*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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Ken Blanchard
Bestselling Author of *The One Minute Manager* and *Gung Ho!*

"Ron Kaufman deserves a standing ovation for *Uplifting Service!* Finally, a book that unveils all the secrets to becoming a service icon. This book not only will help you delight your customers, but it shows you how to uplift your entire organization from the inside-out. Every service provider and business leader should read this book."

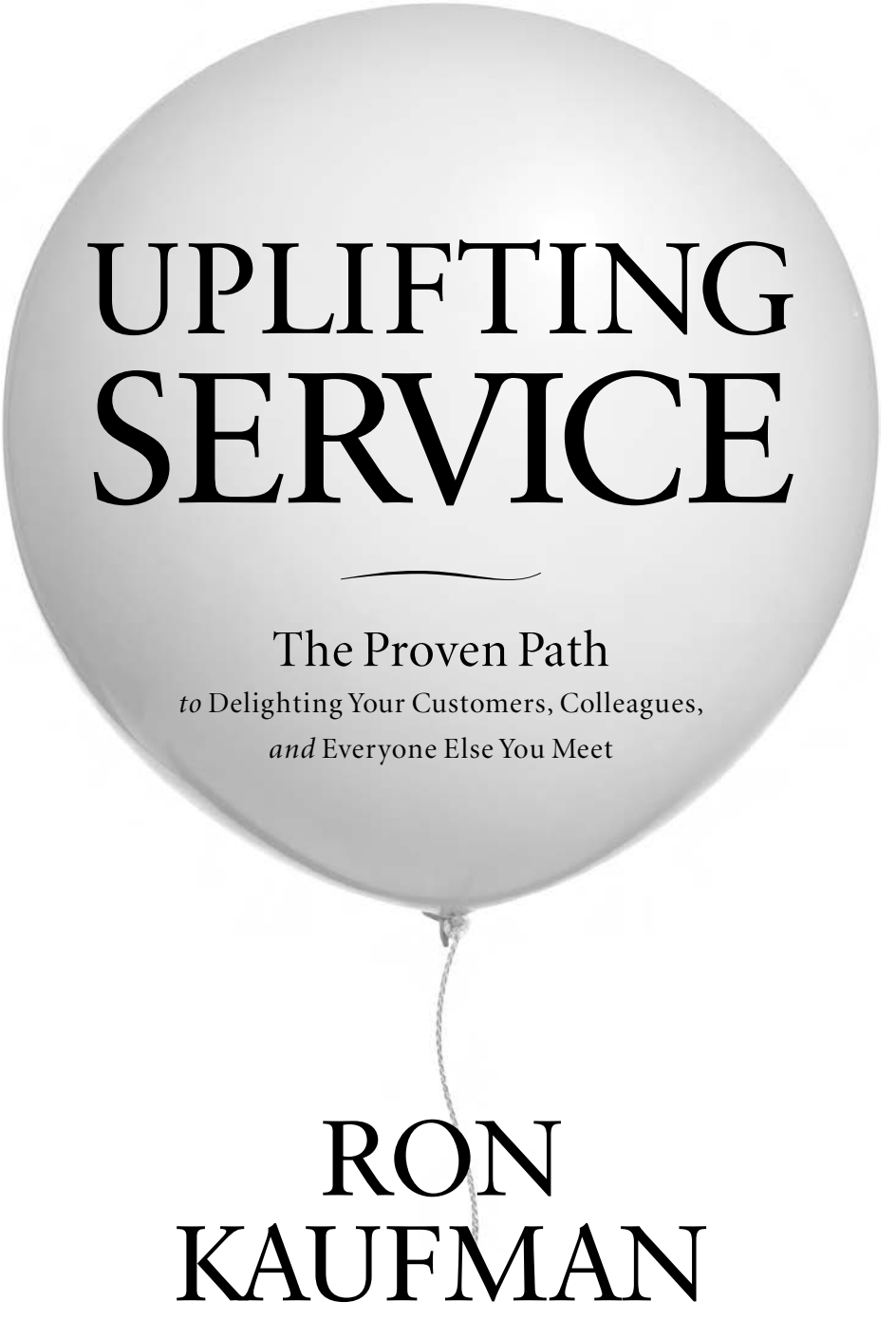
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"*Uplifting Service* is one book every leader must read and every service provider should embrace as their guide. Read it, apply it, and then recommend your customers read it. This book will immediately elevate the value of your relationships. I have witnessed and walked on this proven path and have seen the results that follow. Now is the right time for you and your customers to experience this uplifting transformation as well."

Jagdish Ramaswamy
Chief Quality Officer, Wipro

"If people are your business, this is the book to read. *Uplifting Service* will instantly uplift the value of your human capital: leadership, front line, and everyone in-between!"

Rick Curzon
Executive Director, HR Summit Singapore



# UPLIFTING SERVICE

## The Proven Path

*to* Delighting Your Customers, Colleagues,
*and* Everyone Else You Meet

RON KAUFMAN

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PREFACE

# A Personal Path to Service

For the past 40 years I have been on a mission to improve the world. The vision that motivates and sustains me is a world in which everyone is educated and inspired to excel in service to others.

