

I M A G E

**AN ACTION RESEARCH JOURNAL  
ON  
PERSONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATION**

**THE INSTITUTE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS and LENS INTERNATIONAL**





## AN ACTION RESEARCH JOURNAL ON PERSONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

The Action Research Journal is written to communicate designs, formats and ideas of transformational processes which promote the human factor in private and public sectors. It is published by the Corporate Services Division of The Institute of Cultural Affairs: India for distribution through the Asia Network of ICA and LENS INTERNATIONAL organisations. These include ICA: India (Bombay, Calcutta and Pune), LENS Services (New Delhi), LENS International Malaysia Sdn. Bhd., ICA Australia, ICA Taiwan, ICA Associates (Hong Kong) and LENS International Japan.

The Action Research Journal will draw on a variety of sources including other ICA world-wide offices and affiliated professional consulting organisations to provide a spectrum of practical tools and constructs that facilitate individual and organisational transformation. We welcome comments and articles from our readership.

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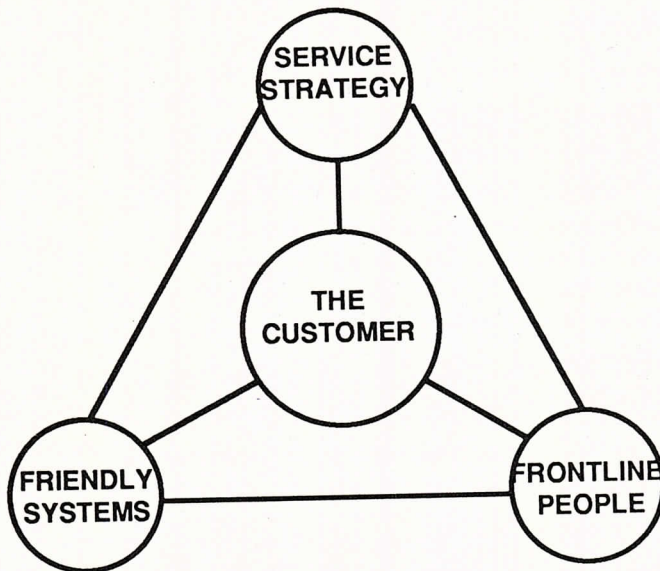
"SERVICE"

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# JOURNAL OVERVIEW



The symbol for this issue of the **IMAGE** on **Service** is taken from the book Service America! by Karl Albrecht and Ron Zemke. It illustrates that the focus of an entire organisation needs to be on the customer.

**Service.** It begins with a well thought out **customer strategy** that can align the entire organisation towards the customer. Often this is a well understood market approach that "niches" the organisation into a competitive position where it can excel through good service. Airlines try this with their advertising slogans like United's "Fly the Friendly Skies" or Singapore's "The Singapore Girl".

Secondly, the organisation then develops delivery systems that are "**user friendly**" whenever a customer encounters them. All of us have had the frustrating experience of being "passed around" the organisation as we try to get a problem solved or an answer to our question. Even when a service person wants to give good service he is often thwarted in his effort by the inability of his organisation's system to deliver quickly and accurately the information or material he needs.

Finally, it all depends on **customer-oriented frontline people**. Often it is the people who interact the most with customers that are the least valued in the organisation. All too often we hear the response to an enquiry on our problem, "Hey, I just work here!" But in service oriented companies these "lowly" people are treated with respect and empowered to ACT on customer needs. They grasp that every

customer is not just a single sale, but represents a lifetime of repeat business and referrals if treated well.

Putting this all together is not an easy task. Service is more of an "**art**" than a science. Although many training programmes exist to instill customer orientation into staff, they rarely are effective. Why? It starts with a basic understanding that the purpose of the organisation, any organisation, is service, period! Not profit, nor growth, nor excellence can substitute for the purpose. This very issue of "The Ethic of Service" is discussed in our first article by John Epps.

Secondly, when a company grasps the total interdependency of all systems in the universe, then fulfilling one's role in that matrix becomes a natural consequence and not an "add-on". Serving society through sound ecological practices, for example, is understood as a principle responsibility of "service" to the larger system that it is a part of. But even if a company does not recognise its connectedness to the larger systems of society, it can grasp the "system" of its own structure and try to build into it the focus on the customer. Unfortunately, the opposite is more likely, as in the domination of manufacturing over marketing. "We made it, you sell it!"

Perhaps one of the least understood dimensions of the "systems" approach is how suppliers and vendors can be brought into a "**partnership**" relationship so that each can better serve a common goal. Developing a "win-win" situation rather than a "win-lose" or "draw" situation can work wonders to smooth the flow of goods and services. The Japanese have excelled at "partnership" types of relationships.

Why is it that we all experience receiving good service as such a rarity? As Tom Peters puts it, "Services pays! Best kept secret in business!" Most companies fail to realise the relationship between their culture (which sustains and supports their priorities and values) and their day to day operations.

Perhaps most important, it means involving the Customer in all you are trying to change. It means developing much more active and responsive customer feedback mechanisms. It means developing the art of listening and sensitivity for everyone. It means finding ways to link those "buried" deep within the organisation systems of administration and manufacturing directly with the customer.



This issue of **IMAGE** is a collection of articles designed to give you some practical images on how to bring about a transformation toward **Service**. It is not an easy task. It takes a total commitment, a well thought-out plan and lots of patient implementation.

John Epps is with the consulting firm of **LENS International Malaysia Sdn. Bhd.**, associated with the ICA: Malaysia. His article on **Service Excellence** introduces the concept of The Diamond of Service and shows how it can be the basis for developing a service oriented organisation.

In the book Service America!, the authors introduce the concept of "**Moments of Truth**", a phrase Jan Carlzon of SAS Airlines coined to indicate those many encounters every customer has with the organisation, each of which is an opportunity to form an impression of its service. In our **Methods** section of this issue we outline a simple way this can be adapted by any group for developing customer sensitivity.

Roger Harrison, Ph.D. of *Harrison Associates Inc.* in Berkeley, California, has written a very insightful focus paper called Organization Culture and Quality of Service published by the Association for Management Education and Development, London. We have taken an excerpt of this article and titled it **Culture and Service**. Harrison spells out his idea of four operating cultures with each having its own understanding of service. He contends that those companies having what he calls a Support Culture are most able to respond to the needs of their customers because of their orientation towards "love" in the workplace.

Tom Peters continues to be a rich source of practical wisdom for orienting an organisation towards customers. We have taken highlights from the chapter on Customers in his book Thriving on Chaos and included it under the title **Customer Responsiveness**.

Some time back we encountered a delightfully humorous talk called "**Think Strawberries**" by James Lavenson, President of The Plaza Hotel, one of the finest hotels in New York City. We think that you will enjoy his story of how he got his hotel to become customer oriented and how it really paid off!

Our **Book Review**, by Richard West, of ICA: India, for this issue is John Sculley's ODYSSEY: Pepsi to Apple. John Sculley left a secure position as the President of Pepsi to take over as the Presi-

dent of, at that time, fast-rising, but risky Apple Computer Co. The book contrasts the difference between a "**second-wave**" company (Pepsi) and a "**third-wave**" company (Apple), and how he struggled to adapt himself to the free-flowing Apple culture and adapt it to compete effectively in the tough market of computers. We highly recommend this book as it has excellent images for what it will take for organisations to transform into the flexible organisations necessary for the 21st Century.

Finally, we are including a **Resource** section for developing customer orientation. We have included a synopsis of excellent films and videos on customer service.

On the last page you will find ads for three publications available through the ICA offices.

#### TO OUR READERS IN INDIA

This issue represents an expansion in the readership circulation. The **IMAGE** is now being published for distribution throughout Asia through our ICA offices and related professional consulting businesses in Kuala Lumpur, Taipei, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Sydney, Delhi, Calcutta, Pune and Bombay. We feel that all of Asia represents an area that is pioneering in many dimensions of personal and organisational transformation. We will be receiving edge articles on transformation from these offices which will broaden and enrich our attempts to explore this ever-expanding subject.

JACK GILLES,  
EDITOR

ICA: INDIA  
Corporate Services Division



# SERVICE EXCELLENCE - John Epps

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We're entering a new world of Customer Service as the leading edge of excellence in companies.

Noting the number of books, articles and videos on the topic will let you see the trend; but to get the real depth and feel of this new world of service, you have to look to experiences. I'd like to begin with a recent encounter with the transition from routine to good service, then to make some observations about why it's important and what it entails.

First the experience: last December, my wife and I had to travel from Kuala Lumpur to Manila for a staff conference. Once the conference was over, she had to go to Hong Kong for another meeting before returning, and I had to stop by Singapore for an appointment on the way home. So we called our travel agent with the details, got his price and gave the go ahead. Then the fun began. He called the next day to inform us we'd have to fly PAL or pay several hundred dollars more; but I had to fly SIA because neither PAL nor MAS return from Manila by Singapore. We groused about that for awhile, but since the flights arrive in Manila within 15 minutes, decided that it wasn't too much of a problem. We're seasoned travellers and somewhat accustomed to putting up with inconvenience. Then the storm broke.

The day before our Thursday departure, he called the office at 5 p.m. to say my reservation could not be confirmed. I was already home packing, so the office called me with the message and that the agent would be calling me. He did. "Your office said you'd be angry," he began. "That isn't the issue," I replied. "The issue is how are you going to get me to Manila tomorrow for my meeting like you agreed?" He said he'd try again and hung up. Fifteen minutes later he called again: "I tried. There are no more seats allocated from KL on your airline, and PAL says they're fully booked." "Friend, I don't believe there are no seats. What if I took Thai to Bangkok and connected to Manila? What about Royal Brunei? Cathay Pacific? China Air? British Airways? JAL? Have you tried all them?" "I'll call you back." Fifteen minutes later. "I got you a first class seat." "Great! I love flying first class." "But it'll cost twice as much." "Sorry, we have a bad connection. I thought you said twice the cost, and that's clearly out of the question. What if I take a shuttle to Singapore and leave from there?" "I'll call you back."

