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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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CHAPTER 8

Engaging Service Vision

In 1985 an advertising campaign changed the state of Texas forever.

Imagine you live in the largest state in the continental United States. You're on a road trip with your family, gazing out at seemingly endless stretches of highway. In the distance you may see rolling hills, parched deserts, massive ranches, major rivers, or gorgeous city skylines.

If you were traveling these highways in the early 1980s, you would also notice something much less pleasant—a lot of garbage, trash and litter along the road. Littering had become a monstrous problem. The Texas Department of Transportation knew the problem needed to be addressed. The state budget for roadside cleanup was growing as fast as the piles of litter.

Texans are proud of their heritage. Many grew up at rodeos, working at cattle ranches and oil refineries. They are the real cowboys in the United States. And, if you want them to stop throwing trash out of their pickup truck windows, a public service announcement that says “Keep Texas Beautiful” just isn't going to work.

But what about a campaign that reaches deep into the psyche of the rough-and-tumble Texas crowd, drawing on their toughness, their pride, and their very identity as Texans? The new campaign was a bold, confident, and very public challenge: “Don’t Mess with Texas.”

Widely embraced since its debut, “Don’t Mess with Texas” became an engaging vision for the State of Texas and is credited for reducing roadside litter by 72 percent in just the first four years. The message lives on today as a battle cry for Texas pride that is recognized around the world.

That’s what Engaging Service Visions do—they unify and energize everyone in an organization. They pose a possibility each person can understand and aim to achieve in his or her work, role, team, and organization. An Engaging Service Vision guides everyone toward action to make the vision real. It doesn’t matter whether you call this building block your service vision, mission, core value, guiding principle, credo, motto, slogan, saying, or tagline. What matters is that your Engaging Service Vision is *engaging*.

When I started working with Nokia Siemens Networks, the executive board had recently approved a new marketing position: “Knowing How.” This promoted Nokia Siemens Networks’ well-known and widely respected strengths for technical expertise. But the company was being challenged by Chinese competitors that didn’t necessarily know more, but were doing more for customers with large teams of lower-paid workers.

“Knowing How” is important, but what really matters is doing something with your knowledge to help someone else. The company’s global service leadership team convened in India under the guidance of Mr. Rajeev Suri, who would soon become CEO of the

entire organization. “Knowing How” evolved to “Knowing How, Doing Now,” which was better, but still left something missing. What is the purpose of doing now? What is the intended result?

The air in the room was thick with focus and the frustration that often accompanies a vision-crafting effort. One of the leaders chuckled quietly and then smiled. Not known for hyperbole or exaggeration, he expressed solid confidence in the company when he said, “Know How, Act Now, Create Wow!”

This simple but powerful phrase has become a guiding focus for more than 60,000 Nokia Siemens Networks employees worldwide. “Know How” means know your customers, what they want, what they need, what you can do to help, and what your competitors are doing differently or better than you. “Act Now” means don’t wait, reach out, take action, and make things happen. “Create Wow” means surprise customers, delight colleagues, go beyond expectations, and create wow—right now.

Consider NTUC Income, in early stages of its cultural revolution, working hard to overcome years of civil service–styled mission, vision, and values statements. Members of the Executive Committee showed me a long list of proposed service standards that read more like a compliance manual than a guideline for delighting anyone. I read the list in their boardroom and sighed. “These statements feel so dead. You really need something more alive.”

The CEO heard what he had been listening for and jumped. “That’s it! When our team members come to work, we want them to feel alive. When we serve our customers at the counter and over the phone, we want them to feel alive. When our agents serve customers in the field, we want them both to feel alive. That’s our vision for the new style of NTUC Income’s service: ‘Service Alive!’”

Imagine going to work with the intention that every contact you have with someone else will leave him or her feeling more alive. So simple, so powerful, and so effective. Today, NTUC Income uses “Service Alive!” as an umbrella theme for many of its programs of service recruitment, orientation, communication, recognition, continuous improvement, and sales support.

An Engaging Service Vision is like a mantra to motivate your team and keep them focused on uplifting service. Sometimes the mantra will evolve. Marina Bay Sands opened its doors with a powerful internal statement to boost employee morale to the same soaring heights as the resort’s stunning 57th story SkyPark: “We are Magnificent!”

This engaging vision kept morale running high through the early challenges facing any new resort, especially one with such a high profile, complexity, and size. But as the team members adjusted to daily challenges, they also understood that being magnificent is not just a moment in time. It is an endless quest to deliver the experience of magnificence to every visitor and to every team member as well. The point is not to be magnificent, but to make sure that the *experience* of magnificence is enjoyed by others.

