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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 18

Service Role Modeling

Why is Service Role Modeling the final building block in an uplifting service culture? Is it less important than the others? Not at all. This is a case of saving the best for last.

Imagine you are developing strength and alignment in each of the other building blocks. Your organization's vision is clear, recruitment is effective, communications, rewards, and measures are all aligned. But your boss doesn't behave as though he believes it. Would you believe it?

Now imagine your organization is improving in the other building blocks, but it's clearly a work in progress. The service language is not yet common, some communications are out-of-date, the recognition program needs fine-tuning, and a service guarantee doesn't even exist. But your manager comes to work each day obviously committed. She walks the talk and makes things happen, fixing problems, resolving issues, and frequently asking for your help. She talks about uplifting service every day and takes action because she believes it. Would you believe it, too?

The Bellman in the Lobby

Jean-Pierre is the general manager of a well-known exclusive hotel in Paris. He is the kind of impeccable gentleman you would expect to see in this position. He knows fine dining and fine wines. He adores the city and admires his upscale guests. He is worldly in his manners and elegant in his appearance.

But four times a year, Jean-Pierre becomes a bellman. One day each quarter he does not enter the building through the luxurious main lobby, as he does on every other day, but rather enters through the staff entrance at the back of the hotel. Like every other member of the staff, he passes through security clearance and then descends to basement level two, where a locker holds his bellman's uniform and cap.

All day, Jean-Pierre greets guests at the roadside, places their bags on a luggage trolley, and escorts them to their rooms. He holds umbrellas in the rain, carries packages in his arms, delivers documents to guests in meetings—and occasionally receives a tip.

The staff members know that Jean-Pierre is really the general manager, but most of his guests do not. Throughout the day he uses this masquerade to seek out real customer comments of great value. “Have you stayed with us before?” he asks a guest. “Is the hotel any better, or worse, since the last time you were here? Where else do you like to stay when you travel? Does any other hotel do things for you that you wish we did, too? How is your room? Is everything up to your expectations? Any messages you'd like me to pass along to the hotel manager?” Guests enjoy this gregarious bellman who seems to love his job, and they share with him candid feedback a general manager might not hear.

At mealtimes, Jean-Pierre takes his lunch and dinner in the staff cafeteria on basement level one. With his bellman's cap sitting

on the table, he looks like any other member of the staff. Team members sit with him and talk about their jobs, listen to his questions, and ask questions of their own. He shares ideas and listens to theirs. He cherishes these four days, as do the members of his team. Seeing their general manager in the cafeteria, pushing a luggage trolley through the lobby, or holding an umbrella in the rain, they feel even more proud of him as their leader.

The Coin on the Floor

Sometimes the things we let stand set a negative tone and a poor example for those around us.

Recently I visited the showroom of a European car dealer. I was awed by the automotive engineering, but I was not impressed by the attitude of the staff. Something in the air, a touch of arrogance, that uncomfortable glance from a salesman that warns, "If you have to ask how much it is, you probably can't afford it."

Walking between two of the most expensive cars, I saw a large and shiny coin resting on the floor. The coin looked curious and inviting, but when I stooped down to pick it up, I discovered to my embarrassment that this attractive piece of money had been firmly glued to the floor.

I stood up and sheepishly looked around. The salesmen snickered. The technicians saw it all through the workshop window and they were having a good laugh at my expense. I was certainly not the first customer to be caught by this practical joke.

A coin doesn't get glued to the ground by accident, and doesn't remain there without leadership consent. No wonder there was

condescension in the air—it was sanctioned at the top and indulged in on the floor.

Creating Role Models from the Inside Out

Service Role Modeling is not only what you do with customers—it's also what you do and say with the members of your team.

When NTUC Income embarked on a cultural revolution, the new CEO Tan Suee Chieh knew he was asking people to change their traditional way of thinking and their comfortable way of being. The best thing he could do was model new behaviors for all to see and follow.

He wanted his people to be more flexible, so Mr. Tan took up intensive yoga classes to demonstrate his commitment to be flexible and balanced. He wanted the team to think and act outside their comfort zones, so he shaved his head for a charity function and proudly displayed the results. He wanted the team to use new media, go online, and not be afraid of the digital future. So he created a Twitter account, Facebook pages, and a LinkedIn profile to connect himself and his company to the world.

Now he wants the company to be fit for the competitive future and is training to run a full marathon. Some in the company will join him on the run. And, through his behavior, everyone will be uplifted by his commitment.

Your team members notice every consistency and every contradiction. You can't ask your team to respond quickly to customers if your own meetings do not start on time. You can't ask for great organization and housekeeping if your own office is a mess. You can't ask your people to be polite and gracious if you swear with

impunity behind closed doors. You can't ask your team members to provide uplifting service if you don't serve them with passion as an uplifting service leader.

Being a Role Model at Every Level

Being a service role model is not just for senior managers and members of the leadership team. It is what happens every time people can see what you do, read what you write, or hear what you say in an internal or external service situation.

Being a role model is present in your tone of voice when speaking to a vendor. It's the way you respond to a customer in a difficult situation. It's how you phrase a written message when you choose to disagree. Being a role model is how you participate on a team, set the mood in an awkward situation, or take the lead with your clear commitment to a purpose or a project. Being a role model is exhibited in every action you take that demonstrates your attitude, skills, and behavior—and not only when other people are listening or watching. What you do when no one else can see you is being a model for yourself.

Chasing a Role Model in the Sky

"How many restaurants are up here?" Todd Nordstrom asked Matthew Daines, an executive at Marina Bay Sands who was leading us on a tour of the stunning SkyPark—57 stories above the bustling city of Singapore.

"Well, there's . . ." began Mr. Daines, before he instantly bolted away and ran ahead of us.

“Where’s he going?” asked Todd, watching Mr. Daines sprint along the side of the infinity pool, swoop up a camera left on a bench, and continue dodging through visitors as he ran. Todd chuckled. “Wow, he’s got some quick feet. Zigzagging through the crowd in a full suit.”

“Oh, I see. That woman he’s chasing must have left her camera on the bench,” I said as we trailed behind. “He really is moving.”

Todd and I caught up with Mr. Daines on the observation deck as the guest was thanking him for returning her camera. He was smiling politely, and was a bit out of breath.

“Ma’am,” he called out as she began walking away. “Since we’re up here, would you like me to take your picture?”

The woman smiled with delight. “We’d love that. You are too kind.”

I nudged Todd as Mr. Daines snapped pictures of the woman and her friend who were clearly excited to have their picture taken together. Off to the side were two restaurant servers. Behind us was a maintenance team member, and around us were other guests who had seen the whole incident unfold.

“Look who’s watching,” I said. “See all their smiles? Can you guess what they are thinking?”

Questions for Service Providers

- What can you do in your organization today to set the tone and the pace for uplifting service?
- How can you and your colleagues take the lead as positive service role models?

Questions for Service Leaders

- When was the last time you did something that caused your team members to say, “Wow! Our leader really believes in uplifting service!”?
- What else can you do to be a role model for your customers, colleagues, company, industry, and for society?
- What is your “coin on the floor”? What are your behaviors that send the wrong service signal to your staff?

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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