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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

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and Everyone Else You Meet*

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## CHAPTER 14

# Service Measures and Metrics

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Leslie Jacobs relaxed in his seat as the long flight began to descend. He was on the tail end of a demanding business trip with too many meetings and not enough sleep. Leslie closed his eyes to enjoy a few precious moments of rest.

A tap on the shoulder jarred him. “Mr. Jacobs, would you complete this for us before we land?” He looked up as a member of the cabin crew handed him the airline’s six-page passenger satisfaction survey. Before he could respond, the crew member walked back to the galley, leaving the survey in Leslie’s hands. He saw rows of small text and columns with even smaller boxes. This was the last thing he wanted to do at the end of the flight. But he knew the crew would be waiting to collect it by the door so he pulled out a pen and started ticking boxes. The same crew member walked by and glanced nervously as Leslie completed the survey, as if any low marks might hurt him personally. The service on the flight was nothing special, but Leslie could feel the expectation, so he gave the crew members higher marks than they deserved.

That evening, a waiter at the restaurant asked if he enjoyed the meal. Leslie smiled with pleasure until the waiter pulled a satisfaction survey from his apron and handed it to him with the bill. Leslie sighed with resignation. It was another unwelcome form with too many questions seeking his opinion about everything from the quality of the food to the ambience, value for money, smiles, and speed of service. Dinner was delicious, but this last-minute task left a bad taste at the end of the meal, and he reflected that in the survey. The waiter noticed the low scores as Leslie left the table, and was confused.

Checking out of his hotel the next morning, the cashier handed Leslie yet another time-consuming survey asking him to answer questions about every aspect of his overnight stay. Leslie felt the hotel was good enough, so he marked “satisfied” across all the columns without any greater effort. Meanwhile, a Japanese guest checking out nearby was clearly delighted with his hotel experience and thanked the cashier profusely as he completed the same survey. Leslie noticed the overseas guest also checked “satisfied” all across the form, but did so with great enthusiasm.

The cashier didn’t seem to care about either survey form. Both were unceremoniously dropped into a collection box, destined for a third-party vendor at the end of the week to wind up in another report at the end of the month, which made no difference at all to the cashier at the end of the day.

Sound familiar? This building block is called Service Measures and Metrics, and, unfortunately, many organizations use this building block quite poorly. Think of the last survey you were given at the end of a flight, a meal, or a hotel stay. Think of the last survey you were asked to complete online. Were you really glad to see it? Do you feel your responses made a difference?

Surveys are commonly used to measure satisfaction, assess loyalty, evaluate staff performance, and find areas for service improvement. But these evaluations are notoriously unpleasant for customers to complete and difficult for people in organizations to decipher. One problem is that surveys tend to grow longer over time and then become entrenched, generating self-sustaining rivers of data. Each new gathering of data must be matched against previous statistics, then be organized, interpreted, analyzed, and reported. But too often, committed service providers are left scratching their heads and wondering, “What does all this mean to us, and what should we do next?”

This process misses a vital point. Service Measures and Metrics are a valuable building block for service improvement. But to build a service culture, the methodology of these metrics must be uplifting for those you query and for the members of your team.

### Clarify What You Are Measuring and Why

Just because you can measure many things doesn’t mean that it makes good sense to track them all. What do you really want to know, and what action will you take with what you learn? Review this list and then decide which insights will be most helpful to improve your service now.

**Customer Satisfaction:** What are your customers’ perceptions and expectations of your service? How satisfied are they with what you have delivered?

**Customer Loyalty:** How often do your customers buy from you? How often do they refer or recommend you? What is your share of their wallet? How connected do they feel to your service and your brand?



**External Service Performance:** Is the service you provide sliding, stable, or stepping up? Are you hitting your performance indicators and meeting service-level agreements?

**Internal Service Performance:** Is the service level inside your company going up or going down? Are your colleagues providing service to each other that accelerates or impedes the performance of your organization?

**Employee Engagement:** How strong are the attraction, retention, and motivation of your employees? Are they connected to your vision, to your customers, and to each other? Are they just employees on the payroll, or active evangelists working with a vision?

