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UPLIFTING SERVICE

The Proven Path

*to Delighting Your Customers, Colleagues,
and Everyone Else You Meet*

RON
KAUFMAN

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“UPLIFTING SERVICE: The Proven Path to Delighting Your Customers, Colleagues, and Everyone Else You Meet”

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CHAPTER 2

The Gateway to Possibility

It was 9 p.m. in Minnesota. It was January, and the temperature was 22 degrees below zero—a bone-chilling reminder of Mother Nature’s occasional cruelty. Most people were warm and safe at home, cuddling up in front of a movie. Unless, of course, there was something more intriguing to discover.

Four teenagers ignored the bitter cold that night. They were in the car together, on a life-changing journey. One of them, 16-year-old Amanda, was a good student and a cheerleader. She was anxious because her friends were pressuring her to do something she had never done before, something she didn’t understand. “You’ve got to try it,” they said. “Everyone cool does it.”

They pulled into a dimly lit parking lot. Amanda took a deep breath and followed her friends into an unfamiliar place, surprisingly full of people, where she quickly found solace by standing behind her friends in a line. They began using words that she didn’t understand, and she was terrified when her turn came. “This is my first time,” she said. “I don’t know what I’m supposed to do.”

The young man facing her smiled. “Well, then, let me be the first to welcome you to Starbucks.”

Amanda has been a Starbucks Coffee superfan ever since that fateful night. A decade later, she can still be found sipping hot coffee inside her neighborhood Starbucks—a notion she once found odd. Young people drink coffee? Who drinks coffee at night anyway? Apparently, a lot of people do.

But it wasn’t the caffeine that attracted her—Amanda prefers decaffeinated coffee. Starbucks hooked Amanda on something else. It is well documented that the company’s founders wanted to create a place for conversation and a sense of community, a third place where their customers could relax and connect outside of home and work. They created a spot with an inviting ambience, comfortable seating, a hip vibe, and great (but not too loud) music. It would be the perfect place to enjoy a conversation, read a book, or do some work with a delicious drink to keep you going. That experience is what keeps customers coming back to Starbucks. But the intrigue that pulls people through the door their very first time is not the Starbucks experience. It’s not the coffee. It’s not even the hype. It’s bigger than that. It’s Starbucks’ uplifting answer to this essential question, “Why?”

“Why?” is a powerful question in the human psyche. It opens up new perspectives and new possibilities for individuals, businesses, governments, and the entire human race. It’s a powerful question that allows us to analyze the reason, explore the purpose, or discover the deeper cause. It is a gateway to learning how to grow, achieve, motivate, differentiate, find a position, take a position, or discover a purpose. Without asking the question, “Why?” some gates never open.

Again consider Changi Airport—why build a butterfly garden? I don't think an airport employee opened the suggestion box one day to find the request, "I would really like to see shorter lines, faster luggage handling, more taxis, and a butterfly garden." Yet, Changi Airport built one of the most delightful butterfly gardens in the world, with a profusion of flowering plants, lush greenery, and an indoor waterfall. Airport visitors can witness the beauty of not just a few butterflies, but hundreds. Stand still for just a moment and a butterfly will settle on your shoulder, its delicate wings caressing you with color. It's breathtaking.

Butterflies in an Airport?

"Why butterflies?" Todd Nordstrom asked me as we toured around Changi Airport.

I couldn't help but smile at his question. "Why a swimming pool? Why a four-story slide?" I replied. "These are all something personal, delightful, and surprising."

He stood speechless.

"Do you realize how deep your question is?" I asked him. "How are you feeling about this airport right now? How are you feeling about the people who work here and about Singapore?" He took a deep, slow breath, and as he relaxed, a smile spread across his face.

Consider how delightful service makes you feel. Consider how it feels to have an associate in a retail store pay close attention just to you. Consider how it feels when an auto mechanic goes out of his way to help save you money or when a banker takes the time to really explain the differences between accounts, services, and fees. Consider how it feels when a colleague listens carefully to

completely understand your request and then gives you exactly what you need.

“Why?”

Why do Nordstrom stores have live pianists playing grand pianos? Why does Google allow its employees to ride scooters in the workplace or feed them with a fantastic array of free food? Why does New Belgium Brewing in Colorado, brewer of Fat Tire beer, offer incentives to employees who ride their bikes, walk, or jog to work? Why does Microsoft send key employees to work full-time for months in charitable organizations while keeping them on the company payroll?

All of these are service initiatives—focused on serving a different audience. They target customers, employees, the community, or the environment. But, why serve others? Why focus your attention and your actions on the needs, desires, preferences, and curiosities of other people?