Another fifteen minutes. "I can't find anything." "Friend," I remarked, "if my father had died and the funeral was in Manila tomorrow, you could get me

there, couldn't you?" Long pause. "Yes. I'll call you back."

Ten minutes. "I've got you on the PAL flight with your wife. We have the SIA ticket. PAL will take it if SIA signs it over. I'll meet you at the airport and see it works out." You could hear his grin over the phone. Mine too.

Well, the airport was a hassle because SIA couldn't sign at their airport office, so the agent called back to town for his messenger to buy a new PAL ticket and bring it to the airport by motorcycle in time for the flight. I won't go into the pacing, the wringing of hands, the check-in staff holding my boarding pass saying, "you'll never make it", or the sinking feeling as Ann checked in. To make it short, 3 minutes after the announced departure time, I was running down the concourse to the very last gate laughing like crazy while the agent was back in the lounge grinning from ear to ear. He'd never performed so well nor had such fun in his life! I even wrote him a thank you letter - I don't write letters. But I was moved by his efforts.

Now the point of this story is that 95% of the pain in this situation was the agent's struggle to decide whether or not to serve his customer. Fortunately he came through. Many don't, and the pain becomes a disaster for the customer. The agent just brushes you off with, "Sorry, that's the way the system works", and you're stuck. The decision whether or not to serve the customer is facing us all, and how we make it determines in large measure, how or even whether we'll go into the future.

## The Customer Is Key

I'd like to lay out some points aimed at making that decision easier. We are in a new business environment in which serving the customer is key to success.

The standard strategy for achieving excellence is to differentiate yourself from the competitors. Usual variables are product, price, service or some combination. But in today's market, products are near-identical and prices are already near the margin of profitability (or are regulated). That leaves service as the major variable by which to distinguish your company.

Once we could afford a "Sell 'em and forget 'em" posture towards customers. Now, as Theodore Levitt from Harvard points out, sales which companies used to see as terminating a relationship, are



seen by customers as initiating a relationship. They are more like a wedding than a quick affair. Businesses that realise this can take advantage of it for repeat business and referrals. These repeats and referrals come far easier and cheaper than restricting yourself to new clients.

We're also in a buyer's market. Goods are available that once were in short supply. And consumers are increasingly vocal about what does and does not measure up. The Ralph Nader movement has come to Asia, and let the sellers be

warned! Regulations of all sorts wait in the wings for unsatisfactory businesses. Conversely those that meet and exceed customer expectations have an edge.

Statistics have shown the economic necessity of customer service. From research done by TARP - Technical Assistance Research Programmes - and reported by Ron Zemke and Carl Albrecht in Service America!, 96% of dissatisfied customers never complain; for every complaint received, 26 customers are unhappy. Furthermore that average unhappy

### THE ETHIC OF SERVICE

The new approach to ethics understands that business is essentially a SERVICE; it may be defined as "An activity that generates a valued benefit." Its organisation allows that service to be performed effectively; its profitability is a measurement of its success in delivering what is valued. And the business ethic that is emerging is an Ethic of Service.

In this Ethics, both Profit and Organisation are considered. Profit is the measurement of success in providing value; when the profit declines, you assume something is required to make your product more valued or to deliver it more effectively. The Organisation is the means by which service is delivered, and it is constantly refined to accord with changing customer conditions. But NEITHER Profit NOR Organisation are ends in themselves, final values to judge all else. Only service holds that position.

The new Ethic of Service is based on four primary values:

1. High quality products and services to the end user
2. Rapid and aggressive response to customer feedback
3. Teamwork empowering individual performance
4. Vision of long-range social benefit

The primary recipient of service in the new ethic has to be the CUSTOMER, the end-user, the client or the buyer. This is where the buck STARTS. Unless the value generated by the company has someone willing to pay for it, there is no business. So providing what is valuable enough to exact a price is the first and primary value of business. This means that quality and responsiveness are prime values.

But a business has other stakeholders, and service to them is also part of the new ethic.

Regarding STAFF, the company serves by providing 1) an opportunity to use one's energies creatively; 2) a source of economic support in payment for those energies; and 3) a community in which to grow and develop. A vast array of fringe benefits, perks, incentives and recognitions are available in the marketplace, but all are manifestations of these 3 major values. Recognition of this responsibility of a company for its staff is a major advance from the days of sweatshops. But this value is secondary; when a group tries to benefit itself first, it will invariably decline in its capacity to deliver value to those who pay for it. The result is a fattened bureaucracy, endless bickering and make-work that not only impedes service delivery but also demeans those paid to perform it.

In the Service Ethic, staff are full partners in the creation and delivery of value. There are differences of function and areas of responsibility, but everyone has a role to play. The tragedy of unemployment is not poverty as in the ethic of profit, nor is it impotence as in the ethic of organisation; it is disengagement. Alternative ways can be found to obtain economic sustenance, and many non-formal groupings can provide group support. But there is no substitute for a job as an opportunity to serve. When one is denied this opportunity, an inevitable death of spirit occurs. Our popular longing for vacation or retirement masks the simple fact that delivering genuine service is humanly enlivening.

The public is served by business. While government regulates and monitors business practices, it depends on business for providing tax funds to carry out government programmes, and for having a direct impact on the standard of living. Much could be said about the interdependence between public and private sector. But in the business ethics of service, the government must benefit from the enterprise.

As must society at large, environmentalists cannot be fundamentally at odds with business in the Ethics of Service. Business has the creativity, technology and capital to provide a safe planet for us all. So the long range and widespread impact of a company are part of its service.

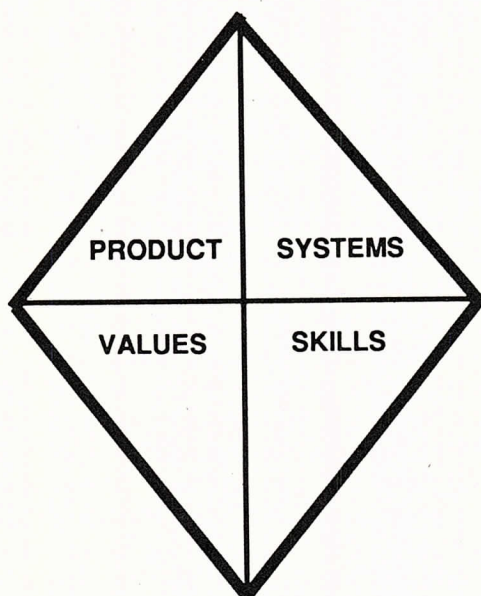


customer tells his problem to 10-20 people. This means that for every complaint you hear about, between 260-520 people are hearing negative reports about your organisation! On the other hand, customers whose complaints were resolved quickly are 95% likely to do repeat business and to tell 5 other people. The upshot of this is that each customer represents more than a single sale. (A possible exception is the undertaker.) Wise businessmen see each customer in terms of a lifetime potential of staggering proportions. In that light, the customer deserves the very best. If he doesn't find it here, he will look elsewhere!

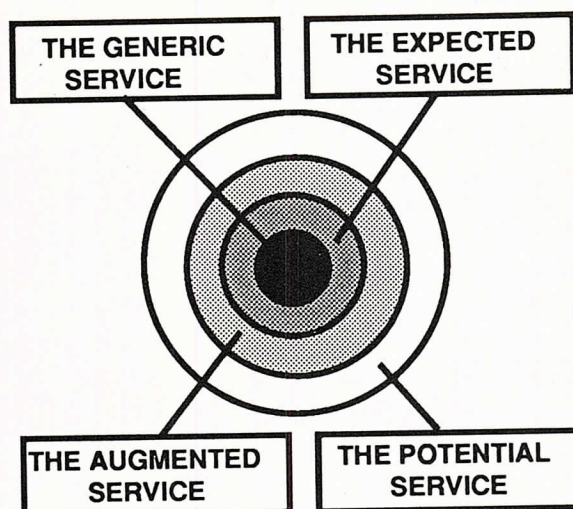
To summarise: in the new business environment, attention to customer satisfaction is the principle mark distinguishing excellent companies from mediocre ones. It is not an afterthought; it's what excellent organisations are for.

### The Diamond of Service

Four arenas are involved in providing service: product, values, people and systems. Together they form the **Diamond of Service** whose four points have to do vertically with The Customer and the Company, and horizontally with Ethics and Strategy.



The **product** you provide is assumed to be reliable and high quality. If it isn't, then go no further. Nothing you do for the customer counts if your basic offering is shoddy. But once an acceptable standard is reached, that's only the beginning. Tom Peters in Thriving On Chaos describes 4 levels: The Generic Product, The Anticipated Product, The Augmented Product, and The Potential Product.



The outer 2 levels exceed the customer's expectation and amount to value-added enhancements. Take an airplane. The generic product is fast, safe transportation at an affordable price. The anticipated product is meal service, baggage handling, and pleasant staff. The augmented product may include choice of 3 main courses, free drinks, lots of staff and children's menu. The potential product could involve flowers in the loo, drinks in the waiting area, and flowers for the ladies. There are virtually endless ways to add value to your basic product through sensitive attention to the customer.

