile and a “Thank you”? How incredible is it when someone “signs off” with another thank you and a heartfelt, “Have a great day”?

As an experiment with one of my clients, we asked the three people closest to the entrance to greet everyone with genuine enthusiasm and energy. These three people (and I love them dearly for trusting me and just “going with it”) gave it their all, greeting everyone that came into the office that day with a smile and a cheerful, “Hi, How are you?” and then, “Have a great day.”

The experiment spread energy and enthusiasm throughout the office, and soon everyone was smiling and greeting everyone else, especially our Customers. Then, the CEO arrived for his weekly series of meetings. When he met with me, he told me that he didn't know what I'd done, he just knew that he liked it—so much so that he went out to

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

the entrance four times that day, just because it made him feel good. He even called the CFO, met him downstairs and went up the lifts with him to see if it worked with everyone. It did!

Spread our energy and enthusiasm. It's contagious.

Offer that extra chance to ask a question. Always remember to ask our Customers if there's anything else we can do for them—there often is.

This isn't just an upsell. How often have you been talking with someone, finished the conversation, hung up, and then thought “Darn ... I meant to ask them.....”? By simply asking Customers if there's anything else that we can do for them, we could be saving them an extra visit or call, or we could prompt them to ask that question they'd been hesitant about. Let's make it easy for our Customers to find out more information or buy more products from us.

Clearly, the greatest proponent of this method is McDonald's with, “Would you like fries with that?” How many times have you said “yes”? I know that I have.

Additionally, it is essential that both the welcome and our extra chance is genuine and has no trace of “robotics” or sarcasm.

“Can do” phrases. Try to say what can be done rather than what cannot be done.

A simple example of this principle is applied throughout this book, where I've suggested things to “Always Remember” rather than things to “never forget.”

However, a concurrent rule also applies that will affect the way you use this: We should always respect our Customers and NEVER lie to them.

Smile. I say it again, and again—our Customers can hear it in our voice and see it on our face.

I know that we've all heard this hundreds of times before. And there's a reason that we have—IT'S TRUE—so do it!

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Be genuine about our smile. It'll help both us and our Customer feel good.

Make a promise and keep it. There are no exceptions to this rule!

Recognize the “proper” nouns. “Capitalize” everyone who is important to achieving our goals.

Capitalization will help us achieve Customer Service Excellence through language in several ways. Let's look at the capital “C” on the word Customer, as an example:

Because its use is not the norm, the capital will make the word stand out in any sentence. Consequently, people will notice it. I recommend applying this principle to all of the documents that our company produces (internal and external), so that it will be visible to all five categories of Customer.

This technique to demonstrate importance can be applied to anyone or anything that we consider important enough to warrant it, including our Customer Service Team, our Investors, our Suppliers.

Creating these new Proper Nouns works in several ways:

- The words stand out in documents, which prompts us to think about the word and why it is important.
- Checking and re-checking these documents for capitalization will help us and our team reinforce the importance of these words, because we are prepared to spend the time to ensure that they are consistently capitalized—and time is money, so the mental link is that these words are valuable to our company.
- When our Customers see the capitalization for the first time, they may ask about it, and then we can help bond them with our company by showing them how important they are to us. Once our Customers know the reason for capitalization, every time they read one of your documents they'll be reminded how important they are to us, even if just on a sub-conscious level. It makes people feel special, and if that isn't worth doing, I don't know what is.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

I can only take partial credit for applying capitalization to make so-called ordinary nouns “proper nouns.” I apply it to words like our Team, Management, and Customer Service Excellence; however, to give credit where credit is due, I learned the basic principle of capitalizing “Customer” from Headsets.com CEO Mike Faith, as one of his basic principles of Customer Love. It’s a great concept, and thank you, Mike, for teaching me.

The “I4U” phrases. The power of the “I4U” statement should never be underestimated. They include phrases like, “What I can do for you is...” or “What I’d like to do for you is...” A powerful derivation of this statement is a question such as, “Could I help you by...?”

The psychological power of these phrases is three-fold:

- They offer our Customer friendly assistance
- They link us and our Customer by placing us side-by-side in a helpful phrase
- They personalize our offer of assistance

Can I help you...? We’ll help ourselves when we help our Customers, so let’s read between the lines and offer to help them; for instance, if the person is clearly time-challenged (read: busy), use phrases like, “Would it help you if I saved you time by...”