It’s simple. Service creates value that extends in all directions. Uplifting service uplifts everyone.

The Gateway: Why Uplifting Service?

“Our vision is to connect lives,” says Changi Airport’s Executive Vice President of Airport Management, Mr. Foo Sek Min. “Airports are typically stressful places. Our goal is to remove that stress. Our culture of service must envelop all the 200 organizations operating here. Everyone’s experience with the service we provide to passengers must be aligned, the people, the process, even the equipment.”

Mr. Foo isn't just talking about connecting people, processes, and equipment at the airport. He's talking about connecting people, processes, and equipment to a bigger purpose, a greater reason, and a deeper cause. He's talking about connecting people to the country of Singapore and connecting Singapore to people and organizations from many other places. The employees at Changi Airport are connected. The customers are connected. The country is connected. And that's valuable in every direction—for everyone.

This may seem ideological. It may even seem unattainable to many people and organizations. And many companies will view the Changi Airport service mentality as something indulgent or outrageous, saying, "That would never work for us."

"Why?"

Everyone has a past to overcome or a current "this is how we always do it" attitude to move beyond. Due to Singapore's reputation for strict law enforcement, it had earned the nickname "Singapore." But look at the country today—the entire community is breaking the molds of sterile process and bureaucratic service. In fact, it's become an international phenomenon. Uplifting service is the essence of the country's commercial culture and its contribution. Singapore's passion is to create and innovate, to constantly find new ways to upgrade and uplift the nation's service to the world.

But Singapore is not the only game changer. Zappos wasn't the first company to sell shoes online, but because of its reputation for zany yet sincere customer service, it's captured the world spotlight. Starbucks certainly wasn't the first unique coffee shop, yet other companies have tried to imitate the Starbucks experience time and again. And, although Disney wasn't the first amusement

park, it is often the first company that comes to mind for children and families around the world.

Companies and organizations can break away and change the status quo by asking and answering three powerful questions that all begin with “Why?” Why improve your service? Why build a service culture? Why build an uplifting service culture that upgrades performance and profit while uplifting the spirits of everyone involved—customers, colleagues, and even whole communities?

The big opportunity isn’t just to understand other companies’ reasons, purposes, or causes. It’s to figure out your reasons, your purpose, and your cause—to start your own service revolution right where you are.

Are you attempting to overcome a specific hurdle? Are you trying to attract, engage, and keep great employees? Are you seeking a sustainable commercial advantage? Are you trying to delight your customers, your colleagues, and maybe even yourself?

What’s your gateway to new possibilities? Why will employees, investors, vendors, community members, and customers all be drawn to your allure?

Why Improve Your Service?

I define *service* this way:

Service is taking action to create value for someone else.

These are simple yet powerful words. Still, they leave a gray area for interpretation about whether the service is good or not, whether

the value is high or low. A carpet cleaning company provides a service. Of course, that doesn't mean it provides a good service. At minimum, you expect dirt to be removed from your carpet. If its employees don't remove the dirt, we say the company didn't provide the service. Eventually, no one wants to hire that company and it goes out of business.

But if the same company goes above and beyond your expectations—to surprise you and delight you—then customers say it's a great service provider. Eventually, more people talk about the company, buy services from it, and look forward to interacting with it. As its service reputation grows, its business also grows stronger.

It's shortsighted, however, to view service only in terms of business transactions, colleagues, and customers. A friend provides the service of friendship. A mother serves her daughter. An employee provides service to his or her employer. A company can serve the community. Government provides service to the people. A nation can provide service to other nations. The list goes on, and in every situation mentioned, the roles of service recipient and service provider could be exchanged. These are all service relationships with value flowing in both directions.

The point is this: we all come into this world depending on other people to take care of us, to serve us. As we grow, other people depend on us to serve them. We all receive service and provide service just to stay alive.

So, why service? It's a necessity. You might even say, as I do, that service is the reason we are here.

Why Build a Service Culture?

Whether you realize it or not, you participate in a collection of service cultures. The question is: what do your service cultures look, sound, and feel like?

On the most basic level, a service culture means that everyone in your team, your group, or your company shares a set of attitudes, goals, and practices that characterize the value you offer and the way you deliver your service. If you're a carpet cleaning company, is your team simply focused on getting out the dirt? Or is everyone dedicated to making your company the preferred carpet cleaner? If the former, you get the job done as quickly as you can, and then you get out. If the latter, you offer tips and suggestions, put furniture back in its original position, and maybe even roll out a small red carpet when your client inspects the work you have performed.

The point is that your team's shared attitudes, goals, and practices characterize the value of the service you provide and define your service culture today.

Why Build an Uplifting Service Culture?

