

*New York Times* Bestseller

# UPLIFTING SERVICE

The Proven Path

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

RON  
KAUFMAN

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## CHAPTER 12

# Service Recognition and Rewards

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Paul McKenzie works in the fresh produce section in a grocery store. On his bright green apron is a large button that reads “I’m a Service Champion!”

Jenny Harman is a hair stylist with the longest list of loyal customers in her salon. Next to her work station is a crystal plaque that reads “Stylist of the Year.”

Foo Teck Leong is an accountant who worked all weekend to help a client. His client was thrilled, and so was the owner of the firm. Teck Leong was given two box-seat tickets to an upcoming and bestselling show.

Vidya Kumaran is a sales executive for a software start-up. She recently visited an angry customer, solved a difficult problem, and landed a new contract that almost doubled her company’s annual revenue. She was given a standing ovation from the entire company and an extra week’s vacation.

Service Recognition and Rewards are a vital building block of service culture. They are a way of saying “thank you,” “job well done,” and “please do it again” all at the same time. Recognition is a human performance accelerator and one of the fastest ways to encourage repeat service behavior.

For many service providers, receiving a token monetary reward feels like an impersonal consolation prize—the easiest possible way to thank employees for their work, but also the least enduring. A well-known automobile dealership in Malaysia learned this lesson the hard way. It paid its sales team a special bonus for achieving high levels of customer satisfaction. But when bonus payments were curtailed during an economic downturn, customer satisfaction levels also fell.

Let’s make this personal so you can feel the difference. Imagine you are hosting a dinner party and a guest arrives with a fragrant bouquet of flowers or a beautifully wrapped box of chocolates. A few days after dinner, the same guest follows up with a beautiful card and a handwritten note saying “Thank you.” How would you feel about this person? Would you look forward to seeing this person again?

Now imagine a different guest arrives and hands you \$20 in cash. This person suggests you buy yourself a bouquet of flowers, a box of chocolates, or anything else you like. A few days after dinner, the same guest sends you another \$5. How would you feel about this? Would you look forward to inviting this person to dinner again?

Money makes a contribution, but heartfelt recognition makes a real connection. Genuine appreciation fully expressed makes a lasting impact on any employee. Gratitude from customers, admiration from colleagues, and strong approval from leaders of the

organization—these can drive service commitment and behavior to even higher levels. Rewards are most effective when used as recognition: a special prize, a unique award, a bonus trip, an unusually uplifting event. These are more memorable and emotional than simply receiving money.

### **Everyone Responds to Recognition**

Recognition can be given to your external service providers for their extra-mile efforts, outstanding service recoveries, greatest service improvements, or number of customer compliments received. Recognition can also be given to your internal service providers for upgrading their department's service, improving their procedures, streamlining their systems, or for their above-and-beyond efforts in helping each other succeed.

You can extend service recognition to everyone else in your community, too. Create an award for best service from a supplier, most appreciative customer, most helpful government agency, or even for your team's supportive family members at home.

### **The Many Ways to Recognize and Reward**

Want your team to give better and more creative service? Then get better and more creative with your recognition and rewards. And there are so many ways! You can do it in public, in private, in person, in writing, for individuals, for teams, and with or without a physical or financial component. You can do it with a handwritten letter, a standing ovation, two tickets to a concert or a ball game, an extra day off, a box of specialty chocolates, dinner for the family, a large bouquet of flowers, a logo on the business card, a star on the name tag, a certificate of achievement framed on



the company's wall of fame, a smiling photograph on your website. Recognition can even be as simple as a card like this that you print and pass along. I hand out hundreds of these cards to smiling service providers every month.



NTUC Income recognizes its contact center employees with paper stars and hearts on the wall—each with an employee's name and what an appreciative customer or colleague said about them. It's an ever-changing, always current "Hall of Fame" that uplifts everyone every day. Marina Bay Sands honors top employees by featuring their photographs and positive quotes on posters in the heart of the house. Singapore Airlines gives a coveted yearly award to staff members and teams who deliver on the company's highest aspiration: "Service even other airlines talk about."

American Express recognizes employees worldwide with an entire week that spotlights employee achievements on social networking sites. Arby's restaurants gets their customers involved in recognition by hanging a brass bell by the doorway with a sign that reads "If your service was GREAT, please RING the bell."

The National Eye Center has a unique approach to improving customer experience and boosting staff morale with recognition. In the main lobby is a prominent area called the "Staff Recognition Center" with complimentary letters from patients and their family members on display. Alongside each letter is a picture of the staff member cited and a certificate of appreciation signed by the managing director. Imagine how these staff members feel when they come to work each morning, knowing their customers and the organization appreciate them. Now imagine how

other customers feel when they see these compliments on public display. They naturally anticipate receiving excellent service and they are more likely to express their appreciation when they get it. This is a win–win–win: the customer wins, the staff wins, and the organization wins.

### **Recognizing Your People Rewards Your Organization**

Does all this upbeat recognition and pat-on-the-back celebration really make a difference? Lanham Napier has no doubt. Napier is CEO of Rackspace, a leader in hosting and cloud computing services, famous for its promise to provide “Fanatical Support” and named as one of the “100 Best Companies to Work For” by *Fortune* magazine. Listen to what he says on YouTube about his “Rackers,” the thousands of employees who keep the company’s customers up and happy every day: “If you want really hard data, we track the engagement of our teams, and we look at productivity levels across different teams. On the days when we have an event or celebration, their productivity is 20 or 30 percent higher. It really renews the energy that Rackers are feeling about their work that day. So we know this stuff works.”

Perhaps the ultimate recognition is being promoted to a new position of greater influence and responsibility within the organization. Those who are promoted should be role models of the service attitudes and behaviors you want everyone to follow. “At Schlumberger, promotion from within is one of strongest features of our global culture,” says Stephanie Cox, the Vice President of Human Resources. “It is significant recognition for those who have exceeded expectations, provided great service to customers and colleagues, and demonstrated potential for contributing even more.”

There is one more reason why recognition for service achievement should come frequently from an organization: because it doesn't come very often from customers. Imagine your service providers working overtime to calm angry customers, listening patiently to complaints, taking action, and following up to resolve every outstanding issue. When it's all over, how often do these customers say, "By the way, you did a great job of calming me down, listening patiently, and taking care of my concerns. Thanks. I really appreciate your terrific service?" The answer is—not often enough.

Providing service to others calls for our very best, and this kind of effort can be its own reward. But recognition from others is also uplifting and rewarding, and is well worth our best efforts.

### **Questions for Service Providers**

- Do you participate in the service recognition programs where you work?
- How can you give praise to the colleagues who give you uplifting service?
- How can you express your appreciation to friends and family members who help support you and serve you at home?

### **Questions for Service Leaders**

- Do you have an attractive and engaging set of Service Recognition and Rewards?
- Are your team members motivated and inspired by the rewards and recognition you provide?
- Are you personally involved in recognizing and rewarding your team members for delivering uplifting service?

# 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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EMAIL / WEB:

[Enquiry@RonKaufman.com](mailto:Enquiry@RonKaufman.com)

[RonKaufman.com](http://RonKaufman.com)

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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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