The people dimension has to do with **skills** in human relations among the front line staff. It isn't enough to be technically competent. That's assumed in the new business environment. To make an impact, one must also be able to listen competently, to respond sensitively, to manifest unfailing courtesy and human warmth. One could quickly list the virtues desirable for front line people and they would amount to the criteria for sainthood. That is obviously going too far. But the typical training for front line staff involves so little on human relations that it's no wonder they frequently appear robotic. Perhaps a start for many companies would involve loosening some of the procedural constraints and allowing for latent human relations skills to surface in face to face encounters with customers. It's a place to begin.

But what about the "backroom boys and girls" who never meet a customer but whose performance either supports or greatly hinders the work of those who do? Obviously "smile training" isn't the answer. Creating an environment of customer orientation is. Allowing people to know their contribution to the whole system helps. In his explanation of the



Matsushita philosophy of operation, Tonu Yamaguchi cites the story of an accounts clerk who hands out cash advances to salesmen in small change so that they will not have to waste time and psychic energy getting change to buy subway ticket or pay a cab fare. This is OMOIYARI, thoughtfulness, in operation. And that spirit operating throughout an organisation will greatly enhance customer service.

The **system** is the third dimension. We need to design our operating systems to benefit the customer. Two local banks illustrate the difference. At one, tellers take their lunch break at normal times - half between 12-1, and next from 1-2. But the period 12-2 is the time when bank customers also have lunch breaks and can go to the bank. The result is a long line that can take 45 minutes. The other bank developed a system of lunch breaks so that all windows were open during the 12-2 peak period. It may have been a little inconvenient for the tellers and supervisors, but it made a great deal of difference to customers. Let's be sure the necessary system of accounting and billing and order processing and delivery and maintenance and sales actually work for the customer. That way everyone wins. Several years ago I had a stolen credit card. It required 5 letters, 3 international phone calls and 15 months before it was replaced. The company, meanwhile, lost over \$7,000 USA on fraudulent charges. Then the first time I used the card, it was flagged as stolen because the company computer system hadn't been programmed with the corrected data. That took two additional calls. Systems are wonderful inventions that expand the capacity to do business by making common operations formula-driven. They only get in the way when uncommon situations arise. In those cases the customer's benefit, not the system's adequacy, is the principal value.

**Values** are the fourth dimension of customer service, and really at the heart of the matter. Does the company value its customers or does it not? Every company will say in speeches and in written statements that it values its customers highly. But what does it reward - customer satisfaction or performance quality? What does it measure? What do job descriptions and performance evaluation emphasise? And where does management spend its time? To enter the new age of business effectively, all these questions need to be answered with a bias toward the buyer. It's time to stop lip service and start customer service.

Values, systems, skills and products all require attention.

## Good Service

What's involved in providing good service? Three observations.

Firstly, "**If it isn't noticed, it isn't service.**" Customers expect perfection, so to attain it doesn't get you any special notice. Going beyond what the customer expects is the mark of superior service. A notable example is the TV repairman who made house calls (in itself remarkable). He not only cleaned the screen but also used a portable vacuum on the dust inside the set and the surrounding carpet. Within 6 months he had to triple his staff. Lots of people can fix a TV. The extra is what gets attention.

This observation has a curious corollary: Service is measured by what people notice. One manager recently lamented, "We promised delivery in 4 hours and made it in 4 1/2; our competitors promised 8 and delivered in 6. So while we beat then by 1 1/2 hours, we were criticised and they were praised! Service is in the eyes of the beholder. Period.

Secondly, every contact between the company and a customer is in Jan Carlzon's term, a "**Moment of Truth**". The customer's impression of the company and its service is formed at every point of contact. Ironically, most of these points of contact are with front-line people who are the lowest level, least trained, lowest paid and least respected members of our organisations. It doesn't have to be that way, and for excellent companies, it isn't.

Thirdly, a **commitment to customer service** has to permeate the entire organisation, or it will cause incredible tension between sales and service, between front line and back room, between administration and marketing, between management and staff. On the other hand, everyone in the organisation does contribute to service of the customer one way or another. One organisation spent 2 years bringing its accounts and billing department up to speed in service, and they went from \$8 million loss to \$10 million profit with no increase in sales! That's what's at stake.



# METHOD - MOMENTS OF TRUTH

The essence of service management is the managing of "**Moments Of Truth**" (MOT). Albrecht and Zemke's assumption is that "If you're not serving the customer directly, you'd better be serving someone who is". Service Management programmes are built on the understanding that the customer is the prime focus of the organisation's concern and that everyone in an organisation plays an important role in the delivery of excellent products and service. The Service Cycle, representing the sequential flow of impressions received by the customer, is analysed using Moments Of Truth (every point at which the organisation and its members make a positive or negative impact on the customer). "When Moments of Truth go unmanaged, the quality of service regresses to mediocrity". An effective method for improving an organisation's customer service, both internally and externally, is through the **Cycle of Service Exercise** described below:

1. Select one particular customer and list every point of contact with your company - by advertisements, phone, mail, visits to your premises, sales people, billing, use of product, follow-up service, etc. Don't forget all of the encounters with support and production functions. Close your eyes and actually visualise the whole sequence of events. This may vary from customer to customer, so take your time in imagining the whole unique journey for this particular customer. Add to your previous list any omissions.

2. Determine the 4-6 major phases for all of the points of contact that describe your relationship with this customer.

3. Draw a circle and divide it into the number of segments/phases determined above. (see diagram). Then place all MOT's sequentially within each segment.

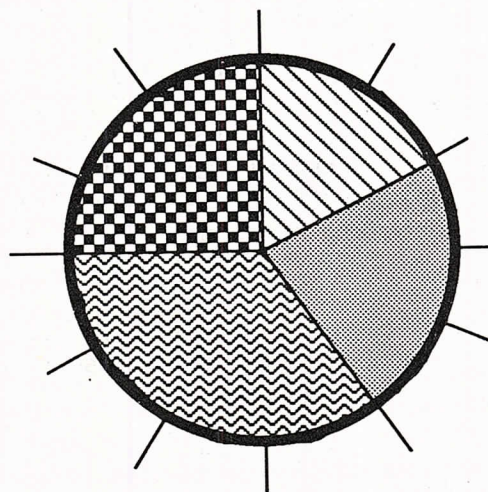
4. Reflect on how this cycle is currently managed - each segment and the whole (where most/least attention is received, skills and attributes for handling each MOT, feedback loops for improving service, etc). It's important to do this from the perspective of the receiver - external or internal customer - standing in his shoes. Determine the service strategy by describing the message you're out to communicate through your actions using the following worksheet:

CYCLE SEGMENT	KEY ASPECT TO IMPROVE	SYSTEMS INVOLVED	FRONT LINE PEOPLE	FEEDBACK MECHANISM	EXTRA TOUCH OF SERVICE

Most of these MOT's are not under the control of management, and therefore, every employee needs to be empowered to carry out his or her job with excellence to empower the effectiveness of the whole organisation.

5. Continual feedback, accountability, reassessment, sharing, praise, involvement, training, interchange and actual first hand experience with a customer, enables a kind of enthusiastic "buy-in-management" that gives the customer and the employee the kind of service worth working for.

**CYCLE OF SERVICE**





# **CULTURE AND SERVICE - Roger Harrison**

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As we experience service internally between the parts of our organisations, and externally as customers, service is a lot of things which are neither supportive, nor compassionate, nor caring. It is in the giving of service that organisations and their customers most experience the lack of caring, and it is in that area where performance improvement most depends on opening the heart of the organisation and its members. In attempting to understand the dynamic forces which influence the process of giving service, I have found it strategic to focus on organisation culture as a key variable. The model presented below identifies the varieties of service which we experience in practice, points up cultural barriers to giving service from the heart, and suggests directions which may be taken to remove those barriers.

## **FOUR ORGANISATION CULTURES**

### **I. THE POWER CULTURE**

The **POWER** oriented organisation is authoritarian and hierarchical. It is dominated by a strong leader or coalition, who often run the organisation for their own benefit, as though they owned it (often they do!). People in the organisation strive for status and influence, and they endeavour to build close relationships with power figures. Political skill is important in getting ahead. People high on the totem pole are usually motivated by the drive for personal power, and those at the bottom by fear and dependency. At its best, the fear is mitigated by a benevolent paternalism, where the strong feel responsible for looking after the weak. At its worst, the organisation is rent by struggles for power, and people exploit or tyrannise those under them. In either case, pleasing the boss is a major concern and aim for most organisation members.

In the **POWER** organisation at its best, leadership is based on strength, justice and paternalistic benevolence on the part of the leader. The leader is firm but fair, and may be generous and indulgent to loyal subordinates. The leader is required to be all-knowing as well as all-powerful. Subordinates are expected to be compliant and willing. They are often lacking in initiative.

The leadership of the **POWER** organisation may, however, rule by fear, with abuse of power for personal advantage on the part of the leaders, their friends and proteges. When the organisation becomes large, or when the leaders struggle for dominance, it may degenerate into a hotbed of political intrigue.

### **II. THE ROLE CULTURE**

The **ROLE** organisation is hierarchical also, but power is exercised through rules, systems and procedures. Personal power is replaced by formal, legalistic structures. Written or unwritten rules and contracts specify job requirements, rewards and disciplinary procedures. Those who stay within the rules are usually safe from the exercise of arbitrary power. The organisation values and rewards consistency, order, predictability and correctness. Doing things right is the goal of the person who wants to do well in the organisation. The **ROLE** culture is the dominant organisation culture in the Western world. We experience its bureaucratic forms and processes from the time we start school until we die in hospital.

### **III. THE ACHIEVEMENT CULTURE**

The **ACHIEVEMENT** oriented organisation is oriented to "making a difference" in the world. Its thrust is outwards, onwards and upwards toward some valued goal or ideal. The organisation provides opportunities for its members to use their talents and abilities in ways which are intrinsically satisfying, which advance a purpose or goal to which the individual is personally committed. Thus people are internally motivated, rather than being controlled from the outside by rewards, punishments or systems.