These phrases show our Customers that we are attentive enough to have identified more than simply their surface “want” (our product) and found one of their psychological needs. These phrases show that we care.

Body language? The assessment of body language is a true art form in itself and can prove extremely beneficial to assessing how successfully our message reaches its intended recipient. Due to the complexity of the interpretation and the tendency of people to latch on to simple pieces of information (and the corresponding tendency that a little knowledge can be dangerous), the best advice is that we should carefully observe our Customers and develop a clear knowledge base of how they behave under different circumstances. Also, it would be

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

very helpful to attend a workshop by a world-recognized body language authority (Alan Pease, for example) or, at the very least, read a good book written by a person of this distinction.

Be real. While it is essential that all of these language principles are practiced and personalized until they become part of our everyday life, it is just as essential that we use them genuinely and sincerely, because Customers can and will detect insincerity. And if they do, the damage can be irreparable.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Chapter 7 Takeaways

1. **Positive Words.** Try replacing negative or neutral words with words like “absolutely,” “perfect,” “great,” “excellent,” and “definitely.”
2. Offer an extra chance to ask a question.
3. **“Can Do” Phrases.** Say what you can do rather than what you cannot.
4. **Smile.** Always, and without fail.
5. **Make a promise and keep it.** There are no exceptions to this rule!
6. **Recognize Proper Nouns.** “Capitalize” everyone who is important to you.
7. **The “I4U” Phrases.** Phrases such as, “What I can do for you is” can work wonders.
8. **Be Real.** Use these techniques genuinely and sincerely. Customers can—and will—detect insincerity.

Always Remember:

To spread your energy and enthusiasm—it's contagious.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN #7

List five positive words that you can use in most Customer Service transactions.

Write three "I4U" phrases.

Write down a phrase that makes you feel good when you're a Customer.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Can you find a situation where the word “actually” is the only word that can be used and must be used?

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Epilogue

Customer Service Excellence: It's Up to You!

FINALLY—Practice Makes Perfect. (As clichéd as it sounds, it's still great advice.)

Now that we've read through my thoughts on achieving Customer Service Excellence and, hopefully, completed some of the “Now it's Your Turn” exercises, it's your turn again.

Customer Service won't improve without effort. All of the skills, techniques, and tools that we've discussed require practice, so that they will become part of your day-to-day life. Once that happens, everything will start to fall into place.

In summary, the key to improving Customer Loyalty while also attracting new Customers (with minimal capital outlay) is Customer Service Excellence.

The basics for achieving Customer Service Excellence include:

- Always treat your Customers as you like to be treated when you are a Customer.
- Be genuine and sincere.
- Have energy, enthusiasm, and passion for your Customers.
- Remember the Three Prompts.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

- Keep your language polite, positive, and friendly.
- Use your Customers' name (and give them yours).
- Always exceed your Customers' expectations.
- Always try to help your Customers transition from one Level of Familiarity to the next, with the aim of making every Customer a Blindly Proud Grandparent.

Now, one last technique for you to think about.

Think about your best Customer:

- Who are they?
- What makes them so special?
- How did they become your best Customers?
- What did you do to help them get there?

Now that you know that, decide on how you are going to make your second best Customer your equal best Customer, AND DO IT!

Once you've succeeded at that, continue it along your line of Customers. Why not make every Customer your best Customer?

And finally: Never give up, because perfection takes time.

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

Parting Wise Words

*When product quality is similar, it is Customer Service that tips the scale. **Michael Smith, Land's End (Clothing)***

*A salesman is one who sells goods that won't come back to Customers who will. **Anon***

1. *Do it right the first time.*
2. *Fix it, if it fails.*
3. *Remember: There are no third chances.*

Leonard Berry, Texas A&M University

*Forget about the sales you hope to make and concentrate on the Service you want to render. **Harry Bullis, General Mills***

*Make everything as simple as possible, but not simpler. **Albert Einstein***

It is not the employer who pays the wages—he only handles the money. It is the product and the Service that pays the wages.