In an uplifting service culture, people gain a deeper understanding of themselves, their purpose, their relationships, and their possibilities for today and for the future. This is where individuals and organizations can realize their full potential.

An uplifting service culture is one in which the character and value of the service you provide elevates and inspires you—and uplifts the people around you. It elevates standards, attitudes, and expectations, uplifting the perceptions, practices,

processes, and products of employees and leaders, colleagues and customers, vendors, partners, regulators, suppliers, and whole communities—everyone touched by and therefore contributing to the culture.

And here's the best part about building an uplifting service culture: it's not a destination. It's forever changing and evolving, an organic phenomenon in which all the people, practices, and processes can drive performance even higher, reaching for—and achieving—ever higher potential.

It's Changi Airport acting as the gateway to Singapore with spas and slides and butterflies showing the country and the world what's possible every day. It's Zappos and its zany behavior capturing media attention, energizing employees to even more outrageous acts of service, capturing even more attention, and ultimately attracting more customers. It's Disney's commitment to give each visitor the experience of a lifetime. It's Google providing its employees with outside-the-box creative time and workspaces—allowing their minds to explore uncharted worlds and then create world-changing online tools. It's your neighborhood baker who saves leftover donut holes and delivers them to the nearby orphanage. It's a daughter raising money door-to-door for the breast cancer volunteer association, walking 60 miles to help save the life of a woman she doesn't know, because her own mother died from the disease years before. It's a boy on the street picking up a piece of trash someone else dropped. And it's a gentleman holding the door open, not for a beautiful woman, but for anyone—because uplifting service is a beautiful experience for everyone.

We all serve, and must be served, to survive. Then we are all already members of a global service culture. But, until we define

the value that our service and our culture will contribute in this world—until we make a deliberate commitment to elevate our own expectations, goals, and standards—we allow uplifting possibilities to pass.

If we want to grow, evolve, and progress in this world—as individuals, as communities, or as a global human civilization—we must ask ourselves this question every day: Why?

Why serve others? To get what you need or want? Why improve your service? To get more business, or stay in business? Or to contribute to the welfare and well-being of others?

Why contribute to a service culture? To earn a bonus or a promotion? To earn a higher margin, or enjoy a better reputation? Or to enjoy working more each day with your customers and colleagues?

Why build an uplifting service culture? To stand out from the crowd, or attract a bigger crowd? To care more deeply for the lives of your customers, the spirit of your colleagues, and the well-being of your community? Or to build a stronger and more uplifting spirit of service into the core of your team, your business, and yourself?

Are You Ready?

There are thought leaders and business leaders in the world today who have answered these questions with inspiring intentions and impressive results. What have they declared? What have they created? How did they build inspiring and continuously uplifting service cultures?

It wasn't by chance or by luck, and it wasn't by personal charisma. They used a proven architecture to build some of the finest service cultures in the world today. And now, you can use it, too.

Are you ready to create your own gateway to uplifting service? Are you ready for a world-changing butterfly experience where you work and live?

Let's take the next step together. Turn the page.

Meet Ron Kaufman

Ron Kaufman is the world's premiere thought-leader, educator, and motivator for uplifting customer service and building service cultures. Ron is the author of 14 other books on service, business, and inspiration.

Ron provides powerful insights from working with clients all over the world in every major industry for more than twenty years. Ron is an inspiration to leaders and managers with his content rich and entertaining speeches, and his impactful, interactive workshops. He is rated one of the world's "Top 25 Who's Hot" speakers by *Speaker Magazine*.

Ron has been featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, and *USA Today*. He is passionately committed to uplifting the spirit and practice of service worldwide.

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A breakthrough book
that will surprise, delight, and uplift you,
your organization, and your team.

In *Uplifting Service*, Ron Kaufman takes you on a journey into the new world of service. Through dynamic case studies and best-practice examples, you will learn how the world's leading companies have changed the game, and how you can successfully follow this path to an uplifting service transformation.

“Read this book, apply the steps. Watch your culture transform and your perspective on service change forever. Ron Kaufman has unlocked the mystery of service. Get ready for a magnificent journey into a new world.”

Marshall Goldsmith

Bestselling Author of *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*

“Ron Kaufman has pinpointed a massive wound in society, and offers a strategy to uplift the world around us. For mankind, it's transformational. For business, it's a clean and clear path to a sustainable competitive advantage. This book is long overdue, and will create a legendary shift.”

Thomas Moran

Director, Customer and Partner Experience
Microsoft Operations



Ron Kaufman, the founder of Uplifting Service, is the world's premiere thought-leader, educator, and motivator for uplifting customer service and building service cultures.

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