The **ACHIEVEMENT** oriented organisation assumes that people enjoy working at tasks which are rewarding or which advance the shared purpose. At their best, such organisations tend to evoke a sense of passion and commitment to the work, a sense of "calling" which can be deeply satisfying. However, the organisation usually makes high demands on its members' time and energy which can lead to burnout and disillusionment over time. Most of us have experienced an **ACHIEVEMENT** oriented work experience, if only for a short time. They are found in organisation startups, in task forces and project teams, and in many of the "hot" high tech companies. The organisation climate of the computer design group described so evocatively by Tracy Kidder in *The Soul of a New Machine* (Kidder, 1981) is an excellent example of the **ACHIEVEMENT** culture.

### **IV. THE SUPPORT CULTURE**

The **SUPPORT** oriented organisation motivates and bonds people through close, warm relationships. People learn to trust and care for one another and for the organisation. They trust the organisation to take care of them, to be **responsive** to their needs, and in turn they are **responsible**; they take care of the organisation.



At its best, the **SUPPORT** culture can evoke extremely high commitment and loyalty in the service of the group and the organisation. Like the other cultures, the **SUPPORT** orientation has the weaknesses of its strengths. People tend to avoid conflict in order to preserve harmony; tough decisions about people may be postponed out of regard for people's feelings; and the organisation may overvalue consensus to the point where it is unable to take decisions in a timely fashion.

Although I describe organisation culture in terms of four archetypal cultural orientations, actual organisations are rarely pure examples of these archetypes. They are mixtures, hybrids and halfbreeds. However, in the twelve years that have passed since publication of my first paper on organisation culture and the instrument which accompanied it (Harrison, 1972, 1975), I have found most organisations tend to have one dominant cultural orientation, modified by a secondary or "backup" style. In pairs, the cultures differ in how compatible they are with one another. For example, **ROLE** and **POWER** are frequently found together and so, less often, are **ACHIEVEMENT** and **SUPPORT**.

Within the dominant orientation, the cultural emphasis may vary among organisation parts. Research and development departments tend towards an **ACHIEVEMENT** orientation; groups which keep track of the money are often very **ROLE** oriented; and so on.

## CULTURE AND VALUES

Each orientation has its own set of values. They give the culture its **Integrity**. For the **POWER** orientation, it is that combination of honour and responsible authority which is paternalism at its best, the ideal of *noblesse oblige*. For the **ROLE** oriented organisation, integrity consists in efficient, well administered systems and in justice, fairness and honesty in dealings with stakeholders: employees, customers, stockholders, suppliers.

For the **ACHIEVEMENT** oriented organisation, integrity is in the highest standards of performance and professionalism. For the **SUPPORT** oriented culture, it is in operating with compassion and empathy, "walking in the other guy's shoes."

The lack of the **SUPPORT** orientation in business blocks managers from developing their more receptive, nurturing qualities. Constrained by their organisation culture to "look out for Number One" (**POWER**), focus on the "bottom line" (**ROLE**), or pursue paths of competence and glory (**ACHIEVEMENT**), people do not appreciate the complexity and the organic qualities of the living systems which our organisations are in fact. They are pushed towards

an increasingly short term orientation which further tightens the circles of competition, environmental damage and mutual exploitation in which we find ourselves.

My current strategy is based on the belief that as we move further into a service economy, organisations are coming under competitive pressures which will force consideration of the possibility that some version of the Golden Rule may actually be good business. As organisations respond to the demands of customers for more personal, individualised service, opportunities to operate from an open heart may increase. These developments are so far seen only in a rudimentary form which I hope heralds a growing trend. The strategy is rooted in the expectation of that change, and to help it along I have determined to act as though it is already a reality.

## CULTURALLY DETERMINED STYLES OF SERVICE

Culture is the key to understanding service. An organisation's cultural orientation has implications for every aspect of its operations and its internal and external relationships. Hence, each orientation tends to produce a typical attitude and style of customer service.

The effect of culture is quite aside from whether the service is "good" or "bad". Each produces a kind of service which is qualitatively different from the others, different in "taste" and "feel". Each may give "good" or "bad" service, and the definition of good service will differ from one culture to the other. I think this distinction is important and that in much of the discussion and writing about service, the "goodness" of service is confused with its style. For example, warm, friendly and relaxed service is not necessarily "better" than fast, efficient and impersonal service, but it certainly feels different. The kind of service which an organisation offers, both internally and to its customers, is a reflection of that combination of values, preoccupations, social structure, norms and mores which we call organisation culture.

### I. POWER ORIENTED SERVICE

The **POWER** orientation is associated with a style of service which emphasises status and prestige. When it is well done, it makes the customer "feel like a king". The hierarchical emphasis of the **POWER** orientation leads naturally to **status differentiation** in service: different grades and classes of service for different customers based on status, prestige, wealth, or the price of the goods or services consumed. On a recent flight to Europe I experi-



enced very strongly the typical "feel" of POWER oriented service. I was waited on hand and foot in the first class cabin with obsequious courtesy. The service was choreographed so as to make one feel like one of the elite, but it also managed to convey that imposters would be found out. In the jeans and tennis shoes I usually wear for long distance travel, I felt a bit like a tramp who had wandered into the Ritz. Nothing was said, of course, but I **knew**, and I knew that "they" knew that I knew!

POWER oriented service is typical of restaurants, hotels, resorts, casinos and gentlemen's clothing establishments catering to the prestigious and affluent, particularly in Britain and Europe. It can be found in sales-oriented organisations which seek to influence purchases through lavish entertainment and gifts. A more aggressive and competitive variety of the POWER orientation can be found in the salesrooms of car dealerships, but there the energy is often devoted to making the customer feel one down, rather than royal!

If a strong leader becomes the champion of service, the POWER oriented organisation can be extremely service conscious. A classic example is the late J.W. Marriott, who was said to read every customer complaint personally, and who was fond of getting his subordinates up at 4 am to make a surprise inspection tour of the kitchens. Such leaders make a strong impact on their organisations. If they are both strong and benevolent, then the quality of service they engender can be both willing and friendly. Often, however, there is more than a little motivation by fear in such leaders' style of management. The fear results in a degree of servility on the part of employees.

The POWER orientation at its best (and, I think, at its highest level of integrity) is often found today in relatively small, owner managed businesses such as restaurants, hotels, summer camps and resorts. Sometimes family operated, often with a family atmosphere, these organisations manage to combine the unity of direction which comes from a strong leader, with the warmth and responsiveness to individual customer needs typical of the SUPPORT culture. They are small enough for one person to exercise control over the details, and the employees are bonded to the owner by ties of affection - not just fear. Such organisations seem to be the last bastion of the benevolent autocracy which was such a prominent feature of the best business leadership in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

## II. ROLE ORIENTED SERVICE

Quality of service in the ROLE oriented organisation tends to revolve around the **transaction**, and around systems designed to make transactions

faster, more efficient and more profitable to the organisation. The ROLE orientation lends itself to the provision of goods and services on a large scale, and to a focus on **cost, price, and margins**. Good service, for such organisations, means devising efficient **service systems** which meet the needs of the typical customer, and then managing the system so that the human components play their parts as designed.

In the United States, our ideas of service are often synonymous with fast, efficient systems, designed to produce uniform and predictable outcomes. Such "excellent companies" as Federal Express and McDonalds have built reputations on the reliability of their systems in meeting customers' expectations. Their service is valued for cost/benefit and uniformity, rather than for making people feel warm and comfortable. Similarly, when we complain about service systems such as the Post Office, or our local bank, we concern ourselves primarily with convenience, (long waits on the phone, not having the information you want); with reliability (losing or delaying the mail, inappropriately bouncing cheques); and with whether we are getting value for our money (continual rises in charges with diminished levels of service).

By virtue of their cultural priorities (order, system, predictability, costs, prices and profits) ROLE oriented organisations tend to try to control variability in their environment. Their priorities are best met by having simple (hence reliable and cheap) systems which provide uniform goods and services to customers with uniform needs. During the last few decades, as our needs and wants have become more differentiated and unpredictable, systems have had to become more complex in the attempt to respond to customer wants, and they have predictably become less reliable as a result. When I compare the management in large bureaucratic organisations today with what it was thirty years ago customer satisfaction is down. I believe that a major reason is the proliferating complexity of systems designed to offer variety and choice to customers. Complex systems are **inherently** unstable and unreliable, no matter how much effort goes into trying to make them work.

Recently, the Customer Service people in an American electric utility I work with got together the field supervisors in a series of meetings and asked, "What could we do in the short term to remove "service inhibitors"?" Service inhibitors were defined as "anything which prevents our field crews and telephone contact people from giving customers the service they want, and which our people would like to give them." It had been expected that most of the ideas would involve additional manpower, money,



equipment: commodities in short supply in any cost sensitive operative. In fact, people enthusiastically contributed suggestions for short term service improvements, only one of which required additional resources. The rest were matters of changing current practices and policies, or giving field people additional discretion to decide which requests from customers were reasonable.

ROLE oriented organisations also tend to be inward turning in their preoccupations and their priorities. They are often large and centralised, and what this means in systems terms is that contact with the environment is limited to the thin, often stretched and overworked "skin" of the organisation. The vast preponderance of organisation members are busy responding to one another, and to the requirements of the systems which control their daily activities.

Thus, today, large, bureaucratic organisations are in trouble as customers demand more variety, and particularly as they demand more responsiveness to their individual needs. The dilemma which exists for such organisations when they want to improve customer service is that they are in trouble because of their size, their systems, their structures and their associated culture - not, I think, because of any inherent incapacity, personality traits or unwillingness to respond on the part of their managers or the people who do the work.

