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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 15

Service Improvement Process

Voice of the Customer will help you hear what your customers and colleagues want. Service Measures and Metrics will help you track what they need. This building block—Service Improvement Process—ensures you will create and deliver both.

Notice that the title of this vital building block is Service Improvement Process, not Service Process Improvement. A process improvement increases speed, reduces errors, improves efficiency, streamlines activity, or makes good use of a new technology. A Service Improvement Process is different; it is the methods and processes you use to challenge and support your people to continuously improve their service.

Wipro Ltd is a company of more than 120,000 employees based in Bangalore, India, a country with more than 1.2 billion people. In such an enormous pool of labor, standing out from the crowd is a challenge. Securing a certificate, credential, or document of achievement is one way of standing out, especially in a country with a long tradition of reverence for education. Wipro uses this

to the advantage of its employees, its customers, and its culture with unique “X-Serve Projects” deployed across the organization.

In an ongoing company-wide campaign to improve customer-centricity, thousands of employees participate in customized classes of service education every year. After each class, Wipro prints—but does not distribute—personalized certificates bearing each employee’s name. Although the employees have completed the class, and certainly want their “Uplifting Service Champion” certificates, Wipro holds the certificates back.

To receive these certificates of achievement, each Wipro employee must first complete a meaningful “X-Serve Project.” First, the employee must take a specific new action that creates value for someone else—value that he or she has never delivered before. This action must demonstrate and apply the fundamental principles of customer-centricity that were taught in the class. But even then, the certificates are withheld.

Next, after the employee takes new service action, he or she must obtain a written message from the person served. This message must confirm the action taken and, more importantly, the value received. Finally, with this confirmation of action taken and added service value, Wipro proudly awards these certificates to their “Uplifting Service Champions.”

Wipro’s “X-Serve Projects” are a terrific example of an effective Service Improvement Process: a proven method ensuring each employee effectively puts new concepts into action . . . at least once.

But one successful application of new learning is not enough, so Wipro created another Service Improvement Process. They launched a contest called “Value I Added,” which can only be

entered by individuals or teams that deliver greater value to Wipro customers than the customers requested, expected, or even paid for. In 2010, this contest attracted over 1,800 entries, with winners and their projects capturing the attention and admiration of the whole organization.

These two processes—“X-Serve Projects” and the “Value I Added” contest—connect learning with action and challenge employees to deliver added value. But Wipro also wants to enroll its customers in building the company’s culture. So it created yet another improvement process by including a unique question to its customer satisfaction reviews: “What value have we *added* since the last time we met that was not promised to you at our last meeting?”

What a remarkable question! Wipro intentionally asks customers to identify value received *beyond* any existing contract or service level agreement. Consider the impact on the Wipro employees who know this question will be posed to their customers. What would your customers say in response to such a question?

“The challenge we faced was to get people to develop a service mindset and constantly look for ways to improve the experience for external customers and internal colleagues,” says Usha Rangarajan, General Manager of Mission Quality & Wipro Way (Wipro’s Business Excellence Framework). “By institutionalizing our service philosophy of being ‘proactive, value-adding service partners’ into the process of service education, contests, recognition and rewards, we have created a measurable improvement in our customers’ experience.”

What Is a Successful Service Improvement Process?

A Service Improvement Process creates focus. It keeps the spotlight on service improvement and builds passion for elevating service.

This is not a onetime thing that people may or may not notice. It's a continuous progression of issues, questions, projects, and invitations connecting people with your vision and committing them to service improvement.

This building block drives service innovation. It's the crucible in which competition powers creativity and stubborn problems meet out-of-the-box solutions. This is where customer complaints are wanted and welcome, where survey reports are carefully examined for new ideas and insights.

Service leaders know that competitors are always snapping at their heels or already stepping out ahead. To gain a sustainable advantage, you must deliver more value today than you did yesterday, and even more tomorrow. A Service Improvement Process keeps focus and attention on this goal.

A Service Improvement Process creates synergy by connecting people between levels and functions. Some issues require ownership on the front line, involvement from the middle, and sponsorship from above. Other service issues are quickly solved by teams working across silos. Cross-functional team members bring new perspectives and fresh energy to old problems.