As Marina Bay Sands evolved, its vision evolved from “We are Magnificent” to “The Journey to Magnificence.” This Engaging Service Vision lives today in the actions of every team member and in the many uplifting service experiences they create.

These simple phrases may seem like just a nice collection of words. But the power of these words should not be underestimated. Companies that take the time to define, refine, and craft an Engaging Service Vision arrive at a greater understanding of their value, their customers, and themselves.

Engaging Your Employees

Employees are the people who make a service vision come alive. They make it real with the actions they take every day. For these vital service providers, an Engaging Service Vision activates creativity, motivates new action, and inspires them to deliver uplifting service experiences every day.

The courier company TNT uses a simple yet effective vision in Asia: “We put the *WOW* in service!” For their truck drivers, package sorters, and call-center employees, this simplicity and excitement works.

I called TNT to schedule a package pickup one rainy afternoon. After the service representative confirmed my address, package contents, weight, and final destination, she asked if she could tell me one more thing, and I replied “Of course.”

Her tone changed slightly, and she spoke a bit more slowly than before. “Mr. Kaufman,” she said. “It’s raining here, but that’s OK. Because customers like you put the sunshine in our lives.”

I smiled and laughed. What she said wasn’t in any script. It wasn’t the company standard. It was an uplifting action from a tuned-in team member with an Engaging Service Vision. She made it come alive on a dreary afternoon. She put the *WOW* in service.

Engaging Your Customers

Your Engaging Service Vision can also resonate with the customers you serve. At Southwest Airlines, the Engaging Service Vision is “We make flying fun.” That’s why their cabin crew dress up

in costumes on Halloween, why they sing “Happy Birthday” to passengers on the plane, and why a top ranked video for Southwest Airlines on YouTube is an upbeat member of its cabin crew rapping the preflight announcements (check it out).

This Engaging Service Vision is why Southwest Airlines won’t hire new staff without a sense of humor, why the staff ask passengers to say hello to strangers across the aisle, and why they make announcements like this one before takeoff: “Ladies and Gentlemen, in the unlikely event of loss of cabin pressure, the oxygen mask will fall from the ceiling above you. If you are traveling with a child, please put the mask on yourself first, and then assist your child. If you are traveling with more than one child, please decide now which one you love more.” It’s not just the passengers with children who laugh. Everyone cracks a smile, everyone knows it’s just for fun, and everyone is engaged.

Engaging Your Partners

Changi Airport has 28,000 employees who come to work every day for 219 different organizations: airlines, police, customs, immigration, restaurants, retail outlets, and banks. Imagine the fragmentation and confusion that could occur if everyone did not understand and share the same vision.

When you are in an unfamiliar airport and you have a question, whom will you ask? Will you pause to locate the official Information Counter and then walk over to patiently wait for your turn? Or will you ask just about anyone you see wearing any kind of uniform or working in any outlet, anyone who works inside the building?

At Changi Airport, people who work in the coffee shops know the departure gate locations and the fastest ways to get there. Airline employees who work at the gates know where you can buy last-minute souvenirs. Airport police can tell you how to find the post office and what time it opens. Immigration and Customs officers will gladly answer your questions about how to get into town.

How do the airport authorities create this community passionately dedicated to service, assistance, and information? They start with an Engaging Service Vision, “Many Partners, Many Missions, One Changi.” At this remarkable gateway, everyone works together to create positive experiences every day.

What’s Your Engaging Service Vision?

An Engaging Service Vision can differentiate you from everyone else, communicating your advantage as an upbeat employer, your reputation as an uplifting service provider, and your value as a vibrant community member.

When you compete on lower prices, then anyone cheaper can beat you. When you compete with a newer product, anyone’s newer product will grab the spotlight. But when you compete with an Engaging Service Vision that shapes the entire culture, then you compete on the quality of relationships you build and the experiences you provide. You stand out for your commitment to new action creating greater value for others. When you compete on uplifting service, you compete with a vision to win. It’s extremely difficult for your competitors to challenge and beat your organization when your service performance is continuously improving.

An Engaging Service Vision should be inspiring, motivating, guiding, and uplifting for your service providers and for your customers. Is yours?

Questions for Service Providers

- Do you know your organization's Engaging Service Vision? Can you share what it means in your own words?
- What actions can you take today to make your service vision come alive for your customers and your colleagues?

Questions for Service Leaders

- Do you have an Engaging Service Vision that stimulates the creativity and activates the service passion in your team?
- Are you enthusiastically sharing examples of your service vision in action with your employees, customers, and partners?
- How can you link your Service Vision to other culture building blocks: Service Recruitment, Service Orientation, Service Communications, and Service Recognition and Rewards?

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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