Often, however, the need for improved service is addressed by providing training and closer supervision, and perhaps by introducing incentives and awards (e.g., "employee of the month"). It is typical of the ROLE orientation to assume that it is the employees who need to be changed, and not the conditions under which they work.

### III. ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTED SERVICE

The ACHIEVEMENT oriented organisation marches to its own drum, and its concept of service derives from its own sense of purpose and mission. The mission may or may not include a focus on service, but in any event, the definition of good service is based on internal values and standards. The standards sometimes bear little resemblance to customers' ideas of what they want.

The world of high technology abounds with examples of unilateral definitions of the customers' needs. Apple Computer under Steve Jobs was a classic example of the ACHIEVEMENT culture. Asked what was Apple's mission, Jobs is reported to have said, "To change the world!". He decided that the MacIntosh computer was what computer users needed to change the world and focused the energies of the organisation on that product. Meanwhile, fanatically loyal users of earlier Apple products languished, fretted and eventually became disaf-

ected as their requests for product information and service were ignored.

Scientists, engineers, professionals and staff specialists of all kinds who love their work and believe they are making a contribution tend to share the ACHIEVEMENT culture's implicit assumption that what the customer (or the organisation, or the world) needs is what they offer. In consulting with these professionals on how they can be more effective in dealing with their clients, difficulties which arise in giving service are nearly always framed as problems in influencing others. "How can we get the line managers to see that our new performance appraisal programme is a real improvement over what they're doing?" "How can we get the refineries to adopt our new catalyst?" "How can I get my patients to take their medicine as prescribed?" "How can we get the Programme Managers to cooperate with our improved budgeting process?"

Thus, the orientation to service is to doing, and the customer becomes the target or object of the service activity. Individuals and organisations which are highly oriented to ACHIEVEMENT tend to define the service relationship unilaterally, and good customers are those who respect the service provider's expertise and cooperate in their own treatment.

The strength of the ACHIEVEMENT orientation to service is in its dedication to excellence, to innovation, and to professional integrity. ACHIEVEMENT oriented organisations will often spare no time, money or expense to get it right, make it work, solve the problem. Because their people are dedicated to their work and believe in what they are doing, they tend to be self motivated, and to drive themselves and others to high levels of personal performance. The idea of service in the ACHIEVEMENT culture is active, shaping, building, creative, rather than receptive or responsive. For the latter, we must look to the SUPPORT orientation.

### IV. SUPPORT ORIENTED SERVICE

The SUPPORT orientation is in important ways the other side of the coin from the ACHIEVEMENT culture. Both are **internally motivated**. It is intrinsically fulfilling for most people to perform and participate in either of these cultures, whereas in the POWER and ROLE cultures, people are controlled by the application of **external** rewards and punishments, e.g., fear of losing one's job, or hope of monetary rewards, and promotions.

The SUPPORT culture emphasises "being" values of cooperation, belonging, caring, responsiveness and receptivity. These are opposite from the "doing" values of ACHIEVEMENT: action, autonomy, performance, innovation, building and shaping the environment.



Thus, the idea of service in the SUPPORT culture is much more oriented to **listening** to customers or clients, **empathising** with their needs, and **responding** to their concerns. Rather than actively shaping the environment, the SUPPORT culture endeavours to flow with external forces, and work with them. For example, the ACHIEVEMENT response to a problem is to attack and overcome it. The SUPPORT response is like the martial art of aikido. One joins with the forces of the others, working with them in a kind of dance, the outcome of which is not a victory, but is more likely to be learning and mutual appreciation.

Where the strategy of the ACHIEVEMENT orientation is to offer or sell something new or better to the customer, the SUPPORT strategy is to ask, "What can we do for you?"

Staff/line relationships within an organisation are often an interesting study in the contrast between active and responsive orientations on the part of staff when they are serving the line. Some staff groups have high standards of professionalism and are oriented to excellence in the practice of their professions. They spend a great deal of time in their own offices, thinking up ways to help the line: new technology, better systems, innovative ways to solve problems. They have well articulated visions of how the application of their expertise can make their organisations better. When they invent or discover something particularly exciting, they venture out with great enthusiasm to "sell" line managers on adopting it. When they don't make a sale, they interpret it as a failure on the part of the line to comprehend the benefits which are being offered. They characterise the line as "resistant to change," or "conservative". These groups are behaving in a typically ACHIEVEMENT oriented way.

Other groups conceive of themselves more as identifying and responding to the needs of the line managers. They spend a lot of time in line managers' offices, talking with them about their operations and their problems. They look for ways to be useful to their "clients". They get to know them personally, often building close relationships which are over and above what's required to do the work. They are often so busy putting out fires and performing other services for the line that they don't have time to think and be creative. Their way of giving service is typically SUPPORT oriented.

The SUPPORT orientation to service comes ultimately from the heart, in contrast to the ACHIEVEMENT orientation which I think of as coming from the will. It springs from our empathy and sympathy with the needs, problems and dilemmas of other human beings, and from the wish to respond and to help. Where the ACHIEVEMENT

orientation is clever and creative, the SUPPORT orientation is compassionate and caring.

## WHAT CUSTOMERS WANT

I believe customers are coming increasingly to place a higher value on the warmth of the SUPPORT orientation in their search for service. They are looking for service transactions where they are treated as worthwhile individuals; where their opinions about what they want and need are respected; where they are assisted by people whom they can relate to on a level of equality; and where caring and kindness characterise the human interactions.

This is the trend I see over the recent past, and I am not sure why. Perhaps it is the growing realisation that we are all going to have to do with the same or a lower standard of material living as time goes on. If we don't look forward with the same confidence to economic advancement, we may want to enjoy the process a bit more. Perhaps it is the feeling that too many of our transactions are with systems, too few with people, and we want those with people to be of a higher quality. Perhaps it is the "high tech, high touch" trend Naisbitt (1982) talks about. Perhaps, living in a competitive, abrasive and insecure world where relationships are often transitory and easily fractured, we are developing a "hidden hunger" to be loved a little bit.

Whatever the reason, customers and the organisations which serve them are growing more sensitive to service quality. When organisations become concerned about improving service, they tend to see it in terms of their own cultural biases, and it is that tendency which this discussion is intended to counterbalance. Increasingly, when customers talk about wanting better service, they mean the style of service which is typical of the SUPPORT culture. That doesn't mean customers don't want efficient systems or excellent, innovative approaches to meeting their needs. They want these, and more. Organisations which don't learn how to listen to customers from the perspective of the SUPPORT framework will not understand what they are hearing, and they may put effort into improving service in ways which customers are happy enough to have, but which don't meet their deeper priorities, the "hidden hungers."



# CUSTOMER RESPONSIVENESS - Tom Peters

Tom Peters book, Thriving on Chaos with its 45 revolutionary principles, provides an exciting set of images for organisational transformation. We briefed the chapter on innovation for the **IMAGE** Journal of October 1988. This time for the Customer Service issue, we are presenting some of his images for **CREATING TOTAL CUSTOMER RESPONSIVENESS**.

Tom Peters raises a question about an organisation being "Market Driven". It sounds good, but as he says it, "A market never bought anything; customers buy things". Customers are real, they have perceptions which may not agree with ours, and the only way to find out their perceptions are to work closely with them to discover what they are so we can respond effectively to them.

The intent of this article, as with the earlier one, is to present some of Tom Peters' images, observations and learnings in such a way that readers may be stimulated regarding what might work in their own organisations and ideally get the book.

"Winners are specialist producers of **HIGH VALUE ADDED** products and services. These emphasise innovative design, are tailored for narrow markets and result in more intense listening to customers, are of superior quality and include exceptional service and responsiveness to customers."

## **1. SPECIALISE, CREATE NICHEs AND**

**DIFFERENTIATE:** Tom Peters has dozens of examples of small and large companies which have niched and differentiated their product. He extols "Kaizan" by which the Japanese mean **ongoing improvement involving everyone** in the organisation. His rules for differentiation include a series of "Don'ts":

- Don't offer what the market doesn't want.
- Don't forget the whole package.
- Don't let premature implementation of exotic technology trip you up.
- Don't forget it is not differentiated until the customer understands the difference.

The more the world perceives a product to be a commodity, the greater the opportunity to differentiate. Then carry on to add differentiators constantly and unendingly.

## **2. TOP QUALITY AS PERCEIVED BY THE**

**CUSTOMER** "Relative Quality" is the most important single factor affecting a business unit's long term performance. Firms whose products score in the top 1/3 of perceived product quality outearn those in the bottom third by 2-1.

Most consumers are willing to pay to get the quality they desire.

Workers become energised by the opportunity to provide quality products or services. The Toyota company in 1960 got 5001 suggestions, an average of 16 suggestions per worker of which 35% were implemented. In 1982, Toyota got a total of 1,905,682 suggestions, an average of 32 per worker of which 95% were implemented.

How to begin: Starting today, don't walk past a shoddy product or service without comment and action- ever again.

IBM: "Measurement is the heart of any improvement process. If something can't be measured, it cannot be improved." The measurement must be done by the participants in the process.

Training is the key to quality improvement.

Task Forces: Most quality improvement opportunities lie outside the natural work group. (This has been the experience of Widia (India) which has dozens of cross-functional quality task forces operating.)

Create endless Hawthorne Effects: when a work situation is constantly attended to and stimulated. This seems to work regardless of the type of intervention.

Work with suppliers, distributors, customers; all must be part of the organisation's quality process.

Costs: As greater quality is built into a product, cost of achieving that quality does not increase, but rather decreases. The elementary force is simplification. Cost reduction programmes often do not lead to improved quality and usually not in the long term to lower costs either.

