

Delivering Knock Your Socks Off Service

The quality and consistency of our service sets us apart from everyone else and serves as a daily reminder to our members of why they joined the club in the first place.

In this wonderfully instructive book on delivering knock your socks off service we learn the fundamental principles of great service:

Reliability—the ability to provide what was promised, dependably and accurately

Assurance—the knowledge and courtesy you show to customers, and your ability to convey trust, competence, and confidence

Tangibles—the physical facilities and equipment, and your own (and others) appearance

Empathy—the degree of caring and individual attention you show customers

Responsiveness—the willingness to help customers promptly

“Caring service delivered quickly and confidently by knowledgeable, courteous people—what more could your customers want?”

Each of these points is explained in a clear and succinct way, often using actual occurrences to validate the point. Quotations from numerous business leaders and writers are sprinkled throughout the book to emphasize each idea, lending credence to each and every one.

Next come the ‘How-to’s’ to great service. “How well you listen, understand, and respond to each customer, how you handle face-to face contact, how you use the telephone, the words you put on paper or in e-mail messages, and the way you anticipate customer needs all contribute to your customer’s evaluation of your efforts. Properly combined and skillfully executed, these elements add up to outstanding service!”

Topics covered in this section include the importance of honesty— “Lying to or misleading customers invariably leads to far worse problems than looking them straight in the eye and telling them something unpleasant they need to hear right now.”

Creating trust in an insecure, suspicious world is a chapter that everyone needs to read and re-read, and put into place ASAP. “Customer trust grows slowly, develops over time, and is a succession of positive experiences. Trust can be dashed by a single incident of unfaithfulness and can be cemented by a singular memorable act.” Ways to build trust include practicing frequent communications, sticking with the truth, developing openness, showing warmth and confidence, and above all—keeping promises.

“The core of the psychological side of service recovery—fixing customer problems—is restoring trust; the customer’s belief that you can and will keep the explicit and implicit promises you make.”

Doing the right thing is covered with frequent allusions to the Nordstrom business principle, and their legendary customer service. “Of course, such a policy only works if managers treat questions as teaching opportunities rather than annoyances, and at Nordstrom you’ll find leaders who are devoted to coaching employees.”

“Tip: Take time to get together with your coworkers to learn from each other’s experiences. Share stories of successes and failures with tough customer problems. The chances are very good that if you are having a problem with something, so are others.”

Next comes listening skills, how to ask intelligent questions (James Thurber said “it’s better to know some of the questions than to know all of the answers.”), winning words and soothing phrases (including great twists on such forbidden phrases as “We can’t do that” and “I don’t know” and “hang on a second, I’ll be right back” and “that’s not my job”). As Adlai Stevenson once said “Man does not live by words alone, despite the fact that sometimes he has to eat them.”

There are 37 chapters that are actually interesting and informative, adding up to a foolproof way to make all of your customer service memorable (in a great way!) I recommend it highly for you and all of your coworkers. It’s available at Amazon in paperback for under \$10.

Delivering Knock Your Socks Off Service, Kristin Anderson/Ron Zemke, Hyperion, New York, 2008

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