



Where
To
START

When You Need
To Improve Your
Customer Service

5

PROVEN TACTICS TO
KICKSTART EXCELLENCE
IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

*Improve Your Customer Service,
Your Business, and Your Life*


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Tony is available to bring his own brand of customer service magic to your business today. There are keynotes, workshops, programs, and materials suited for any size business with any size teams.

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Where to Start



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INTRODUCTION

What to Do

When You Don't Know

What to Do

*Admitting you need help
is the best place to start*

INTRODUCTION

What to Do When You Don't Know What to Do

There is going to come a time when you feel overwhelmed. Maybe you are new to your business or are in the middle of a change effort or perhaps you have a turnaround account that you have been asked to save.

Either way, we all have those times in our careers when we don't know what to do. Often when the situation is bad it is easy to feel helpless or hopeless (or both). That is a terrible way to live and a worse way to feel. So whether you are new to your company or have a herculean effort ahead, you are likely reading this because you need some help with your Customer service.

Don't feel bad. Everyone can have better Customer service - Often the first step to finding your way in the service marketplace is to admit that you need help.

I want to help. I may not know exactly how you are feeling but I can sympathize. I've been there, so you are among friends. We are about to take a quick trip together and between these pages I know you'll find a few nuggets to help you along the way.

Let's talk about what to do when maybe you don't know what to do.

When I was a young manager I was asked to take on a turnaround account. It was in trouble financially, dirty, mismanaged, and the service was disjointed and inconsistent. I certainly had my hands full and it was my first Front Line Leadership role, so I was determined not to fail.

What followed was six months of the hardest work I've ever done. I often worked seven days straight and 14 hours per day in long stretches. There were

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rumbblings from employees and there was a coming vote on perhaps unionizing. The team was not happy with how they were being led and the communication with them was spotty at best. Guests were unhappy with the services and products they were receiving, and there were issues all along the service pipeline including timeliness, attention to detail, and overall quality.

It was a business in distress and the clock was ticking.

I was asked to go to this account and help put it right. It was daunting at first until I realized that the secret was to put a plan together.

It's okay to feel like you can't catch your breath and that you are feeling overwhelmed. That is completely natural.

But you can't let it control you.

You can't let it make you feel small.

You can't let it get you down.

I know that may sound like it's easier said than done, which is why I wanted to write this book. I wish someone would have taken the time to share these tidbits with me when I was struggling with Customer service. But the good news is that you'll get the benefit of learning from all the mistakes I made over the last 25 years of serving Guests without actually having to make them yourself.

I am looking forward to our time together and I want to thank you for taking this first step toward improving your Customer service.

So let's get started.

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Where to Start



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CHAPTER ONE

*Where
Are
You?*

*You have to know where you are
to decide where you need to go.*

CHAPTER ONE

Where Are You?

Do you know where your business currently stands?

There is power in understanding where you are and where you want to go. Until you can truly identify your pain points, you'll never win.

First, you need to put a pin on the map and say definitively “I Am Here.”

When I have set to work on a change effort, I have found the following steps valuable to get the ball rolling. Too often folks jump in without thinking through the whole process - which doesn't lead to success or sustained change.

1. **TAKE TIME TO WATCH AND DO NOTHING.** This may sound counter intuitive when it comes to fixing service issues, but you have to take stock of where you are. It's hard to stand still for a moment to really see what is happening and note the pain points. But as hard as this may be, it is absolutely necessary. You can't wait too long to start making changes, but to do so without first understanding the current landscape is tantamount to reading the last page of a book and thinking you understand the whole story.

You must watch daily service and the production process very closely looking for opportunities, asking questions, and taking notes. You must also walk through your business with a hyper critical eye and from the Guest's point of view. It is a skill to see things from the Customer perspective, but once you master it you'll find that you can impact change very quickly. Too often managers find themselves walking through their business with blinders on - intent to get to their next leadership demand, but missing the big picture. It doesn't mean they



are bad managers, just lost and unfocused. If you point the same critical vision on your own business that you would when you were out to eat or visiting a department store, you'll be able to see where you need to focus. Understand the entire process from start to finish and analyze the choke points and silly processes. Undoubtedly you will find some things that are working well and others that leave you wanting. But resist the urge to jump in and start making changes.

That comes later.