An image to work from: Each day, each product or service is getting relatively better or worse, but it never stands still.

The pattern of quality improvement progression: 1) Natural work group, 2) Jointly with suppliers, 3) Field sales, service and marketing, 4) Cross functional and systems improvement, 5) Shift of emphasis to the customer.

## **3. SUPERIOR SERVICE: EMPHASISE**

**INTANGIBLES:** Technical Research Programmes Study: - 26 of 27 customers who have a bad experience will not report it.

- 91% of those who complain won't come back.
- The average person with a bad experience will tell 9 others.



- 13% with bad experiences will tell 20 more.
- Costs of getting a new customer is 5 times that to maintain the customer you already have.
- The opportunity is not in the generic product or service, nor in the expected, but rather in the augmented and the potential service. This suggests where payoff is to be found.
- The good news is, if you resolve a complaint in a timely and thoughtful fashion, 82% of customers will come back. "A well handled problem breeds more loyalty than before the negative incident."

Reliability rather than overly aggressive promises is the most valuable strategic edge.

**Customer Perception is a function of Delivery over Expectation. CP = D/E**

A three-step formula for estimating the value of a customer portfolio each individual handles in a day:

1. Estimate the ten-year life-long value of a customer based on the size and frequency of a good customer's average transaction.
2. Multiply by two to take into account the word-of-mouth factor.
3. Multiply the new total by the average number of customers served per day.

View every element of every operation through the customer's lens; redefine each element of the business in terms of the customer's perception of the intangibles.

#### **4. ACHIEVE EXTRAORDINARY**

**RESPONSIVENESS:** CATS: Customer Action Teams become advocates for the customer. Their assignment is to get close with the power to respond. Quality is necessary as is manufacturing responsiveness. Millikin Company's Interactive Elements:

1. Top management commitment.
2. Earlier quality programme.
3. Supplier programme which shifts from adversarial to partnership relationship.
4. Shake up of the manufacturing structure.

**5. GO INTERNATIONAL** Don't forget everyone operates in a global market.

**6. CREATE UNIQUENESS** A firm or product must be perceived to be noticeably better, not merely among the better performers.

Uniqueness requires consensus, not perfection. The uniqueness should be clear enough that even entry-level people should know it.

A statement should be 1) Roughly right, 2) Enduring, 3) Succinct, 4) Memorable, 5) Believable and 6) Energising. A good example is Federal Express in the USA, "Absolutely positively overnight".

**7. OBSESSED BY LISTENING** Keep an ear to practical, application-oriented needs. Not educating, talking and telling, but listening in terms of possibility. Treat customer as a foreigner who does not speak our language. CIS: Create a Customer Information Service and measure customer satisfaction.

**8. TURN MANUFACTURING INTO A MARKETING WEAPON.** Finally, quality, maintainability, responsiveness, flexibility and length of innovation cycle is controlled by the factory.

The Japanese tinker, invent and add customer-friendly features incrementally. Sixty percent of Japanese capital goes into improving performance of existing machinery. "Toyota is the most efficient engine plant in the world; it has 20 year old machines from the U.S. which are retrofitted."

Spending big money quickly on automation is not wise. In the end, its effectiveness depends as much on organisational preparation as on money and technical prowess.

Customer-Responsive Manufacturing:

1. Process engineers live on the shop floor.
2. Every machine is modified many times.
3. Old and new reside comfortably next to each others.
4. Functional barriers are virtually nonexistent.
5. Process and product innovation goes on constantly.
6. Customers are in the plant and plant workers are out with customers constantly.
7. Plant managers have worked on the floor, modified machinery and worked in sales.

**9. MAKE SALES AND SERVICE FORCES INTO HEROES** Give them time and attention. Give a lot, expect a lot; if you don't get it, prune. Provide bold, extensive, expensive support.

**10. LAUNCH A CUSTOMER REVOLUTION** Do everything in an integrated fashion.

Tom Peters stories are priceless to grasp the transformational frame of reference necessary to really "focus on the customer". This approach is sheer opportunity to catalyse a transformational process in your organisation.



# **"THINK STRAWBERRIES" - James Lavenson**

I came from the balcony of the hotel business. For ten years as a corporate director of Sonesta Hotels with no line responsibility, I had my office in a little building next door to The Plaza. I went to the hotel every day for lunch and often stayed overnight. I was a professional guest. You know nobody knows more about how to run a hotel than a guest. Last year, I suddenly fell out of the corporate balcony and had to put my efforts in the restaurants where my mouth had been, and in the rooms and night club and theatre-into which I'd been putting my two cents.

In my ten years of kibitzing, all I had really learned about the hotel business was how to use a guest room toilet without removing the strip of paper that's printed "Sanitized for Your Protection". When the hotel staff found out I'd spent my life as a salesman and that I'd never been a hotelier, never been to Cornell Hotel School, and that I wasn't even the son of a waiter, they were in a state of shock. And Paul Sonnabend, President of Sonesta didn't help their apprehension much when he introduced me to my executive staff with the following kind words: "The Plaza has been losing money the last several years and we've had the best management in the business. Now we're going to try the worst".

Frankly, I think the hotel business has been one of the most backward in the world. There's been very little change in the attitude of room clerks in the 2000 years since Joseph arrived in Bethlehem and was told they'd lost his reservation. Why is it that a sales clerk at Woolworth asks your wife who points to the pantyhose if she wants three or six pairs - and your wife is all by herself - but the maitre d' asks you and your wife, the only human beings within a mile of the restaurant "How many are you?"

Hotel salesmanship is retailing at its worst. But at the risk of inflicting cardiac arrest on our guests at The Plaza when they first hear shocking expressions like "Good Morning" and "Please" and "Thank you for coming", we started a year ago to see

if it was possible to make the 1400 employees of The Plaza into genuine hosts and hostesses. Or should I say "salesmen?"

**"Frankly, I think the hotel business has been one of the most backward in the world. There's been very little change in the attitude of room clerks in the 2000 years since Joseph arrived in Bethlehem and was told they'd lost his reservation!"**

A tape recorder attached to my phone proved how far we had to go. "What's the difference between your \$85 suite and your \$125 suite?" I'd ask our reservationist, disguising my voice over the phone. You guessed it: \$40!"

"What's going on in the Persian Room tonight?" I asked the Bell Captain. "Some singer" was his

answer. "Man or woman?" I persisted. "I'm not sure" he said, which made me wonder if I'd even be safe going there.

Why is it, I wondered, that the staff of a hotel doesn't act like a family playing hosts to guests whom they've invited to their house? It didn't take too long after becoming a member of the family to discover that members didn't even know each other! With that large a staff, working over eighteen floors, six restaurants, a night club, a theatre and three levels of sub-basement including a kitchen, a carpentry shop, plumbing and electrical shops, a full commercial laundry - how would they ever know who was working there, and who was a guest or just a purveyor passing through? Even the old timers who might recognize a face after a couple of years would have no idea of the name connected to it.

It struck me that if our own people couldn't call each other by name, smile at each other's familiar face, say good morning to each other, how could they be expected to say, amazing things like "Good Morning, Mr. Jones" to a guest? A year ago The Plaza name tag was born. The delivery took place on my lapel. And its now been on 1400 lapels for over a year. Everyone, from dishwashers to the General Manager, wears his name where every other employee, and of course every guest, can see it. Believe it or not, our people say hello to each other by name - when they pass in the halls and the offices. At first our regular guests thought The Plaza was entertaining some gigantic convention, but now even the oldtime Plaza regulars are able to call our bellman and maids by name. We've begun to build an atmosphere of welcome with the most precious commodity in the world - our names. AND our guests' names.



A number of years ago, I heard Dr. Ernest Dichter, head of the Institute of Motivational Research, talk about restaurant service. He had reached a classic conclusion; when people come to a fine restaurant, they are hungrier for RECOGNITION than they are for food. It's true. If the maitre d' says "We have your table ready, Mr. Lavenson", then as far as I'm concerned the chef can burn the steak and I'll still be happy.

When someone calls you by name and you don't know his, a strange feeling of discomfort comes over you. When he does it twice you HAVE to find out HIS name. This we see happening with our Plaza name tags. When a guest calls a waiter by name, the waiter wants to call the guest by name. It will drive him nuts if he doesn't know. He'll ask the maitre d', and if he doesn't know he'll ask the bellman who will ask the front desk...calling the guests by name has a big payoff. It's called a TIP.

At first there was resistance to name tags - mostly from the oldtime, formally trained European hoteliers. I secretly suspect they like being incognito when faced with a guest complaint. We only had one staff member who said he'd resign before having his dignity destroyed with a name tag. For sixteen years he's worn a rosebud in his lapel and that, he said, was his trademark and everyone knew him by it. His resignation was accepted along with that of the rosebud. Frankly, there are moments when I regret the whole idea myself. When I get on a Plaza elevator and all the passengers see my name tag, they know I work there. Suddenly,

I'm the official elevator pilot, the host. I can't hide, so I smile at everybody, say "good morning" to perfect strangers I'd ordinarily ignore. The ones that don't go into shock, smile back. Actually, they seem to mind less the fact that a trip on a Plaza elevator, built in 1907, is the equivalent of commuting to Manhattan from Greenwich.

There are 600 Spanish speaking employees at The Plaza. They speak Spanish. They don't read English. The employee house magazine was in English. So was the employee bulletin board. So were the signs over the urinals in the locker rooms that suggest cigarette butts don't flush too well. It was a clue as to why some of management's messages weren't getting through. The employee house magazine is now printed one side in English, the other in Spanish. The bulletin board and other staff instructions are in two languages. We have free classes in both languages for departmental supervisors. It's been helping.