In support of this mission, I have flown more than ten million miles, visited three hundred cities, and worked with businesses in every industry from high fashion to high technology, government agencies, schools, associations, and voluntary service organizations. I help people become better service providers, and help organizations build uplifting and self-sustaining service cultures.

I define service as taking action to take care of someone else. Or, in commercial terms: *Service is taking action to create value for someone else*. The surprising upside is that improving the service you give someone else also benefits you. Providing uplifting service to others naturally enriches your relationships, improves your network of support, and contributes to your own success.

People often ask me where I get my intense passion for this topic of uplifting service. I consistently and candidly reply, "I get my

passion from you." It delights me to see people succeed by contributing to the lives of others. That's what this book will do for you: show you how you can add more value to others, and gain more for yourself.

## Life Lessons

Unusual people and events have powerfully shaped my life, and the lessons I've learned from them are the roots of my unrelenting passion. My grandmother was my earliest inspiration. She taught kindergarten in New York City for 40 years, and when I visited her class, I felt like the most important person in the world. My grandmother made everyone feel like the most important person in the world.

She'd give one child a compliment and give another a helping hand. She'd read to one group while answering questions from another. She'd separate two fighting five-year-olds and manage to make them both feel good. And at the end of the day, she reassured every parent that his or her messy, noisy, rambunctious child was the most precious miracle in her classroom.

What amazed me was my grandmother's ability to do this all day, all year, for 40 years. Every time she made a child smile, she seemed to get more energized, like her battery was being charged over and over again. She got as much juice out of teaching the kids as they got from being with her. The lesson I learned from watching my grandmother work was as clear to me then as it is today: *providing service to someone else gives you something back. Making other people feel good somehow makes you stronger.* Grandma Bea was the first great teacher in my life. Her intention to serve was the most memorable thing about her. She called it love.

While my grandmother taught me the beauty of service, a Frisbee disc opened the door to a life of serving others.

I am not a tall person. Actually, I'm short. Most team sports were out of my reach as a kid. All that changed when a local high school teacher, Al Jolley, introduced the Frisbee game called Ultimate in our school, and formed a team that anyone could join. But still, because I was short and not very good at throwing or catching a Frisbee, I was often the last person picked.

Dan Buckley was a much more experienced player, and he sported a heart as big as his Frisbee-flinging sidearm throw. He not only picked the smaller people so we could play; he actually threw the disc to us and encouraged us whether we caught it or dropped it, made a decent or another lousy throw. My grandmother had every reason to be nice to little people; she was a kindergarten teacher and she was my grandmother. Dan had no apparent external motivation for being so generous. His reason came from within.

The first official rule in Ultimate is called "the Spirit of the Game." It holds players fully accountable for their behavior on a playing field with no referees. Dan did not just follow this rule; he lived it and I learned a powerful lesson from his example. *Everybody wants to play in this life. Give people enough encouragement and opportunity, and they will rise to the occasion, often surprising you with their commitment and contribution.*

After high school I enrolled at Brown University where I studied history and was captain of the Ultimate team. On the Frisbee field we learned how to work and win together on a small scale. As a student of human history, I was shocked by how often people all over the world fail at living well together on a large scale. Humanity seems to have a long-standing addiction to misunderstanding,

mistrust, and armed conflict. Hardly the spirit of the game I thought we could be playing.

In my studies, I wasn't as interested in learning why war broke out as I was curious to understand how people came back together. Trade and commerce play roles in reconnecting people after war. But I was more intrigued by the endearing and emotionally enduring connections: sporting events, pen pals, student exchanges, and sister cities. I wondered if I could make this kind of contribution to other people's lives, make a bit of difference, and maybe even make this world a better place to work, live, and love.

So I took my curiosity and Frisbees to Europe where I studied during fall and winter and travelled madly in spring and summer. I slept on trains, ate in vegetable markets, and engaged with the people I met in every direction. I taught Frisbee to families in parks and was invited into their homes for dinner. I played Frisbee on the beach and ended up at parties with new friends. I sold Frisbees in the streets and was overlooked by the police who simply smiled.

Whether on Scandinavia's modern trains, Rome's vibrant streets, or Morocco's earthy squares, I discovered that I could lift people's eyes and spirits with my simple piece of plastic. Riding with the wind by day and on rumbling trains at night, my life became a real-world expression of the Frisbee advertising slogan, "You just can't do it alone."

Even during those carefree days I was learning something useful—that effective methods for connecting people can also be easy to apply. *Uplifting someone else's spirit can be as simple as putting a smile on your face, a compliment in your voice, or a Frisbee on your finger.*

My flying discs were simple tools for creating connections, overcoming fears, evoking—and at times provoking—full participation. Getting people involved gave me deep satisfaction. Getting people to play together gave me even more.