2. **TALK TO THE TEAM.** There is power in asking others what they think. If you start a new role and jump straight in without the benefit of the team's knowledge, you could be sunk. That's not to say that everything they offer up will be gold, but you can't ignore them just because they are a part of a struggling piece of business. Often the best team will flounder under lackluster leadership, so embrace the fact that you'll have some high flyers and others who may need coaching. Let folks know early on when you take the reins that you'll be inviting them all in for a chat. Let them know that you are looking to understand them, their roles, and want to hear their ideas.

When you bring them in, here are some questions you can begin with:

- What is working?
- What isn't working?
- If you had that magic wand, and could change one thing, what would it be?
- Are you happy in your current role?
- What are your future plans? What do you have in mind for your next step with the organization?
- Are there any training gaps here that need to be filled?



Also take time to ask a few personal (but not too personal) questions. It's good to focus on business, but important to look for openings to deepen your personal relationship with the team.

There is power in getting to know them on a deeper level and letting them get to know you. If you keep it all business, you'll never develop the deep level of loyalty you seek.

3. PUT TOGETHER "THE LIST." Action plans get a bad rap out there in the business universe, but not because they don't work. Often they are overly complicated, not specific, or have no level of accountability. But as far as crystalizing your thoughts and moving the mission forward, they can work in a very real way. The trick is to be sure that you don't write them and then let them rot in a desk drawer. Your plan should have real actions tailored to fix real issues. Couple that with realistic deadlines and a list of resources needed, and you'll find that you can drive change quickly.

TIPS TO BUILDING GREAT ACTION PLANS:

- First start a grid or spreadsheet. I like Excel or Numbers for this as it allows for intelligent sorting. You can also find that OneNote or Evernote can really help here as well. Keeping notes everywhere in an unindexed fashion will get you nowhere.



- Make a list of every item you see as a problem. Be specific and don't worry about spelling, grammar, or categorization. That will come later. But this is your time to get it all down on paper. You could have deep service issues, you could have a dirty business, or you could also be in need of additional training. Leave nothing off and don't relegate anything as too insignificant to note or fix. If you are thinking about the issue after your intent observations, then it is a problem.
- Now sort that list into categories (employee relations, training, service, production, delivery) and combine any areas that seem repetitive so that you can streamline the list as much as possible.
- Next, read the list through and eliminate any remaining redundancies, add items that popped to mind, and eliminate anything that you believe is no longer a priority.
- Assign an A, B, or C to the list based on importance.
 - A: Immediate attention in the next 24-48 hours
 - B: Intermediate importance that should be dealt with in the next 7-21 days
 - C: Long term goals that may take 30 days or longer to complete.
- Now identify the timeline for completion on each item. Set deadlines that are reasonable but 10% harder than you feel comfortable with. Stretch to reach them more quickly than others might, as this will show quick results that will snowball into increased success. It will also show everyone organizationally that you can get things done.



- List resources required for each item. This could be a training that needs to be scheduled, expertise that needs to be brought in from outside to assist, budgetary needs, and time commitments.
 - Finally, delegate as is prudent. You will need to assign each item to someone to own - this could be you or members of your team. ***Don't try to own it all yourself - you will likely need help here to win.*** You may find that the first step of the action plan may be to develop your team so that you have folks who can help you win. Without a team (and that can be hourly front line Associates as well as managers) who are well trained to execute and drive change, it will be a lonely - and probably unsuccessful - journey.
4. **REFUSE TO FAIL.** If you took on a huge change effort, chances are you are already committed to win. That means that for a period of time, your schedule will be monopolized. Take the time to be honest with your family about what you are about to accept and make sure you are all on the same page. Once you have that blessing, then you have to own it. This could be emotionally taxing, time sucking, and extremely frustrating. The trick here is to push hard, work harder, and move with purpose as you seek to improve the business and service situations. Drive hard right from the start and get out of the triage stage as soon as you can. This will start getting your life back to normal more quickly. But if you take on this commitment you have to own it 100%. There is no better way to let the long hours and hard work spiral on than to not give it everything you've got. You are a talented leader, with an organization that obviously believes in you, so give it all you have and leave nothing on the field each day.



This is your check point. Now you should know where you are strong and where you must focus. You have an action plan and a deep understanding of your business and its needs.

Now it's time to get organized so you can start delivering the service you want and your Guests demand.

Where to Start



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TACTIC ONE

*You Have to Be
Organized
to Lead*

*When you can't find your desk
you'll never find your leadership*

TACTIC ONE

You Have to be Organized to Lead

What does organization have to do with Leadership?

Everything!