With 1400 people all labeled and smiling we were about ready last June to make salesmen out of them. There was just one more obstacle to overcome before we started suggesting they "ask for the order". They had no idea what the product was they would be selling. Not only didn't they know who was playing in the Persian Room, they didn't know we had movies - full length films without commercials - on the closed circuit TV in the bedrooms. As a matter of fact, most of them didn't know what a guest room looked like unless they happened to be a maid or a bellman.





**"It was at that point I had my toughest decision to make since I've been in this job. I had to choose between staying on as President or becoming an Oyster Bar waiter".**

The reason the reservationist thought \$40 was the difference between two suites was because they'd never been in one, much less actually slept there. To say our would-be salesmen lacked product knowledge would be as much an understatement as the line credited to President Nixon if he had been the Captain of the Titanic. My son told me if Nixon had been Captain of the Titanic, he probably would have announced to the passengers there was no cause for alarm - they were just stopping to pick up ice.

Today, if you ask a Plaza bellman who's playing in the Persian Room he'll tell you Ednita Nazzaro. He'll tell you because he's seen her. In the contract of every Persian Room performer, there's now a clause requiring him to first perform for our employees in the cafeteria before he opens in the Persian Room. Our employees see the star first, before the guests. And if you ask a room clerk or a telephone operator what's on the TV movies, they'll tell you because they've seen it - on the TV sets running the movies continuously in the employees' cafeteria. Believe me, if you are having your lunch in our cafeteria and watch "Female Response" or "Swedish Fly Girls" on the TV set, you won't forget the film. You might, however, suspect the chef has put spanish fly in your spaghetti.

Our new room clerks now have a week of orientation. It includes spending a night in the hotel and a tour of our 1000 guest rooms. They can look out the window and see the \$40 difference in suites since a view of Central Park doesn't even closely resemble the back of the Avon Building.

As I mentioned, about six months ago, we decided it was time to take a hard look at our sales effort. I couldn't find it. The Plaza had three men with the title "salesman" - and they were good men. But they were really sales-SERVICE people who took the orders for functions or groups who came through the door and sought us out. Nobody, but nobody, ever left the palace, crossed the moat at Fifth Avenue, and went looking for business. We had no one knocking on doors, no one asking for the order. The Plaza was so dignified it seemed de-meaning to admit we needed business. If you didn't

ask us we wouldn't ask you. So there! Our three sales-service people were terrific once you voluntarily stepped inside our arena. You had to ring our doorbell. We weren't ringing yours or anyone else's.

This condition wasn't unique to our official Sales Department. It seemed to be a philosophy shared by our entire staff - potentially larger sales staff of waiters, room clerks, bellmen, cashiers, and doormen. If you wanted a second drink in the Oak Bar, you got it by tripping the waiter. You asked for it. If you wanted a room you were quoted the minimum rate. If you wanted something better or larger, you had to ask for it. If you wanted to stay at the Hotel an extra night, you had to ask. You were never invited. Sometimes, I think there's a secret pact among hotelmen. It's a secret oath you take when you graduate from hotel school. It goes like this: "I promise I will never ask for the order".

When you're faced with an old and ingrained tradition as that, half-way countermeasures don't work. We started a program with all our guest contact people using a new secret oath: **"EVERY-BODY SELLS!"** And we meant everybody - maids, cashiers, waiters, bellmen - the works. We talked to the maids about suggesting room service, to the doormen about mentioning dinner in our restaurants, to cashiers about suggesting return reservations to departing guests. And we talked to waiters about strawberries.

A waiter at The Plaza makes anywhere from \$10,000 to \$20,000 a year. The difference between those two figures is, of course, tips. When I was in the advertising agency business, I thought I was fast at computing 15 percent. I'm a moron compared to a waiter. Our suggestions for selling strawberries fell on responsive ears when we described a part of the "Everybody Sells" program for our Oyster Bar restaurant. We figured, with just the same number of customers in the Oyster Bar, that if the waiters would ask every customer if he'd like a second drink, wine, or beer with the meal, and then dessert - given only one out of four takers we'd increase our sales volume by \$366,000 a year. The waiters were way ahead of the lecture - they'd already figured out that was another \$50,000 in tips! And since there are ten waiters in the Oyster Bar, even I could figure out it meant five grand more per man in tips. It was at that point I had my toughest decision to make since I've been in this job. I had to choose between staying on as President or becoming an Oyster Bar waiter.



But, while the waiters appreciated this automatic raise in theory, they were quick to call out the traditional negatives. "Nobody eats dessert anymore. Everyone's on a diet. If we served our chocolate cheesecake to everybody in the restaurant, half of them would be dead in a week".

**"SO SELL 'EM STRAWBERRIES!"** We said. **"BUT SELL 'EM"**. And then we wheeled out our answer to gasoline shortages, the dessert cart. We widened the aisles between the tables and had the waiters wheel the cart up to each and every table at dessert time. Not daunted by the diet protestations of the customer, the waiter then went into raptures about the bowl of fresh strawberries. There was even a bowl of whipped cream for the slightly wicked. By the time our waiters finish extolling the virtues of our fresh strawberries flown in that morning from California, or wherever he thinks strawberries come from, you not only have had an abdominal orgasm but one out of two of you order them. In the last six months we show our waiters every week what's happening to strawberry sales. This month they have doubled again. So have second martinis. And believe me, when you get a customer for a second martini you've got a sitting duck for strawberries with whipped cream. Our waiters are asking for the order.

**"THINK STRAWBERRIES"** is The Plaza's new secret weapon. Our reservations now think strawberries and suggest you'll like a suite overlooking Central Park rather than a twin-bedded room. Our bellmen are thinking strawberries. Each bellman has his own reservation cards, with his name printed as the return addressee, and he asks if you'd like him to make your return reservation as he's checking you out and into your taxi. Our Room Service order takers are thinking strawberries. They suggest the closed circuit movie on TV (\$3.00 will appear on your bill) as long as you're going to eat in your room. Our telephone operators are even thinking strawberries. They suggest a morning Flying Tray breakfast when you ask for a wake-up call. You just want a light breakfast, no ham and eggs? How about some strawberries?

We figure we've added about three hundred salesmen to the three sales-service team we had before. But most important, of course, is that we've added five pure sales people to our Sales Department. Four of them are out on the street calling - mostly cold - on the prospects to whom they're ready to sell anything from a cocktail in the Oak Bar to a Corporate Director's meeting to a Bar Mitzvah. The

chewing gum people sell new customers by sampling on street corners. The Plaza has chewing gum licked a mile. Our sales people on the street have one simple objective: get the prospect into the hotel to sample the product. With The Plaza as our product, it isn't too difficult. And once you taste The Plaza, frankly you're hooked.

In analyzing our business at the hotel we found, much to my surprise, that functions - parties, weddings, charity balls and the like are just about three times more profitable than all our six restaurants put together. And functions are twice as profitable as selling all 1000 of our rooms. Before we had this analysis, we were spending all our advertising money on restaurants, our night club and our guest rooms. This year we're spending eighty per cent of our advertising money to get function business - weddings instead of honeymoons, banquets instead of meals, annual corporate meetings instead of clandestine romantic rendezvous for two. We've added a full time Bridal Consultant who can talk wedding language to nervous brides and talk turkey to their mothers. Retailers like Saks and Bonwit's and Bergdorf's have had bridal consultants for years. Hotels have Banquet Managers. Banquet Managers sell wedding dinners. Bridal Consultants sell strawberries - everything from the bridal shower, the pictures, the ceremony, the reception, the wedding night, to the honeymoon to the first anniversary.

When you fight a habit as long standing as the hotel inside salesman, you don't just wave a wand and say "Presto, now we have four outside salesmen". We want our new salespeople to know how serious we are about going out after business. We started an Executive Sales Call program as part of our "Everybody Sells" philosophy. About forty of our top and middle management executives, ones who traditionally don't ever see a prospect, are assigned days on which they make outside calls with our regular salesmen. People like our personnel director, our executive housekeeper, our purchasing director, and our general manager are on the street everyday making calls. Our prospects seem to like it. Our salesmen love it. And our non-sales "salesmen" are getting an education about what's going on in the real world - the one outside the hotel.

As a matter of fact, that's why I'm here today. I made a sales call myself with one of our sales people. We called on your program chairman and tried to sell him strawberries. He promised that if I showed you a strawberry he'd book your next luncheon at The Plaza. I'm looking forward to waiting on you myself. Thank you very much.



# BOOK REVIEW - ODYSSEY: Pepsi to Apple - Sculley

## Operating as a Network

**John Sculley** not only tells a remarkable story of his own journey of consciousness which includes challenging images for any manager who is anticipating the future, but he has coupled the capability of a terse and factual story teller with that of a corporate guru and teacher who is not afraid to look at the long-term implications of his Odyssey learnings.

His value for us in Asia is the broad span of high-level responsibility he has undertaken and his willingness to look underneath what was going on. His tutorials which come at appropriate places in his story are useful illuminators for tomorrow's Third Wave managers. His reading list at the back of the book is somewhat awesome in intensity regarding implied understanding needed for a Third Wave manager. It is no little contribution to my effectiveness and attitude that I am using a 20- megabyte Macintosh SE to write this article.

I find most helpful his comparisons of Second and Third Wave organisations, the original concept of which was borrowed from Alvin Toffler, but the grounding for which is uniquely his own. His images of a "Network Organisation", "Buy-in Management" and "Genetic Coding" are concepts which will be described in this article.