Dan "Stork" Roddick worked for the Frisbee manufacturing company Wham-O. He heard about my adventures overseas and sent me business cards that read "Ron Kaufman, International Representative, International Frisbee Association." This was the equivalent of deputizing an evangelist to take on the world. So I did.

I created a company called Disc Covering the World and spent two more years crossing borders and organizing flying disc tournaments, festivals, clinics, and family play days everywhere I went. I rallied students to an international Ultimate game in London's Hyde Park and created an Official Frisbee Sanctuary with a willing youth hostel warden in Belgium. I served as Master of Ceremonies at the Smithsonian Frisbee Festival in Washington, D.C., the Milton Keynes Bowl Air Day in the United Kingdom, and the World Frisbee Championships at the Rose Bowl in California.

Throughout these adventures, Stork was an encouraging patron, collaborator, advisor, and friend. He saw the world through the lens of a sociologist and believed that we could shape culture with festivals and sports, that we could popularize the Spirit of the Game. We shared the dedication of those who uplift themselves by deliberately serving others. But we didn't call it service at the time. We called it play.

One year when I was Master of Ceremonies at the Rose Bowl, I discovered that collective energy is malleable and people who organize others bear a responsibility to shape that energy with care. One hot summer day, someone pushed a scrawled note onto my

clipboard: "A big dog is barking desperately in a white van in the parking lot with all the windows rolled up. It's hot!!" I looked up at the enormous crowd and paused, then took a deep breath and announced, "Ladies and Gentlemen. If you drove here today in a white van with a big dog, your canine friend is getting hot and would like to see you in the parking lot *right now*."

My attempt to put a light spin on a serious situation failed and 65,000 people hollered "Boo!" A wave of darkness rolled out of the crowd and onto the field. Competitors stopped playing. Frisbees fell to the ground. Everyone paused, waiting. I responded from pure instinct and called out to the crowd, "How many of you came here today to have a really good time?" The crowd yelled back "Yeah!" and the wave of darkness floated away. The dog lived to bark another day, and everyone was uplifted.

Guiding the energy of any group toward a constructive purpose is an essential form of service. This is true whether you are leading a team, focusing a department, building the culture of an entire organization, or contributing to the future of our global civilization.

In 1985, I started another company to connect people across cultures with long-standing histories of misunderstanding and mistrust. I organized Frisbee Friendship Tours to the People's Republic of China, was featured in *LIFE* magazine, guided Youth Ambassadors of America to the Soviet Union, and was interviewed on Chinese and Soviet TV. One member of the Soviet politburo understood what I was really doing—connecting people—so he sanctioned our gathering with children, clowns, and plastic flying discs in Moscow's heavily patrolled Red Square.

Through all these crazy events and years of ceaseless travel, another lesson emerged. For my curious gatherings to succeed,

I had to work with police and parks departments, radio stations, newspapers, commercial sponsors, Frisbee experts, novices, and even dogs. I had to figure out what each of these groups wanted to achieve and then design and deliver an event that gave each group what it valued.

> "I don't know what your destiny will be, but this I know: the only ones amongst you who will be truly happy are those who have sought and found a way to serve."
>
> *Albert Schweitzer, Nobel Prize winner*

Radio stations want interesting interviews. Sponsors need high visibility. Expert players enjoy good music and good crowds. Parks departments appreciate clean and safe events. Police insist on orderly traffic. Photographers seek "the shot" to capture the essence of the scene. Dogs need cool shade and clean water. *When each group gets what it really needs, and when all of us feel well served and understood, then everyone can be uplifted together.*

This lesson applies far beyond the Frisbee field. Whenever people with different interests meet in the fields of community or commerce, each of us makes a fundamental choice to focus first on what we want or on serving others. The surprising truth is this: the best way to get what you want in life is by helping others get what they want.

## Surprising Singapore

In 1990, I went to Singapore for one week at the invitation of Singapore Airlines and the government's National Productivity Board. The country was seeking to transform from a low-cost

manufacturing base to a value-adding center for services, ideas, and innovation. One week stretched into a month, then into a year, and now into more than two incredible decades.

During that time, I helped create a service curriculum for the nation, teaching thousands to create more value in the world and in their lives through service. I created the company UP! Your Service with its cheeky name to highlight three important points: *UP!* is the direction you'll travel to grow your income, your company, or your career. *Your* is a declaration of personal responsibility—this upward action must be taken by you. *Service* is your dedication to caring about other people, secure in the knowledge that you get more for yourself when you create for others what they appreciate, respect, and value.

Service industries have always been in my client list with Singapore Airlines, Raffles Hotel, and Changi Airport among the first distinguished organizations I served. Retail, hospitality, health care, insurance, finance, and real estate companies all appreciate the value of delivering great service. But there is also growing demand from the technology, telecommunications, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, government, and other sectors. The value of service as a differentiator is especially high in industries in which products are easily commoditized and delivery is quickly matched.