When your team needs you to be out on the floor leading them, they can't feel as though you are mired in nonsense and can't be trusted to show up. They need you to not only to inspire their mission and motivate the team, but also to approve purchase orders and answer questions. They need someone who is on top of the nuts and bolts items of leadership as well as the visionary stuff - those who are big thinkers without backing it up in action are seen as unfocused and generally relegated to "Absent Minded Professor" status.

Being productive and organized is so important because of the impact it has on others. To serve Guests well, you must be available to them. That means finding a way to cut through the clutter of daily work, handle the important items quickly, and get out into your business.

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The same holds true of your teams – they need you as well. They need to you to develop them, coach them, and lead them. And on a very base level, they need you to approve their expense reports, review their ideas, and respond to questions. None of these things can happen if you are buried in spam and busy work – and this isn't the delicious spam that goes so well with scrambled eggs. No such luck. This is the nitty-gritty, time sucking, no value spam that eats up valuable time every day.

- **TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND LET'S EAT THAT ELEPHANT**

When you look at projects, emails, or the daily flow of work, it can be overwhelming. This is especially true if you find yourself behind or trying to pound through a giant backlog of email. We've all left our inboxes too long and had to pay the piper. If you find yourself flustered by so much to do, then break it down into pieces. Set a goal to eliminate 50 extra emails each day or jump in and work at it full tilt for 1 hour. Then move on to something else. This will keep you from getting overwhelmed and make it easier for you to focus on making progress. That feeling of accomplishment will often lead you to do an extra 15 minutes on that project or maybe tackle a few extra pieces of the puzzle – sometimes getting started is the hardest part and this will help you with that.

- **STOP TOUCHING THINGS SO MANY TIMES.**

There is the old OHIO adage that begs you to Only Handle It Once. That is a fantastic way to tackle your daily work. It isn't always possible (sometimes you have to let something sit for a minute or maybe you even need to cool down before you can respond), but it gives us all a nice goal for which to shoot. If you find yourself looking at email or notes over and over again, then you are wasting time. Every time you settle in to look at it, you have to find your place and begin again. If at all possible, deal with it, delete it, file it, or make it someone else's responsibility. In any case, those four options move it out of your work queue. This is also a great time to talk about delegating. In most cases you have a team for a reason – use them. Make sure you are delegating out the work and then following up on



progress to be sure the quality you demand is there.

- **DON'T LET PEOPLE RUN YOUR LIFE WITH EMAIL**

It is so easy today for folks to send you rogue calendar appointments or forward you information to review. Keep a close watch on what is being sent to you via email and set boundaries with colleagues. Your supervisor is a whole different matter, but for now settle for containing those who don't keep you employed. Don't let your coworkers hijack your day with nonsense. I often check email quickly in the morning just to make sure my boss hasn't sent me anything that needs attention, then I go on with my task list. I don't much care for folks using my inbox to try to add work to my day or advance their agenda, so I guard against that by pushing back the nonsense to the sender.

- **FIND A SYSTEM YOU LOVE TO STAY ORGANIZED**

There are so many great systems out there today for organization that it's a shame that more folks don't take advantage of them. I am a huge fan of OneNote - which is a handy task list, note taking, and filing system that can sync across mobile and desktop seamlessly. This is a great place to keep a daily journal, a task list, and even file project photos and meeting notes. Couple that with a tightly controlled calendar through Outlook and you have what you need to stay on track. You may prefer Evernote or even good old-fashioned note cards or notebooks. Anything can work so long as you develop a system that gets results and that you maintained with discipline and consistency.



- **STOP MULTI-TASKING**

You can't do it so stop trying. When I watch people bounce from email to a spreadsheet to an E-Learning, I just chuckle and know that I'll be done with my work and out the door before they finish any two of those things. The fact of the matter is that while it feels like you are getting more done, you are just touching things too many times. Every time you switch gears you have to get back in that frame of mind and find your groove. Once you find your groove, just stay in it and finish the task. Our scattered brains love to jump around, but you have to resist the urge and tackle things one at a time - it will take you less time in the long run and your results will be superior.

These five items are just the tip of the iceberg. But if you find yourself drowning in work and need to start getting your life back in balance, these can help you start moving in the right direction.

It is imperative that you own every second and get the most out of your day to ensure you have the maximum amount of time to spend with your Guests, your team, and your family.



TACTIC TWO

Win With Communication and Training

*If you don't communicate your vision
and train the team, you will lose.*

TACTIC TWO

Win with Communication and Training

When surveyed and interviewed, most front line associates are in lockstep with their thoughts and critiques with regard to their Leadership.