Henry Ford

Men who drive sharp bargains with their Customers, acting as if they will never see them again, will not be mistaken.

P.T Barnum, Entrepreneur

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

A u t h o r

About the Author



Ken Welsh Trained as a City Planner (Chief Strategic Transport Planner, Sydney City, Australia) and Actor/Director. Now he is a Business Voice Coach and Team Building Consultant with LetsTalkCommunication.com (LTC).

With LTC and Australian Corporate Team Building Company, Murder By Design, Ken has worked with over 100 companies to assist them in:

- Developing and improving internal and external communication cultures
- Team and morale building
- Call centre Customer communication techniques

FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY

- Staff, management and executive communication training

He currently coaches companies and individuals in:

- US
- Canada
- Mexico
- The UK
- South Africa
- Dubai
- Australia

Create Thought Leadership for Your Company

Books deliver instant credibility to the author. Having an MBA or Ph.D. is great; however, putting the word “author” in front of your name is similar to using the letters Ph.D. or MBA. You are no long Michael Green, you are “Author Michael Green.”

Books give you a platform to stand on. They help you to:

- Demonstrate your thought leadership
- Generate leads

Books deliver increased revenue, particularly indirect revenue:

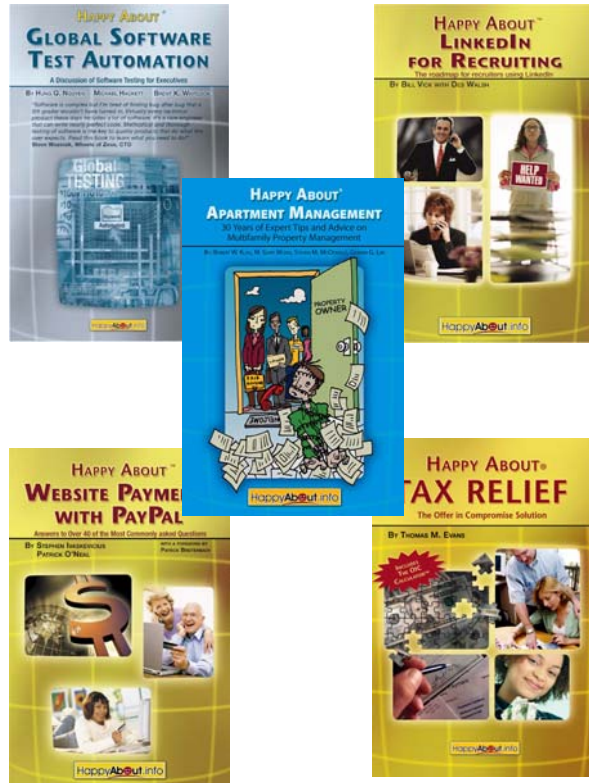
- A typical consultant will make 3x in indirect revenue for every dollar they make on book sales

Books are better than a business card. They are:

- More powerful than white papers
- An item that makes it to the book shelf vs. the circular file
- The best tschocke you can give at a conference

Why Wait to Write Your Book?

Check out other companies that have built credibility by writing and publishing a book through Happy About.



Contact Happy About at 408-257-3000 or go to <http://happyabout.info>.

Books

Other Happy About® Books

Purchase these books at Happy About
<http://happyabout.info>
or at other online and physical bookstores.

RULE #1: STOP TALKING!

A Guide to Listening

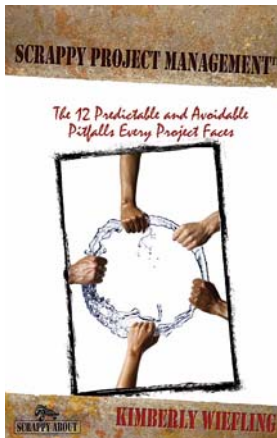


by
Linda Eve Diamond

Rule#1: Stop Talking

If you want to be successful, stop talking and start listening. A guide to being successful by practicing the art of listening.

Paperback \$16.95
eBook \$11.95



Projects are MESSY!

From the minute the project begins, all manner of changes, surprises and disasters befall them. Unfortunately, most of these are PREDICTABLE and AVOIDABLE.

Paperback \$19.95
eBook \$11.95