Over the years, I have seen profound changes in people's attitudes and actions and dramatic improvements in many companies' service performance, with measurable gains in reputation, market share, and profits. Organizations that build vibrant and uplifting service cultures enjoy a sustainable competitive advantage, attracting and retaining better customers as well as more talented and motivated employees.

## The Global Service Challenge

Two contradictory themes run throughout human history. One is the theme of misunderstanding: avoiding dialogue, accumulating mistrust, and armed conflict. The other is better understanding: creating dialogue, building new value, and accumulating trust. Selfishness and fear are at the root of the first, while compassion, generosity, and a commitment to serving others are at the heart of the latter. What causes someone to choose one path over the other? Why are some people so persistently caring and others so regularly rude? Why do some experience life as an ongoing opportunity, while others suffer it as a source of never-ending complaints? More importantly, how can we interrupt this pattern of conflict and missed opportunities to create better lives—and give our children a better future?

The challenge we face today is global in scale and scope: to bring a passion for uplifting service to every culture and corner of the world. The principles of delivering superior service should be taught in our schools, practiced in our communities, and woven into every fabric of our lives.

Years ago I made the decision to serve a larger social purpose. That desire has been at the core of my intentions and actions from organizing Frisbee festivals and international tours to designing and delivering service improvement and culture-building programs. I put my ideas and energy to work to promote the well-being of others. Now, you can do this, too.

We live in an extraordinary time. We have the technological and social ability to connect and serve each other as never before. Yes, there are many problems, but also breakthroughs. There are

confused and dangerous individuals, but also many people acting with commitment, compassion, and concern.

I believe the readers of this book are people who enjoy making useful contributions. Whether you do this in your work and your community, or in your home and personal life, the service you provide to others creates a more enlightened planet for us all.

Thank you for reading and sharing this book and for putting what you learn into action. As you apply what you learn, other people will be uplifted in their lives, and you will be uplifted in yours.

I hope we have the privilege of meeting in person one day soon, and sharing the joy of uplifting service.

My warmest and best wishes to you,

Ron Kaufman



Introduction

# The Problem with Service Today

We are facing a crisis of service all over the world.

Huge economies are transforming from manufacturing-based to service-based at record speed, and our populations are largely unprepared. Customers are angry and complain to anyone who will listen. Service providers are irritated to the point of resentment and resignation. Countless organizations promise satisfaction to external customers and then allow internal politics to frustrate their employees' good intentions to deliver. And our early educational systems don't even recognize the subject of service as an area for serious study.

Yes, we face a service crisis. But, how can that be?

Service is present in every aspect of our lives from the moment we are born. We enter this world completely dependent on other people to serve us with food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education, and affection. Longer than any other species on earth, young people are dependent on constant service from parents, teachers, doctors, and community leaders.

As we grow, we go to work, become professionals, and get jobs, earning money and building our careers in successful service to others. When we become parents, we are service providers to the next generation. And when we become caregivers to our own parents, the roles are reversed and we are service providers to those who first served us.

We live and work in a world that is completely infused with service. In commerce this includes customer service and colleagues providing internal service. We have roadside service, desk-side service, counter service, delivery service, and self-service. In our communities we depend on the civil service, public service, government service, military service, and foreign service. When we gather to worship it's called a religious service, and when someone dies there is a memorial service.

Service is all around you; it's everywhere you look and live. But still, there is a vast disconnect between the high volume and the low quality of service we experience every day. In fact, there is a twofold catastrophe in our lives that makes very little sense. First, many individuals and organizations are unable to provide consistently satisfying service to customers, clients, and colleagues. And, second, many service providers complain continuously about jobs they dislike.

With service all around us, and so much a part of our daily lives, why aren't we doing it better? Why is service in this abysmal state? What is the problem? In fact, there are two problems.

## Problem 1: Service Is Considered Servile

"The customer is king" implies the service provider is not. The word *serve* comes from the Latin word for "slave," which is hardly an attractive proposition. It's no wonder even the word *service* is

avoided by many professionals. People want to be the boss, the leader, the manager, the rule maker—not the humble servant.

On a wider commercial scale, it doesn't help that the "customer service department" is often seen as a necessary evil, tacked on the end of a company value chain like the caboose on a train. It's the place people go only when things go wrong, where angry customers are seen and heard, where service providers toil until they can take no more, and where costs are to be cut, contained, and attributed to other company functions.

This outdated interpretation is operationally, economically, and emotionally counterproductive.

Numerous organizations and studies have proved that loyal customers are more profitable than customer churn and that better service is a key to retaining your best customers. Plus, the positioning of superior service allows for higher pricing and margins, and shareholder value tends to grow in step with a company's service reputation in the industry. Furthermore, when staff members are associated with an excellent service organization, their pride is measurable; employees are more engaged, more productive, and more committed to the organization. Uplifting service organizations simply attract, develop, and retain better talent. People want to work for, and want to be associated with, organizations that are distinguished by uplifting service.