They say loud and clear:

You don't listen to us.

You don't train us.

You don't communicate with us.

You don't recognize us.

That is a shame because every day there are Associates out there performing herculean efforts to serve their Guests. I have been working in the retail, restaurant, and big box businesses for over 25 years and I've found that often teams perform in spite of their leaders rather than because of them. Every day businesses open their doors to serve Guests - and often they do it with lackluster or absentee leadership. Often Associates band together, help each other, and get things done even though their leadership gives them little or no direction. Many times the result is just to get the business open each day; however, the execution is lukewarm. But they do get to the finish line.

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Now imagine what would be possible if leaders stepped up and maximized their team's performance. What if they challenged them? What if they communicated with them?

Amazing things would be possible.

Start by being a better listener. There is power in taking time to engage and listen to your teams. Too often our teams find themselves ignored or only listened to half-heartedly. That's a shame because they are on the front lines and have the best measure of Guest satisfaction. They are the ones who stand across from Customers, look them in the eye, and care for them. They are the ones who hear the complaints and endure their ire when things go astray. This is even more reason to listen. Engage with them regularly to learn the choke points of the daily mission and what tools might help smooth the way. They will also be able to tell you what is working well and what might do so if tweaked ever so slightly.

If you are lucky enough to have a team that shares regularly, then embrace them and listen. You may think you are a good listener, but chances are you need to hone that skill just like any other. Chances are that you need to talk less, listen more, and take better notes. Eliminate distractions and focus on what folks have to say. This means shutting down the email and smart phone - and it means keeping your focus on them, not what you want to say next. There are a million books out there on how to be a good listener - it can be best summed up by keeping your

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mouth shut, eyes open, and head in the conversation. Do that and you'll never be accused of being a poor listener.

Now once you have this wealth of knowledge, resist the urge to judge the ideas right then. Worse even than that, resist the urge to steal great ideas. Finally, don't ignore the great ideas. If you do any of these things, you'll find that your team will stop coming to you with their thoughts altogether.

Training is a magical thing. It not only makes team members better at what they do, but shows an investment in their career. Front Line Associates love it when they are taught new skills and encouraged to learn new things. Stagnation breeds departure, and you'll find that if you do not invest in the necessary training for your team that they will quickly go someplace that does. Training take all shapes and sized and must be broken up accordingly. Early on in my career I put way too much stock in books – sure they are great, but not everyone is a reader. Audiobooks are fantastic, too, but not everyone retains information that way. There is great value in classroom learning, but alone that cannot hone the requisite skills. The trick is in combining all these great learning models. Keep in mind that many learn by doing, so kinesthetic learning is a must as well –particularly in a trade where learning a craft is required. You'll never become a competent carpenter, cook, or musician simply by reading a book or attending a seminar. If that were the case, I'd be a concert pianist by now!

Keep in mind that training is like making your bed or brushing your teeth – It shouldn't be a onetime occurrence. There is a need for deep training when someone joins an organization, and it is imperative that they are trained before they start their jobs. That means understanding the ins and outs what makes up great service, the organizational expectations, and also how to do their particular job in detail. Don't let new team members practice on Guests and make sure that they are allowed to role play with seasoned Associates before they begin work.

Communication is a two way street. We talked about how important listening is to the team, but they want to hear from you as well. They need to feel like they

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know what is going on and that there are no secrets. In an informational vacuum, rumor mongering becomes the number one hobby and that leads to organizations that rot from the inside. That is no way to run a business, especially when we have so many great ways to keep in touch. Even in today's digital age, there is still a need for a good old fashioned employee bulletin board. Keep it neat, up to date, and filled with key information. Never let your team wonder about their schedules, when open enrollment occurs, or about any policy changes. There are also email distributions, employee intranets, and social media. Maybe an invitation only Facebook or Twitter account is the way to go in addition to an employee newsletter or weekly bulletin.

Don't skimp on the recognition. It's easy to believe that you are doing a cracker jack job at recognition, but don't fool yourself. If you truly are one of the few that is amazing at providing that great recognition, then power on to the next chapter. But if you think you may have some work to do, then read on.

Everyone loves to know they've done a great job, but you need to customize the recognition to the person. No one likes generic recognition and some folks don't want to be praised in public. This is where knowing your team well comes into play - the more effort you take with getting to know your team the more equipped you'll be to recognize them properly. Some folks like a public display and others will prefer a kind word in private. But make sure to be specific and don't wait too long to give out the praise. The longer you wait, the less impactful it will be. Finally, don't wait for the "big" moment, but rather appreciate the everyday excellence your team demonstrates. This will make sure that your team never accuses you of only engaging when they do something wrong. It will also help them embrace change and take action when you do need to discuss items that didn't go so well.



