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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 25

Your Implementation Roadmap

We were on a wooded trail leading up the side of a small mountain in Washington State. It was summer. My parents—both in their late 70s at the time—had invited me to join them on a two-hour hike to the top. We were halfway to the summit, appropriately prepared for the challenge and the season with hiking boots, long pants, jackets, and hats. We paused for a moment to admire the quiet beauty, tall pine trees, and the cooling high-altitude breeze.

Suddenly, a young man with intense focus came charging up the trail. He wore nothing but running shoes, gym shorts, and a sweat-soaked T-shirt. We barely had time to step aside as he sprinted past us, literally racing to the summit. I could hardly believe my eyes.

“He’s running all the way up this trail?” I asked in disbelief. My parents smiled and nodded. They are frequent hikers and had seen this many times before. “Yes, some people actually run the entire way, driving themselves to do it in the shortest possible time,” my mother explained. “Others stop along the way to take pictures or to rest. We like to keep a steady rhythm. But one thing is

certain: it doesn't matter what your pace is, this trail takes everyone to the top."

The path you have followed in this book is as reliable as that mountain trail. Follow the steps and keep on going, and you will reach the summit of uplifting service. The architecture is proved, the principles and practices work, and the framework provides a structure for your self-assessment and next actions. But the culture of every organization is unique. And the way you implement what's inside this book will be completely unique for you.

You may want to charge up the hill, implementing many new practices in rapid succession. Or you may plan a longer ascent with many stages to accomplish. Some organizations are climbing the steep slope from a low base of upset customers and a poor service reputation. If this is where you are today, take heart, take action, and this path will bring you up. Others are in the middle of their fields—neither the service champion nor the worst. If this is where you find yourself, you can walk this path with confidence. It will take you to even higher service levels. Some companies and cultures are already strong and well known for uplifting service. If this is where you are today, congratulations. But you know that your competition is climbing higher every day. Stay in shape and stay on top by applying the principles and practices in this book.

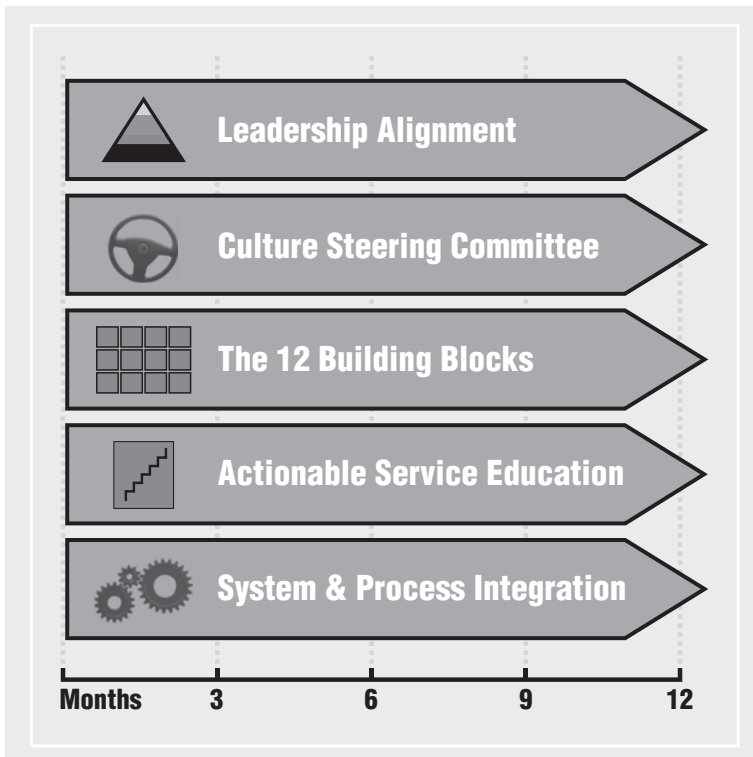
Preparing Your Implementation Roadmap

Whenever my parents embark on a new hiking adventure, they find out before they go what other hikers have experienced on their chosen trails. What is recommended? What is to be avoided? What preparations are most important? What will make their hikes ahead successful and satisfying? My parents study key features of the trail. They learn what to bring and what to leave behind. They

figure out in advance the best time to start, how far to go, what to do when the weather is nice, and do differently if it turns nasty.

Now you can do the same. Using this Implementation Roadmap, let's look ahead to see what awaits you and how you can best prepare for a successful culture-building journey.