With these benefits so recognized and clear, why is improving and sustaining great service so difficult to achieve? There is another problem.

## Problem 2: The World of Service Is Poorly Mapped

Look into any field of human activity and you will find terms that people in that field use and understand. Doctors and nurses refer

to systolic and diastolic pressures. Chefs and cooks use the terms *blanch* and *bottom cuts*. Carpenters work with trusses, joists, plumbs, and stringers. All well-developed areas of human activity feature recognized terms for commonly accepted ideas and principles in their fields. These are called *fundamental linguistic distinctions.*

But the world of service, and continuous service improvement, has no such common language. The whole domain suffers from weak clichés, poor distinctions, and inaccurate common sense. "The customer is always right" is often wrong. "Go the extra mile" is bad advice when the client wants precise fulfillment of exactly what was promised. "Serve others the way you would like to be served" is well-intentioned but misguided. Good service is not about what you like; it's about what someone else prefers. Service academics have created many meaningful terms: *gap models, channel preferences, promoter scores*, and more. But these have not become widely understood among the millions of service providers worldwide.




Well-developed domains of human activity also feature *standard practices* that deliver predictable and reliable results. Pilots land aircraft safely by adhering to carefully documented checklists. Accountants complete audits by following a step-by-step review of contracts, resolutions, and supporting documentation. Religious events follow time-honored routines and traditions. And sports teams compete within accepted rules of play.

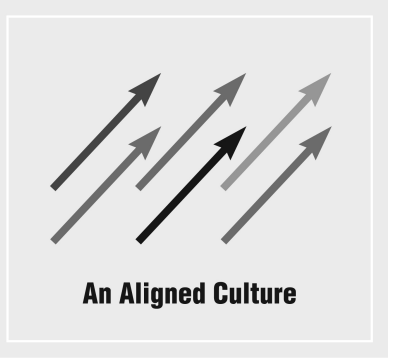
But once again, the world of continuous service improvement—and building service culture—has struggled without a proven way of

working. We have suffered from the lack of fundamental principles, effective processes, actionable models and frameworks to guide us successfully along the way.

## So, What's the Solution?

First, we must transform the outdated view that service to others makes us subservient, subordinate, or servile. Service is taking action to create value for someone else. And that is the essence of every successful business, organization, and career. Uplifting service brings pride to service teams and increases service providers' sense of fulfillment and satisfaction at work. Uplifting service at home and in our communities makes our lives more enjoyable and rewarding. Far from subservience, providing uplifting service to others is the essential reason we are alive and here on earth together. Uplifting what you do for other people is the key to uplifting yourself.

Next, we need a proven path, a map, and a methodology that works with fundamental principles to apply in every service situation. We need practices that will consistently and reliably deliver service value in our professional and personal lives. We need a common service language to effectively communicate our visions, our expectations, and our promises to each other. We need to teach people to think about service not just as a procedure to follow, but as a mindset of purposeful engagement and proactive communication that leads to productive behavior. We need leaders who model service at every level of an organization. And, we need an architecture that helps any group of people engineer a self-sustaining culture of uplifting service. A passionate group of like-minded people with a plan and a commitment to action can and will transform our world.




Imagine that world right now. Imagine a world in which everyone is encouraged and encouraging. Imagine a world in which the common intention isn't just to resolve problems, but also to uplift and inspire others. Imagine a world in which people measure their success by the responses they receive, not by the actions they take. Imagine a workplace in which tasks and projects aren't considered complete until someone has been surprised or delighted. Imagine a world in which people are committed to uplifting the spirit and the practice of service because they really want to, not just because they were asked, ordered, or paid to. Finally, imagine an organization—your organization—truly uplifted, with every person fully engaged, encouraging each other, improving customer experience, making the company more successful, and contributing to the community at large.

## What This Book Will Do for You

This book reveals the power of uplifting service and the steps you can take to build a sustainable culture that delivers it every day. This book answers questions about continuous service improvement and clears away many misconceptions. It spotlights companies and people all over the world who make service their top priority, enjoying great rewards and reputations. This book provides the insights you need to begin elevating your organization—and your own perspective.

This book will lead you on a proven path to truly uplifting service. This path works whether you serve external customers or internal colleagues, individually or as part of a team, in any function and at any level inside an organization. The tools and practices in this book have been proven effective in every context you can imagine: in business, government, communities, and homes; on every continent; and in many languages.

All over the world, people like you are taking practical steps to understand their customers better, create more positive experiences, generate greater value, deepen loyalty, and build longer-term relationships for the future. All over the world, people are also looking for new ways to enjoy their work more fully, to get along with colleagues more easily, and to feel better about their customers and about themselves. The pathway to achieving these important professional and personal goals is through providing more uplifting service.

By taking the steps presented in this book, you will earn greater success in your business and enjoy more fulfillment in your life. You will feel better about the people you are serving and the person you are becoming.

Welcome to the new world of uplifting service.