TACTIC THREE

*Understand
Fantastic
Service*

*You can't deliver
what you don't understand.*

TACTIC THREE

Understand Fantastic Service

So many Leaders, whether seasoned or freshly minted, don't consider the meaning of great Customer service. Think of it in terms of the difference between a Guest in your home and how you would treat a stranger. When you embrace Guests like you would friends at a cook out then you are well poised to begin understanding the mission of delivering fantastic service.

But I'm going to throw something in here that might sound a little counter intuitive.

STOP TRYING TO AMAZE YOUR GUESTS WITH OVER THE TOP SERVICE.

There, I said it. And I'm not taking it back.

So why this grand statement? Why am I not extolling the virtues of grandiose service? It's simple: it doesn't have the impact you wish it did. And oh, by the way, there is such a lack of really great service out there that the basic blocking and tackling items will actually win you much better loyalty. If you can nail down the basics and deliver them consistently, you'll find that you will be given credit for A+ service.

You'll find that your Customers appreciate it even more when you not only meet their base expectations, but also anticipate their needs.

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So what are the three secrets to giving your Guests what they want?

GIVE THEM EXPERIENCES THAT ARE “JUST FOR THEM”

When you make your Customers feel special they won't forget it. Every Guest comes with a different set of requests or needs that sets them apart as individuals - and which cannot be ignored. They want to feel like true Guests rather than a transaction or a dollar sign, and to do that you must find the joy in serving them. It could be the love of cooking for diners, the desire to bring health and wellness to patients, or a desire to keep folks safe while repairing their cars. Regardless of your business, there is a larger mission that will help you delight your Customers. Think of each Guest as an individual and VIP, and you'll find that providing great service becomes even more personal for your organization.

MEET THEIR EXPECTATIONS:

When you serve Guests each day, be sure that you understand exactly what they desire. So often businesses waste time trying to give folks what they think they want, rather than focusing their vision on a need that their Customers have. Apple bet the store that their Customers wanted the next step in the evolution of the cell phone when they launched the iPhone; Walt Disney knew that families were looking for an escape from the everyday world in a clean, safe amusement park; and Starbucks was certain their “third place” environment would meet the need for a separate location from work and home. In all cases they were right. They didn't guess at this - they asked Guests what they wanted, looked at the market, and then designed services and products that were designed to meet the needs of Customers. Ask yourself what your Guests need from a business like yours and then deliver it in a friendly, clean, consistent, and hassle free environment.



That's really all folks are looking for when it is all boiled down - to be treated well, to know what to expect, and to get what they want with minimal effort.

DEVELOP TEAMS THAT KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING.

Guests love it when those serving them are experts. Whether it's the mechanic that finds auto issues like a champ, the barista that makes the best latte, or the dentist who has the magic touch with effortless cleanings. Think about how amazing it is when you walk into the home improvement store and the Associate in hardware knows exactly what tool or bolt you need to complete a project. Feels good doesn't it - a relief that you've found an expert who can help.

That is the same way your Customers feel when you deliver for them. That means a well-trained, well-treated, well-led teams that puts the Guest at the very center of everything. The biggest obstacle to this pillar is the poorly trained Associate - if your team is ill equipped to do their jobs that will translate into experiences that never hit the mark. Make sure your teams are experts in their field and that you communicate with them in a robust and honest manner. Great communication and timely training will allow you to hit this important Guest need.

Customers are savvy and they know what they want. You can choose to ignore their wishes or you can do your very best to anticipate, meet, and exceed their expectations. Now improving the Guest experience will take commitment and great Leadership - Let's talk about that.



TACTIC FOUR

*Be a
Capital “L”
Leader*

*Terrible leaders rarely
Inspire their teams to deliver.*

TACTIC FOUR

Be a Capital “L” Leader

As we discussed earlier, sometimes you will end up in a role that requires you to fix what isn't working. I have done this several times in my career, and I want to share with you another experience I had several years after the one I mentioned earlier. This was another of those struggling locations we have all encountered - some call them turnaround accounts. I call them a lot of work, sweat, and commitment.

The previous leader had neglected cleanliness, recognition, and customer focus. I even heard stories of the manager rolling out of the office on his swivel chair to check on operations rather than walking.