Many people want to know how long it takes to build or improve a service culture. From my experience with organizations of all sizes and from all over the world, the answer is 12 months. This does not mean that everything will be completely different one year from today. It means that even a very large organization with a well-established culture can see a positive shift toward service improvement and service results within one year.



And a smaller, faster, or more nimble organization can make a dramatic change in the same amount of time.

Whether your implementation is fast and focused, or more gradual and steady, you can succeed by looking ahead in five key areas.

1. Leadership Alignment

Building or improving a service culture requires commitment from the top. But buy-in alone is not enough. Your leadership team members must be aligned with each other. They must understand why uplifting service is a key to the future and what will be required of them as leaders—and as a team—on this rewarding and demanding journey.

Leadership alignment provides a healthy start on the path and ensures strong support down the road when you need it. Until this alignment is clear and strong, avoid raising expectations with others. Do not announce a service improvement initiative until your leaders are ready to back these words with action.

How do you know if your leadership team is ready? Pose these questions to your team at the top, and then listen for discussion and debate. Keep the conversation going until the team aligns and comes to a clear agreement.

- Why build an uplifting service culture?
- What are the results we commit to achieve?
- How will we provide leadership support?
- Who will be on the Steering Committee?
- When and where will we begin this project? Who will be involved when we start?
- How will we expand, refine, and sustain this long-term effort?
- How will we measure success and share the recognition and rewards?

2. Service Culture Steering Committee

Building or improving the service culture in an organization is a holistic project that touches everyone. Create a Steering Committee to plan and guide this project. This committee will gather support, schedule activities, review results, and make recommendations or revisions to the roadmap.

Committee members must represent the concerns and interests of everyone in the organization. Representatives from human resources, organization development, sales, service delivery, and customer care will all understand the need for their involvement from the beginning. But other parts of the organization have different points of view and valuable perspectives to share. Include representative voices from the frontline operations, production, logistics, research, finance, legal, facilities, supervisors, managers, leaders, and unions. Your committee may change or rotate members from time to time. Fresh talent is good for the work of this group and for the careers of those involved. Creating your Steering Committee means answering questions such as:

- Who will serve on the Steering Committee, and for how long?
- How often will the Steering Committee meet? What will be on the Committee's agenda?
- What decision-making power will the Committee have, and how much budget will they control?
- Who can the Committee call on for expertise, sponsorship, or support?
- How will the Committee evaluate their effectiveness?
- How will an individual's participation in the Steering Committee be recognized and rewarded?

The answers to these questions will be as diverse as organizations themselves. By exploring, agreeing, delivering, and assuring, you

will discover the best answers for your organization to achieve your own objectives.

3. The 12 Building Blocks

The next step in your Implementation Roadmap is a self-assessment in each of The 12 Building Blocks of Service Culture. For each building block, use these questions to guide your exploration:

- Why is this building block useful for us?
- How clear is our focus?
- What are we doing in this area now?
- How well are these activities and programs working?
- Who is responsible here? Who else should be involved?
- What could be improved? How hard would that be?
- How much impact or value would be created?
- What are the next steps up?
- How can this building block be better connected to the others?

You may discover some current activities are out of synch with where you want to go. These legacy policies and practices are reminders of “the way we’ve always done it.” Leaving these remnants in place sends a confusing message. Out-of-date practices should be stopped early in your journey.

You may also find opportunities to spotlight service with very little effort. Sometimes a minor tweak or simple step can send a very supportive signal. For example, celebrating customer compliments can be done immediately and at low cost. Publicizing service improvements requires very little effort and makes everyone feel good. Actions like these are low-hanging fruit. You can pluck them early and enjoy.

In some building blocks, improvements and new activities may require substantial investment. For example, revising your recruit-

ment, appraisal, or promotion strategy takes leadership time and attention. Revamping your customer satisfaction or loyalty metrics is not a simple project. Launching a new contest requires ongoing commitment and possibly financial resources. Improvements in these areas may not be quick or cheap. But your investments of attention, time, and money can deliver powerful and lasting results.

The more you study *The 12 Building Blocks of Service Culture*, the more opportunities you will see. But don't do everything you see as fast as you possibly can. Rather, stage your activities over time—it's a roadmap, not a race. Send an early message, and then reinforce it another way. Focus attention on a service issue, and then highlight the same issue through a completely different channel. Refine your activities, revise your programs, review what works and do it again. Make the message consistent and compelling, but keep your initiatives fresh, engaging, and even entertaining.