SECTION ONE

# WHY?



Chapter 1

# Journey into a New Culture

It was the opportunity he had waited a lifetime for—traveling across the ocean to discover a new world, and a new way of conducting business. So, there he sat, staring into the darkness while his family slept in a nearby room, his bag packed with the only suit he owned resting at his feet. He flipped through the empty pages of his passport while he waited. Finally, headlights appeared in the driveway, creeping slowly toward the house.

Of course, this opportunity made the young man's family proud, especially his wife—even though she was staying home with their young children and would wait anxiously for his return. It made his father proud, who had worked so hard to give his son a better life than his own. And this opportunity made the young man's mother proud, as she believed from the day he was born that her son was destined for better things.

In the car on the way to the airport, the young man recalled his simple childhood—frigid mornings warming his hands by a woodburning stove. He remembered the family gatherings when

generations would mingle, sharing stories and family legends, and sitting in his small schoolroom daydreaming about new worlds.

As the car entered the big city, the young man noticed people glaring, with poverty in their eyes. He passed storefronts spray-painted with graffiti and with windows clad with thin steel bars, the only barrier between shopkeepers and thieves. In one tattered storefront window, a sign screamed out, "SELLING EVERYTHING! GOING OUT OF BUSINESS AFTER 40 YEARS."

"Sad," the young man thought. "Where did the prosperity go?"

The airport was congested and cluttered. Car horns honked. People scurried. Buses barged their way into the pandemonium. It was a madhouse. The taxi driver stopped far before the entrance and said, "You'll have to walk. I'm not wasting my time in that mess."

Inside the airport, passengers crowded into lines that stretched through narrow, seemingly endless hallways. The young man hadn't even left his native country yet, but he felt consumed by anarchy—the polite civilian nature of his youth squashed by the harsh reality of tough economic times. Travelers rudely fought for a spot in line at the gate. Everyone was anxious.

Agents and employees at the airport were also sharp. It seemed their primary concern was to simply herd people through as quickly as possible, repeating their mantra, "Keep it moving." The young man let the agents direct him and kept his mind focused on the task at hand—leaving this chaos behind for the learning experience of his lifetime.

"You!" screamed the gate agent, pointing at the young man and waving him over abruptly. "Give me your papers." And so,

the young man did, realizing that he would let nothing get in the way of his boarding the airplane. He didn't care how rudely he was treated, how long he had to stand in line, how hard he needed to work to keep his composure, or how assertive he needed to be to claim his turn. This was the kind of turmoil and disarray the young man hoped would not exist in the new world. And although he had heard stories, he could not help but wonder, "Does such a new world and a more considerate culture really exist?"

"Whatever happened to the ideology of respect?" the young man wondered quietly. "What happened to human generosity and compassion?" He remembered the kind, helpful man who owned a small grocery store in the town where he grew up. He remembered his mother's unwavering loyalty and how she would not shop for groceries anywhere else. He smiled as he remembered the years he worked in that store after school, helping customers, carrying bags, and smiling with his colleagues as they brought groceries and smiles to everyone else.

"Your flight is boarding," said the gate agent loudly, snapping the young man out of his reverie. The young man stood in line until it was his turn at the counter. He watched as the agent checked his name, Todd Nordstrom, on his passport and boarding pass. Todd walked onto the plane in silence.

Unlike so many stories through the ages, in which young people from less-developed parts of the world travel westward to Europe and North America in search of a better life, this story follows a new tide that's turning in the other direction. Twenty-one hours after leaving North America behind, the airplane touched down and the doors opened. A waft of fresh air filled the cabin, and this young man stepped into the new world.

He had heard the stories, but the reality overwhelmed him. This airport didn't resemble anything he had ever seen before. The ceilings were as high as the sky. And although it was the middle of the night, the building was lit to appear as if it were the middle of the day. The walkways were wide enough to be roadways, and they were clean—not a trace of litter. Lush plants and flowers enveloped ponds where exotic fish swam. Families gathered and posed for photographs. As his eyes and ears filled with wonder, Todd found smiles greeting him at every turn.

"Welcome, sir," said an airport employee. "May I help you find something?"

"I just got off the airplane," Todd replied.

The airport employee chuckled. "You must be tired," he said. "Where did you come from?"

"America," he said. "I flew in from Los Angeles."

The airport employee grinned and noticed a luggage tag hanging from his bag. "Welcome to Singapore, Mr. Nordstrom. We are glad you are here."

## In Search of Uplifting Service

This Mr. Nordstrom isn't related to the iconic retailer that shares his name—a profitable retail brand often used to illustrate the power of excellent customer service. In fact, he is not an expert in customer service at all. He's a friend of mine, a typical young businessman, curious about achieving success. He's curious to know how others have made it happen. His views of the world are limited only by what he already knows.

I invited Todd to visit me in Singapore to experience firsthand what I have learned in this country and in other locations all over the world. I wanted to show him what was possible—and to change his perceptions forever.