**Staff Development:** Are your team members progressing as professional service providers? Is your service education making any difference? Are your employees getting bored or getting better? Are they seizing every opportunity to develop their service skills and mindsets?

## Don't Just Collect Data; Create Value

The purpose of this building block is to drive new actions that create and deliver greater service value. This purpose is perfectly aligned with our definition of service as *taking action to create value for someone else*.

Your actions can generate positive results in many different areas: performance, profitability, market share, reputation, customer loyalty, employee engagement, and more. Understanding the data can help you track progress, identify trends, and provide a baseline for future improvement. The right measures will also help you catch problems early and avoid pitfalls before they happen.

Service Measures and Metrics are most effective when they help you prioritize what's most important. What new commitments should you make? What new actions should you take? What can you do next, or do right now, to increase satisfaction, secure future business, or generate greater loyalty for your organization? If your current measures and methods of reporting do not achieve these goals, then it is time to review and revise.

Don't let your Service Measures and Metrics become disconnected from the practical levers of power. Collecting data and crunching numbers can easily become a separate function or a department, fueled by the urge to gather even more data and encouraged by the suppliers of surveys, facilitators of focus groups, and purveyors of mystery shopping. I am not against any of these practices; they all have their time, place, and function—so long as they lead you to new action.

Make sure the people on your team know what you are measuring and why. Be sure they understand which numbers you are tracking, and which needle you want them to move every day.

### **Make Your Survey a Positive Experience, Not a Painful Procedure**

Your measurements process should feel like an opportunity to contribute, an invitation to help create a more satisfying experience.

People should look forward to participating in your surveys, interviews, and evaluations as a worthwhile investment of their time. If your current process is tedious, don't be surprised if only unhappy customers use it to tell you how upset they are. An unpleasant or unwelcome survey can destroy more value than it creates!

I recently flew into Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and had a wonderful ride in my hotel's car shuttle from the airport. The driver was so friendly. He gave me a cold towel and a cool drink. He offered a choice of music, talked about the weather, and made sure I was comfortable with the air-conditioning. His smile and good feelings washed over me during the drive, and I liked it.

At the hotel, I signed the guest registration and gave my credit card for payment. Then the counter check-in staff asked me to complete another form. It read:

## LIMOUSINE SURVEY

Dear Mr. Ronald Andrew Kaufman:

To consistently ensure the proper application of our quality standard, we value your feedback on our limousine service:

Were you greeted by our airport representative?	YES / NO
Were you offered a cold towel?	YES / NO
Were you offered cold water?	YES / NO
Selection of music available?	YES / NO
Did the driver ask about the air conditioning?	YES / NO
Driver was driving at safe speed?	YES / NO

Room Number \_\_\_\_\_ Limo Number \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

As I read the form, the good feelings fell away. The driver's enthusiasm suddenly seemed to be a charade. His concern for my well-being was just a checklist of actions to follow. His good mood was merely an act to meet the standard, not to connect with his guest. I felt like the hotel's "quality control inspector," and I did not like it.

If the hotel wants my opinion, they must make me an advisor, not an inspector. Ask me: What did you enjoy most about your ride from the airport? I'd have told them about their wonderful driver, and given him an A+. What else could we do to make your ride even more enjoyable? I'd have recommended providing a wireless tablet device with an Internet connection.

## **The Death of Customer Satisfaction**

Every day, a quarter of the world's population connects via Nokia Siemens Networks' infrastructure, products, and solutions. The company serves telecommunications providers and partners in every corner of the globe with more than 70,000 employees throughout 150 countries. This giant business-to-business company knew very well that satisfying customers was essential for growth in profitability and market share.

But Nokia Siemens Networks had a problem: its Customer Satisfaction Survey was unwieldy. The survey had grown bloated, expanded over time to accommodate many internal requests for more data and details on customer expectations, perceptions, priorities, and competitive comparisons. It was like a bus with only 48 seats and 100 extra people hanging from every window, handle, rooftop railing, and bumper.

Customers did not enjoy this annual assessment process. Most ignored it. Many who did complete the survey used it as a hammer to hit the company hard with their complaints. Employees did not appreciate it either: it was difficult to decipher and hard to fathom what to do. Even worse, individual incentives were tied to very specific changes in one part or another of the survey, leading to individual actions that did not align well with each other across the organization.