A well-designed Service Improvement Process promotes communication across functions, divisions, and departments. It stimulates collaboration across levels, languages, and locations. With thoughtful planning and invitations, you can also tap the creative energy of your customers, vendors, distributors, and even your government or industry regulators.

Your Service Improvement Process may include many different methods. You can use the following approaches, create new ones, combine old ones, and change any you are using over time. Your

constant challenges are to focus attention, gain active participation, and generate real results.

Problem-solving workshops: Albert Einstein said, “Problems cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them.” Elevating an issue from daily difficulty to a dedicated workshop also graduates that problem—and the people working on it—to a higher level of thinking.

Cross-functional teams: Sometimes the best ideas come from those who aren’t closest to the problems. The participants on cross-functional teams not only learn to understand the concerns of other departments, but they also bring fresh energy and perspectives.

Job rotations: Do you know what it’s like to wear someone else’s shoes for a day? Try it, and let your employees try it, too. The first question from people reporting to new departments is typically, “Why do you do it this way?” And that’s often followed by, “Wouldn’t it work better if . . . ?”

Service improvement contests: Many people are motivated by a challenge to win. If your team responds to competition, create a structure that harnesses this drive for the benefit of those you serve. When service improves for customers on the outside and for colleagues on the inside, then people serving on all sides will feel like winners.

Sharing best practices: Sharing effective examples and successful stories can educate, motivate, and inspire. Find out what is working well inside your organization and then spread the news with online stories, brown bag lunches, weekly meetings, town hall events, formal case studies, and personal interviews and conversations.

Applying new technology: Technology offers many possibilities to measure, deliver, accelerate, and refine. To apply technology as a Service Improvement Process, frequently ask: “How can we use technology to support our service providers? How can we liberate their time and spirit to do what only people can do—caring and responding to the concerns of other people.”

Keep Your Process Fresh and Flowing

After you discover which methods work best for your culture, keep them fresh by changing the criteria, timing, reward, or any another aspect of your programs. When you want people to improve what already exists, it helps to put a little madness in the method. For example, no one ever hung a suggestion box hoping it would be ignored. But rarely will a mere suggestion box attract a healthy flow of good ideas. Now imagine a staff suggestion program that captures attention with a different service challenge and a different form of recognition every month:

- January:** Submit your best ideas for welcoming our new customers. Winners celebrate with dinner for two at a fancy restaurant.
- February:** Submit your best ideas for appreciating our loyal customers. Winners receive a one-year subscription to a useful publication of their choice.
- March:** Submit your best ideas for improving service between two or more departments. Winners from both departments get tickets to an upcoming show.
- April:** Submit your best ideas for speeding up a service process. Winners receive a brand new pair of running shoes.

- May:** Submit your best ideas for bouncing back with service recovery when something goes wrong. Winners get an extra day off.
- June:** Submit your best ideas for reducing costs while maintaining or improving our service. Winners take home a percentage of the savings.
- July:** Submit your best ideas for increasing our sales through service. Winners attend a training program of their choice.
- August:** Submit your best ideas for recruiting new team members who live our values and are motivated by our purpose. Winners enjoy a deluxe buffet with our next batch of new recruits.
- September:** Submit your best ideas for benchmarking other organizations. Who should we visit and why? Winners join the group that goes on the benchmarking visit.
- October:** Submit your best ideas for collaborating more closely with our vendors. Winners get a behind-the-scenes tour at the vendor's organization.
- November:** Submit your best ideas for keeping our customers' needs and interests top of mind. Winners are invited to follow any senior leader of the company for a day.
- December:** Submit your best ideas for new topics for our monthly suggestion program. Winners will see their ideas put into action next year.

Questions for Service Providers

- Do you participate enthusiastically in a Service Improvement Process?
- What service problems do you think could be resolved with your organization's Service Improvement Process?

Questions for Service Leaders

- Is everyone on your team fully engaged in a Service Improvement Process?
- Do your team members feel motivated and empowered by the improvement processes you use?
- How do you personally support service improvement workshops, initiatives, contests, and suggestion programs?

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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