This is not a book of heartwarming stories of fantastic customer service at The Ritz-Carlton, Disney, or Singapore Airlines. These iconic service providers have earned and deserve their prestige and commercial success. But service is not merely the act of treating customers well. There is a greater definition and a greater role for service to play in your life, and in our world. This book will show you how to create that world.

What is the real definition of service? What does it mean to create a service culture? What are the benefits—for customers, colleagues, and communities—of building an uplifting service culture? And, most importantly, what actions can you take right now to bring these benefits to your life?

All of these questions will be answered throughout this book. And, although you may think you already know the answers, you'll be surprised by what you learn and delighted with what you discover. You'll see how service has become diluted to the dull cliché we call "customer service." And, you'll realize that global businesses, communities, governments, and humankind in general are just now witnessing the birth of our true service potential.

Service is not just a reaction to a request. It's not a department that responds to complaints. Service is not a company policy. It's not a standard procedure.

Service is greater than that—it's a gateway to fulfillment, satisfaction, and delight. It's a curiosity to listen intently and appreciate

others, a commitment to taking action and creating value. Service is a contribution affecting every business, industry, culture, and person—including you. To see the true impact of uplifting service, we need to look farther than over the counter, over the web, or over the phone. We need to look for examples and insights all over the world.

## Why Service? Why Singapore?

Singapore is a unique and extraordinary island south of China. It's small—about 280 square miles of landmass, with fewer than 6 million residents, and less than an hour-long drive from coast to coast. Yet the country is one of the leading financial centers in the world. It hosts one of the busiest shipping ports in the world. Year after year it's rated one of the best places to live and conduct business. It has held the rank of fastest-growing economy in the world, and has yet to celebrate its 50th birthday.

The principal gateway to Singapore is the airport. It's no ordinary airport. In fact, it is the most awarded airport in the world, and it has an extraordinary impact on the entire country.

How can an airport have so much impact—especially on a nation with such high credentials? Backtrack to Singapore in the early 1990s and you'll notice a very different picture of the country. Singapore has few natural resources other than its people and its strategic location. In the 1980s and 1990s, the manufacturing base of the country was moving to China where land was vast and labor inexpensive. Administrative tasks were being outsourced to India and other low-cost locations. Singapore's educational system was focused on supporting the manufacturing base with quality-assurance training and business models.

Singapore could see the opportunity in service-based industries like medical, financial, legal, education, hospitality, entertainment, and retail, but the nation's human resources hadn't developed to support these service industries. The people of Singapore had been educated to know the answer, pass the test, do the right thing (the first time), avoid making mistakes, and follow proven procedures. But to serve? What does that mean in a culture in which everyone is meticulously trained to reliably follow the rules?

This challenge went even deeper. Singapore has a global reputation for vigorous law enforcement. It is, quite possibly, one of the safest places in the world—unless you're a criminal. Singapore had developed a stable culture of law-abiding citizens. So how can people educated to explicitly follow rules and regulations adapt to roles that require adaptation, creativity, and problem solving every day?

Singapore had to transform an entire nation that knew how to follow instructions well, but was hesitant to follow a customer wherever their interests may have led. Government officials recognized this conundrum. Yet, they also realized the opportunity—and the necessity—to transform. In fact, driven by the vision of the country's founding prime minister, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, government leaders have been guiding this country through successful transformations from the beginning. Today, as many parts of the world struggle with deep challenges and difficult change, this small country is a unique example to study. Singapore offers a wide range of successful organizations, uplifting service experiences, and practical insights for enduring success.

When Singapore claimed independence in 1965, it was a time of racial tension and economic hardship. In a land populated by immigrants with a potentially volatile mix of ethnicities,

religions, and economic backgrounds, the population and the law had to respect social differences and allow (if not demand) economic progress. That was an all-embracing and law-abiding transformation.

The country's geographic location made it a port of constant commerce, bringing travelers and companies from all parts of the globe to engage in business, enjoy leisure, or simply connect in transit to another part of the world. But Singapore wanted to become a premier global hub for creating and exchanging value, not just an exotic local bazaar, a transit point, or an interesting regional destination. To find its place in the wider world, Singapore had to undergo another enormous change of thinking and global understanding throughout the nation.

Then, during the 1990s and into the next century, as Singapore's low-cost economy disappeared and value-adding services took root, the time for another transformation had come, a transformation of thinking and action to create even greater value for people throughout the world—and for the people of Singapore—a transformation of attitudes from command to creativity and of behaviors from compliance and control to concern and compassion. In short, an *uplifting service* transformation.

If you want to transform a mindset, convert an industrial base, inspire a diverse amalgamation of people, and uplift an entire nation, where do you start? You start at the gateway. You start at the airport.