“Imagine a customer satisfaction survey that consisted of 150 questions,” says Jeffrey Becksted, at the time the company’s Head of Customer Experience and Service Excellence. “We thought that the more information we could collect, the better we would be able to respond. But, imagine the effect of 80 thickly detailed PowerPoint presentations descending on our organization all at the same time. We simply had too much data for us to digest in a meaningful time frame. We were so focused on asking our customer about us, that we failed to ask the really important question of what actions we can take to create more value for them.”

Managers at Nokia Siemens Networks knew there was a problem with the survey. “It was obvious that we had to take a fundamentally different approach to surveying our customers,” Becksted says. “We were focusing on too many areas, and not asking action-oriented, value-creating questions. So, we started over.”

Rajeev Suri, the newly appointed CEO of Nokia Siemens Networks, pulled the plug on this dysfunctional practice, and formed a new team to find a better way to measure. Imagine that for a moment. Here was a legacy process—built on years of adding and arranging questions to collect feedback for every department and process throughout the company—that generated massive amounts of data. And, overnight, the Customer Satisfaction Survey was gone.

How do you move beyond satisfaction? How do you stop looking backward to evaluate performance, and instead look forward to create new possibilities and potential? By changing your mindset—and transforming your survey—to a value-add proposition. Nokia Siemens Networks brought people from different departments together with a new goal—to create conversations and cultivate insights that would improve the relationships with their clients moving forward.

“Instead of asking clients how they rate our service, we asked them to explain their challenges, their goals, and the ways in which we could help them,” says Becksted. “We asked them where Nokia Siemens Networks fits into their future—not how we’ve served them in the past. We asked about expectations and their experiences of working with us.”

Today, instead of 150 questions focused on expectations, satisfaction, and competitive comparisons, Nokia Siemens Networks interviews its clients with a Customer Experience Survey that has far fewer questions and a greater focus on taking the right new actions, increasing loyalty, and building future business. And, they’ve already witnessed a tremendous response.

“It’s a simple change,” says Becksted proudly. “The question ‘How did we do?’ which is a lagging metric of past performance becomes ‘What can we do?’ which is a leading indicator of future success.”

How can you move beyond satisfaction?

“Change the goal,” says Becksted. “Companies don’t put limits on process improvement, product development, and the bottom line. Why put a cap on improving service by simply reaching customer satisfaction? The goal needs to be constantly adding value. Focus on them, not you. Instead of asking a client to tell you how they perceive your service, ask them to tell you about their needs, challenges, desires, and goals. It doesn’t matter how well you’ve done as much as it matters how they see you in their future.”

“Get leadership involved,” Becksted concludes. “If the leaders of an organization can’t see the detriment of only measuring the past, then your company is doomed to become a thing of the past. However, if they can look into the future, and change the mindset

and the survey, to move beyond satisfaction, the results can be astounding. It's a simple change that's already paying off for our company and our customers."

## Reconnect to Be Responsible and Responsive

When you survey or interview customers, you create expectations that something will be done with their responses. Your process should close the loop to let them know that something has been done. The sequence looks like this: Conduct Survey → Capture Data → Conduct Analysis → Identify Insights → Take Action → Create Value → Repeat Survey.

If your customer says something should be changed in the first survey, you have an opportunity. If your customer says something should be changed in the first survey, and nothing has changed by the second survey, then you have a problem. Low scores in the first survey are acceptable; you want to uncover new opportunities for action. Low scores in the same area in the second survey can be dangerous if left unattended.

Service Measures and Metrics are a vital building block to help you identify problems, discover opportunities, drive new action, and create more value for your customers, your team members, and your organization. Will you settle for anything less?

## Questions for Service Providers

- Do you understand what is being measured in your organization, and why these measures are important?
- Do you see how your own ideas and actions can help improve these measures?

## Questions for Service Leaders

- Does your survey focus on collecting data or creating value?
- Does your current measurement process consistently lead to new improvement actions?
- Do your team members understand and act quickly on the information they collect?
- Is your survey a positive customer experience or a painful audit procedure?
- Do you reconnect with surveyed customers to thank them and inform them of new actions that have been taken?



# 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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