

*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 19

# Learning Takes Practice

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As the lights dim, the audience quiets to a whisper. A spotlight travels across the small wooden stage to a microphone standing in the middle. Suddenly a tall man bursts out from behind the curtain waving at the eager audience and shouting “Is everyone ready for a great time tonight?”

The crowd goes wild.

This was open microphone night at a small comedy club in midtown New York City. And it was Roger Staples’ first attempt at stand-up comedy.

Roger had grown up in the midwestern United States. Now, in his mid-20s, he worked as part-time disc jockey. But he had always dreamed of being a comedian. He studied all the famous American comedians—spending his free time watching their shows and listening to recordings while he drove. He even read the transcripts of their shows. Roger studied every book he could find about comedy and laughter. He knew the complete history of humorists from jesters to modern-day comics. He knew the

difference between satire, slapstick, and stand-up, and could explain what makes people laugh and giggle.

But Roger also knew that just reading and writing jokes wasn't enough—he also had to impress people with his confidence and charisma on the stage. So he read every book he could find on public speaking and presentations to prepare for his first show. He read, and read, and read.

Yet, that night, when Roger stepped in front of the microphone, he looked out at the smiling audience, and his mind went blank. His jaw locked. And after 41 brutal seconds of silence, Roger walked off stage without saying a word.

Why? What happened?

Although Roger had studied every book, he never actually *learned* the art of stand-up comedy. He could talk about it, but he couldn't do it. All he knew was in his head, but it wasn't in his body. It's like reading every weight loss book but not exercising or changing your diet. Or like watching a movie about riding a bicycle without getting on—and falling off—to learn pedaling, steering, and balance.

The same is true with service. It's not enough to only read this book and know the language of uplifting service—you must apply the practices, too. There are four approaches people and organizations can take when it comes to learning about uplifting service. Which category best describes your team or your organization? Which category best describes you?

**The Do Nothings:** People in this group do absolutely nothing to elevate their service levels or boost their employees' understanding of service. They continue day after day as if service improvement is irrelevant, unimportant, or simply someone else's job.

**The Lip Servers:** The lip servers say they will provide good service in marketing messages, and encourage it with motivating posters on the wall, but they don't provide any tools for learning or improvement. It's basically an empty message communicated by leadership that becomes an empty promise to customers and just noise to employees.

**The Process Trainers:** Process trainers spend time and money on customer service training, and then wonder why no substantial improvements are made or why enthusiasm stalls shortly after. This is the vital difference between training and service education. Training teaches people how to do something: take specific actions in specific situations, use a script, follow a checklist, or complete a procedure. Training is essential when the service provider must do just the right thing at exactly the right moment. Pilots and surgeons, for example, are carefully trained to follow procedures and are regularly checked on their skills.

But training is tactical and prescriptive and will often differ among functions. In a large service organization, this leads to a fragmented understanding of what service means to different colleagues, and for different customers. Process training often leaves employees uncertain what to do in situations they have not been trained to handle. And since customers' needs and interests are always changing, this leads to frequent escalations that consume managers' time, and leaves frontline staff members feeling disengaged and disempowered.

**The Service Educators:** Service educators are different. They engage every member of the team in an ongoing learning adventure. They know that becoming skillful in service does not happen all at once, just as mastering math or learning a new language cannot be accomplished in a single session. If you are in this group, you know that service education must be frequent, repeated, reviewed, and renewed for everyone on a continuous and uplifting basis.



Training teaches someone what actions to take in a specific situation. Education teaches him or her how to think about service in any situation and then choose the best actions to take. Service educators teach fundamental service principles. They develop relevant case studies, customized exercises, challenging simulations, and practical discussions with key learning points to apply. They teach with real-time data, current customer comments, compliments, complaints, and competitive information. And the service educators don't stop there. They insist that service education must lead to practical action steps for each person and position. And it must be valuable for every colleague and customer served.

If you are a service educator, you know that new learning happens when principles are put into action, new insights are discovered, new skills are developed, and new understanding and competencies are secured. Just reading a book won't uplift your service performance or build your service culture. This is why the chapters in this book include so many action steps. It takes new action to uplift your service and delight the people around you.

Finally, service educators use methods of teaching that are uplifting. Service skills and attitudes are delivered and experienced together. Manufacturing requires a competent skillset. Service requires a competent successful skillset *and* an uplifting service mindset.

## Education Can Be Exciting

"Pretty amazing, isn't it?" I asked Todd Nordstrom as we stood at the curb waiting for a taxi outside Marina Bay Sands. "Everyone in this property gets it."

Todd nodded as he continued to snap photos with his phone.

“Mr. Kaufman!” someone screamed from the distance. “Mr. Ron Kaufman!” Todd stopped taking pictures. “Who’s that?” he asked as a man ran toward us.

“Mr. Ron, welcome back!” the man said with a gleeful smile. “Let me get a taxi for you.”

The man put his fingers to his lips and whistled while waving his other arm in the air. Todd watched him with curiosity. And, he listened carefully as the nice man and I exchanged greetings.

As soon as the taxi doors closed, Todd turned his head back to see the man waving good-bye. “A friend of yours?” he asked.

“I met him a few weeks ago when I came here for a luncheon,” I responded. “He’s a great guy. He really understands. That’s the level of enthusiasm every company wishes it could get from its employees when they deliver service.”

“No kidding,” said Todd. “Any hotel would be thrilled to hire an upbeat guy like that.”

“Yes,” I said. “But that level of enthusiasm isn’t just good recruiting. Marina Bay Sands continuously educates its team members so they provide that level of service in all kinds of situations.”

“You can’t train someone to get that excited,” said Todd.

“No, you can’t,” I said, agreeing. “But you can educate them, and they will get themselves that excited to serve.”

# 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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