## Changi Airport's "Why?"

Singapore realized something that much of the rest of the world is still trying to figure out—there is a service crisis in the world,

and only focused attention and persistently positive action are going to fix it. Businesses have turned a very simple human concept into a catastrophic cliché. Bosses demand "customer service" from frontline employees as if it were a performance metric. They remain blind to the fact that true service comes not from demands and dashboards, but from a basic human desire to take care of other people. So many organizations, rooted in task and efficiency metrics of the industrial revolution, have stuffed the concept of service into disconnected departments and filled it with meaningless mantras and reactionary rhetoric, without stopping to realize its true potential.

"Oh, you want service?" an employee asks. "Well, you'll have to talk to our service department." Or, "You want something else or something different? That's not our policy." "It's not my job to make you happy," says a manager. "Talk to human resources if you've got something to say." An executive might even say, "It's not personal. It's just business."

What happens to customers' loyalty when they realize that some employees are not concerned with achieving or delivering their satisfaction? What happens to team members when their manager is unwilling to help support or serve their needs? And what happens to an organization that isn't concerned about the welfare of its employees, its community, its industry, or its social contribution? Morale declines, performance suffers, and service spirals further downward.

Where does service really start? And where does it end? In Singapore, it starts when and where you land—at the gateway.

Since the airport's humble beginnings in 1981, Changi Airport has evolved to become a global standard of functionality, aesthetics, and service. It is currently the world's seventh-busiest airport,

serving, surprising, and delighting more than 42 million travelers a year—that's more than seven times larger than Singapore's entire population.

The airport property is nothing short of exceptional. It's jammed with amenities unseen at any other airport in the world, like a butterfly garden, outdoor swimming pool, playground equipment, a four-story slide, napping rooms, spa treatments, and entertainment venues that include movie theaters, multimedia and online experiences, and even video-gaming stations.

Sounds like a great time, right? It is. However, it's much more than some fun between flights. The stress-free atmosphere of Changi Airport is a soothing oasis where you can relax, regroup, and reclaim your senses. It's a chance to reconnect with loved ones, call home, or meet someone new. It's a place where you can find yourself, and be yourself.

In the same way, Singapore is a place in which the world can see itself, too. It's an entire country in just one city. It's a wide range of races, religions, and cultures all serving each other and succeeding together. It's a small country in a big region serving customers from all over the world. It's a mix of people and languages using a commitment to uplifting service to build a better future. Singapore is a microcosm of the world. What works in this country can work in your company, your organization, your career, and your life. Uplifting service can work in your world, too.

## The Adventure That Lies Ahead

With each chapter of this book, you will take another step on the proven path into a world where service has the power to uplift, delight, and inspire.

We'll start inside Changi Airport and discover *why* Singapore embraced uplifting service at this important gateway.

Then we will travel inside the infrastructure of two other Singapore-based organizations, NTUC Income and Marina Bay Sands. The former is the nation's largest insurance company whose mission and vision of service are unique. The latter is a new, integrated resort on a journey to global magnificence, accelerating its business performance and enabling human potential with an uplifting service culture.

We'll leave Singapore's borders to visit uplifting service organizations and destinations around the globe—Nokia Siemens Networks with telecommunications customers in more than 100 countries; Royal Vopak based in Holland with a global span of oil storage and chemical handling facilities; Xerox in the United Arab Emirates; and Wipro, an IT and consulting powerhouse based in India and serving clients worldwide with a customer-centric competitive edge.

Uplifting service transforms individuals, teams, and entire organizations. I've witnessed its power and its impact firsthand. And along the way, I've gathered insights, interviews, best practices, and strategies from the world's most successful service cultures, innovators, and leaders. You will meet these leaders and discover the challenges they have overcome and the rewards they have achieved. And, for the first time, the essential architecture they use to engineer an uplifting service culture will be revealed so that you can use it, too.

Uplifting service is not just a business mantra; it's a transformational mindset. It's a powerful driver of engagement, loyalty, and trust. It's an accelerant, a connector, and a movement. And it's the only aspect of business that fuels and feeds the spirit of

every person to create a sustainable advantage, a continuous improvement, and a constant uplifting of people's performance, passion, and potential.

Like Todd Nordstrom's view of the world and service after he visited me in Singapore, your understanding and perception are about to change forever.



# Tools *for* Your Journey

Every great expedition begins with a great idea. However, embarking on your journey into a new world also requires planning, commitment, and the right set of tools. Great explorers prepare themselves with proper gear and resources. To help you succeed along the path, we have provided all the tools you will need to uplift your service performance and build an uplifting service culture—free articles, videos, and easy to follow guides—revealing new ways you can begin transforming your culture today.

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## Video Library

Innovative ideas and useful insights. Watch these short videos to understand the benefits, issues, and challenges in building an uplifting service culture. You will learn a lot in just a few short minutes.



## Assessments

Are you an Uplifting Service Provider? Take the quiz to find out. Are you an Uplifting Service Leader? Take the test to discover your rating. Do you have an Uplifting Service Culture? Find out now.



## Webinars

Ron Kaufman explains how the Uplifting Service architecture works, and how you can put it to work right away. Each webinar is packed with case study examples, insights, and results. You can learn more online, anytime, at your convenience.



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# 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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