Let's talk about what it means to operate as a **network**. Unlike a hierarchy which lives out of rigid and relatively permanent structure, levels of authority, control, a network has no real centre. All organisations have networks, but in a second wave organisation, they are tolerated. In a third wave organisation, they form the basis for operating style:

- A network has no centre. It is process more than structure. It operates more with cross-functional modular groups which are task oriented.
- The leader can be a follower or a peer. He provides inspiration rather than dogmatic views. The leader emerges as a product of cultivation where talent and ideas shine rather than becoming a leader through a process of elimination.
- Everyone including the leader is concerned with members of the network adding value. The leader does this by setting the agenda and deciding finally where the resources will go. He empowers the network.
- One may be a leader in one network and a follower in another.
- The network is a natural course of how ideas flow. It is like management by dissent, a "love of colliding ideas".
- There is little permanence to structure. Temporary teams are the order of the day. Usually third wave companies need fewer employees per unit of output.

### CONTRASTING MANAGEMENT PARADIGMS (p. 140 of *Odyssey*)

<u>CHARACTERISTIC</u>	<u>SECOND WAVE</u>	<u>THIRD WAVE</u>
1. Organisation	Hierarchy	Network
2. Output	Market share	Market creation
3. Focus	Institution	Individual
4. Style	Structured	Flexible
5. Source of strength	Stability	Change
6. Structure	Self-sufficiency	Interdependencies
7. Culture	Tradition	Genetic code
8. Mission	Goals/strategic plans	Identity/directions
9. Leadership	Dogmatic	Inspirational
10. Quality	Affordable best	No compromise
11. Expectations	Security	Personal growth
12. Status	Title and rank	Making a difference
13. Resource	Cash	Information
14. Advantage	Better sameness	Meaningful difference
15. Motivation	To compete	To build



- Apple takes the network process into close working relationships with a number of third-party suppliers whose future is intimately tied up with the company.

- Reorganisation is looked at positively.

### Third Wave Organisation

A third-wave organisation is more concerned with **market creation** than market share.

- More on finding niches, customer needs, anticipating societal changes and less on competing for a fixed or determined market.

- Making own products obsolete is understood. The company renews itself by supplying customers with a meaningful difference whereas a second wave organisation gives customer better sameness. (I find Akio Morito's book, "Made in Japan" helpful here. He says that Sony knows when it puts a new product on the market that competitors will have something as good or better available within three to six months.)

A third wave organisation exists for the growth and development of its people; a second wave organisation motivates by promotion, salary, bonuses.

- Motivates by commitment to ideology, a chance to change the world, the possibility to grow as a person.

- Attitude is based on the possible rather than the current actual.

A third wave organisation "thrives on change", actually catalyses change, whereas a second wave organisation is built for growth and stability.

### Buy-in Management

A natural outgrowth of a third wave organisation as Sculley describes it is **Buy-In Management**. Its attributes are:

- The decision-making process recognises individuals regardless of where they reside in the organisation. Ideas can originate anywhere. This is different from top down, but also different from the Japanese consensus process which bubbles up.

- It does not allow for compromise. Each person is obliged to sell his ideas and persuade others of their importance.

- This encourages unfettered group discussion of attitudes, policies and ideas. A free form interchange weeds bad ideas from the good ones.

- When buy-in is achieved, the members will do whatever is necessary to succeed.

### Genetic Coding

A third wave organisation continually reinvents itself with a **genetic code** reference to the past whereas a second wave organisation sees its future as an extension of the past.

- Culture imposes constraints. It usually imagines a closed system. It misses evidence of action and change.

- Heroes and myths are static. Culture becomes a feel-good tool, a set of behavioural blinders.

- In genetic coding, as cells grow and divide, the genetic code is always present, yet the code's message is expressed differently in different organisms. Imprinted are notions of identity and values, but in so doing suggests a sense of forward looking investment in the future, not expression of the past.

- Not tribal as culture is, but biological.

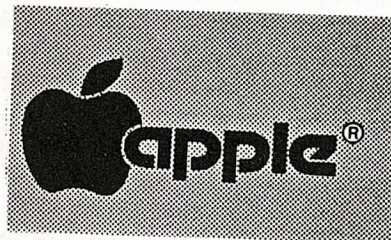
- Not goals, but visions and directions.

- Not war stories, but metaphors which focus on relationships of ideas, images and symbols, doing what was not done before. This creates a collision of ideas which produces fusion.

- Progress not so much measured by how much we can learn, but how well we can unlearn.

- Discipline, not control. For a creativity-driven organisation, control has a negative connotation. Discipline is an underlying process integral to innovation.

The above is a sampling of the reflections of John Sculley on his Odyssey. His ruminations about what is coming for Apple and for learning processes and the role computers may play are also exciting.





# AUDIO - VISUAL RESOURCES

## Some Excellent Customer Service Audio Visuals

### "IT'S ALL RIGHT, IT'S ONLY A CUSTOMER" - Video Arts

This 25-minute film starring John Cleese is ideal for people who work in a company headquarters. "Central Office," no matter what the organisation, tends to produce certain forms of customer insensitivity, three of which are delightfully ridiculed by Cleese. "Herbert 1," the stickler for procedures, "Herbert 2," the R & D Specialist, and "Herbert 3," the company sportsman, all interact by telephone with the poor customer. After a full day of one discouraging encounter after another, the hapless customer finally reaches "Herbert 4" who does it right. At the conclusion, the customer practices some of the earlier "Herberts" on the company when it calls him for collection. The tricks work both ways!

The film, then, is a hilarious teaching tool whose message is all too pertinent. Its use, however, is limited to the central office or "back room" people whose contact with customers is infrequent. Its point is that customer service, not Standard Operating Procedures, R & D Projects, or Intramural Games, is what the company stands for. Recommended highly for central offices, but not for sales or other "front-line" personnel whose opinions of central office would only be confirmed by what Cleese portrays.

### "WHO SOLD YOU THIS, THEN?" - Video Arts

This John Cleese film of 30 minutes length is perfect for sensitising "repair" personnel of their impact on customers. The insensitive repairman manages to cast doubt on the product, the salesman and the company, leaving the customer determined never to do business with them again. With the ascerbic wit of his Monty Python years, Cleese masterfully portrays these repairmen as negative examples everyone can recognise and no one wants to copy. The film ends with Cleese as a customer who is treated to a repair job by a sensitive person who leaves him placing a large order from the company. So there is a positive model presented. This film is superb for the correct audience. But its use for managers or sales staff is limited.

### "IN THE CUSTOMER'S SHOES" - Melrose

This 26-minute film is made for everyone who has direct contact with customers. It is a rather simple story of several instances of negative customer service with the feelings of the poor performing personnel clearly and sympathetically exposed. Then a turn-around occurs and the snowballing effect of good service is also shown. The film is quite good at helping people change their point of view and remember their own experiences as customers and the basis for establishing their relationship to customers. The film is somewhat simple and smacks a bit of the soap opera; but soaps have their appeal, and this one does a surprisingly effective job for front-line personnel. It lacks the humor of the Cleese genre, but it portrays service vividly rather than just talking about it. However great the lecturer, the film medium is best used not to present lectures but to provide practical images. At that, this one succeeds admirably.

### "PASSION FOR CUSTOMERS" — Video Publishing House

Tom Peters, at his passionate best, presents 5 case studies of superior service from five companies. The five include The Louisville Redbirds baseball team, Federal Express, The Limited, Worthington Steel, and University National Bank. Each is shown in action as Tom narrates. This film was made at one of his presentations, so his beginning and concluding remarks are before a live audience of rapt participants.

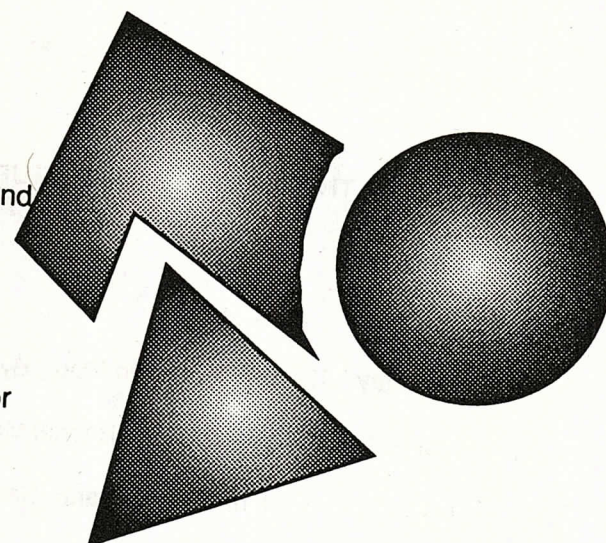
After vividly presenting the five cases and emphasising the essential humanity of good service, Peters make six concluding points about what makes good service work. He says that good service is:

- 1-redefining the mundane
- 2-listening and measuring customer satisfaction
- 3-cherishing front line people
- 4-responding quickly to customer needs
- 5-focusing on quality and service
- 6-inspired, in-touch leadership

No one could argue with these points, but when Peters presents them, they sound new. This film is best with an audience of managers who have the capacity to set policy guidelines. Portions have been used effectively with line personnel: Federal Express is excellent in dealing with telephone contacts; but the Redbirds and University National Bank are good at showing how "little things mean a lot." To appreciate the film, the audience needs some familiarity with American English. Peter's use of idioms and slang is rather more pronounced than is at first apparent to an American. But within those broad limits, this film is excellent at providing concrete examples of what good service looks like.



**Winning Through Participation: Meeting the Challenge of Corporate Change with the Technology of Participation**, by Laura J. Spencer of the *Institute of Cultural Affairs*, is a how-to book of participative planning methods that illustrates proven, successful approaches to problem solving for all types of businesses and organisations. It also features a Forward by Rosabeth Moss Kanter, author of *When Giants Learn to Dance* and *The Change Masters*.



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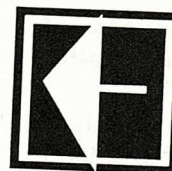
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