4. Actionable Service Education

With leadership aligned, a Steering Committee in place, and building block activities prepared, you are ready to cascade Actionable Service Education into and across the entire organization. The application of these principles will be different in each job and every function, but the principles themselves are the same. This common application of fundamental service principles is essential for building a strong service culture. This kind of education brings new insights and understanding; it calls for reflection and questioning of current views and practices. This kind of education asks every person to put new learning into action, and it requires full support from all—leaders, managers, supervisors, and frontline staff.

Leading these educational courses and conversations is a tremendous responsibility. This unique role is course leader, educator, facilitator, coach, encourager, problem-solver, consultant,

and provocateur all in one. These individuals should be carefully selected for their understanding, attitude, and orientation to new action. This role calls for patience, clarity of thinking, commitment to uplifting service, and boundless generosity in the encouragement of others. It is a unique opportunity to influence the views and lives of others, and to have one's own life enriched in the process.

I frequently encourage CEOs to enable their own team members to lead in-house service education programs. And I encourage team members to volunteer to become these course leaders. External training providers rarely understand your business concerns and objectives as your employees. This is another common reason why so many customer service training programs don't produce substantial or sustainable results. Your goal is more than short-term improvements in a few problem service areas. You want to build an organization with an internal capability to solve problems today and create great successes in the future.

Course leaders influence other people's actions and thus shape the future of the entire organization. Anyone in this position should connect early with the managers of the employees they are teaching. This early connection is essential to ensure a course leader is well prepared. It opens a channel for course leaders to learn about current issues and bring them into each class. It also allows course leaders to return after the class with feedback and practical suggestions for the managers.

Anytime someone participates in a class of actionable service education, he or she should be engaged and informed in advance to understand these questions:

- Why have you been selected?
- What will you be learning?

- How will this learning apply to your job?
- What new actions will be expected from you?
- What value will your new actions help create?
- How will your actions and results be measured?
- What support can you expect from your manager?
- How can you share ideas for further improvement?

Cascading Actionable Service Education throughout an organization requires a rollout of some proportion. Use this mobilization to reinforce other service culture building efforts. For example, bring yesterday's Voice of the Customer comments and last month's Service Measures and Metrics into tomorrow's problem-solving sessions. Harness the ideas and action plans from today's class discussions into next week's Service Improvement Process. Study last month's service award winners to understand how they put service principles into action. Keep fresh information flowing into your service education process. Keep new ideas for action flowing out. Keep the energy for improvement moving and growing in all directions.

5. System and Process Integration

Ultimately, the principles of Actionable Service Education can be embedded into your processes and daily procedures. The objective of System and Process Integration is for these principles to penetrate the very way you work so that simply coming to work and doing your work provides inescapable service education.

For example, at Vopak terminals in Asia, every incoming customer complaint is tracked along a well-developed Service Transaction and Perception Point map. This map guides the quality and sequence of actions to ensure a positive customer experience. At Parkway Health, the hospital operating system includes a standard

procedure that charts Service Transactions and Perception Points on the Six Levels of Service in each category of The BIG Picture. At Wipro, in preparation for customer satisfaction reviews, customer teams prepare by using Explore, Agree, Deliver, Assure: the Cycle of Service Improvement. And at Xerox Emirates, the *Bounce!* model and the Loyalty Ladder underpin every opportunity for service recovery and service improvement. With tools like these in use every day, the distinctions and practices of uplifting service are embedded in daily action and deeply into the culture.

Where can you adopt the language in this book so it becomes the language of your team? How can you apply the models in this book to uplift and upgrade the service you provide?

Review each process involving customers and service providers. There are many to consider where you work. For example:

- How are customers greeted?
- How is product and service information presented?
- How are the needs and concerns of customers identified?
- How are service orders clarified and confirmed?
- How is service tracked and delivered?
- How are customers kept informed?
- How is satisfaction checked? How is value measured?
- How do you follow-up and follow-through?
- How do you deepen relationships with customers?
- How is learning captured and shared inside the organization?

In each case, where can you apply the principles of Actionable Service Education? Where can you use the Common Service Language? How can you create connections with the building blocks of service culture? Embedding these into your systems and processes helps everyone progress along the proven path.

Often things go well and sometimes better than expected. Other times, projects run aground despite the best of ideas and intentions. What can you do to increase the odds of success and minimize the likelihood of trouble? You can study those who succeeded before you, and those who did not. You can learn from the experience of others, as you will see in the next chapter.

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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