Let's just say that morale was low, turnover was high, and commitment was nowhere to be found.

Leadership is so important to Customer service. Anyone can be a manager or supervisor; but to be a leader - a capital “L” LEADER - is something totally different. These Leaders get out into the thick of things and listen, assess, and act. They don't waste time placing blame, but rather dig to the heart of the problem and inspire teams to get better together.

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You may find yourself in this position one day and feel overwhelmed by the gravity of your new role. I can tell you that while it is a challenge that can test you to your core, it is one that you'll remember all your life if you win. It can also highlight you as a high performing Leader who can drive change in the organization. Yes, I am saying that moving the needle at a troubled account can be a touchstone moment in a career that can label you as an all-star.

It can also bite you if you don't take swift action and start to drive change quickly. Many managers have been overwhelmed and chewed up by accounts they were trying to save.

This could also be something you experience in your current role. Businesses are constantly in flux and sometimes service can erode organically due to changes in personnel, staffing cutbacks, organizational changes, or neglect. If you find yourself in a position where things have gotten away from you, the same tactics will help you right the ship.

So here are five steps to begin turning around an account with lackluster Customer service. Be mindful that these are the triage steps and will get you from abysmal to acceptable. From there you will need to dial in further to go from better to best.

There is additional information on these steps on my website (click the globe below).

1. **Be honest about where you stand with delivering customer service.** Don't sugarcoat it, don't obfuscate it, and don't get defensive about it. Just own up to where you currently stand and commit to improve. As they say, admitting the problem is the first step. You would be surprised how many Leaders refuse to admit to the problem and consequently never give themselves the chance to improve their service.

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2. **Put together a plan.** Action plans get bad press but you have to decide who's going to fix what and how long they have to do it. If you don't take the time to put down on paper where you might have issues, and what resources you're going to put behind correcting them, you'll never get anywhere. It must be agnostic of blame and focused on quick solutions. Get the quick wins out of the way, then move to the more time consuming items. For example, focus on cleaning the place up before you craft a big strategic plan. Refer back to Chapter one for the best way to develop those plans.

3. **Take the time to visit your location during off hours or when you know they struggle.** This could mean on weekends or after 5 PM depending on the length of your daily hours of operation. Many times, certain businesses thrive best when Leaders are on site and the focus is tight on execution. Too often, though, newer Associates and Leaders work during the off peak times - and this can lead to inconsistent service or execution. Your attention to these shifts will shine a light on the importance of all Guests, not just those who visit when we are at our best. Working these “off shifts” at first, then following up with periodic visits, will keep the pressure on all aspects of your organization to perform.

4. **Pull resources into immediate training.** Often training is squeezed off the page when budgets are tight. That can be effective for a time, but eventually the need will come to reinfuse the training budget. That could be an investment of time or it could be something more depending on what type of training your group may need. Start by pulling the team together and making sure that they understand their jobs, their importance to the organization, and their expectations. Often taking the time to reinforce the mission can start to get things back on track.

5. **Get the whole team involved.** You can't do it alone so stop trying. Get your other Leaders involved, bring in outside resources if you have a larger organization, and make sure you motivate the Front Line Associates to improve performance. This means abandoning the archaic idea that asking for help makes



you look weak – on the contrary, it is a mark of maturity and dedication. Would you rather drown alone or swim with a large team?

Remember, these are just the first steps. These actions can help you begin to improve service if you find yourself leading a piece of business that needs to be “turned around.”

Don’t waste time wringing your hands over it – attack it and make it better.

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TACTIC FIVE

*Serve Like
You
Mean It*

*Honestly great service
will always delight Guests.*

TACTIC FIVE

Serve Like You Mean It

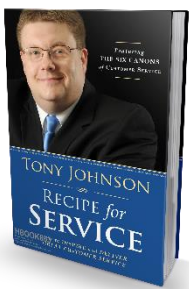
Customer service is a contact sport. It takes the very best of us each day and those who embrace the service mentality will find themselves most poised to win.

Your Customers can tell when you are mailing it in and if your team has embraced a service culture. It isn't enough for you to understand and provide great Customer service – as a leader you probably do that automatically. The magic happens when your team embraces the principles of great service.

The basics of providing fantastic service are outlined in **THE SIX CANONS OF CUSTOMER SERVICE**.

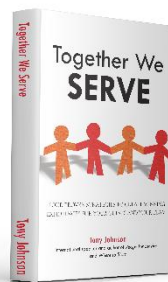
- Smile and Welcome You Customers Warmly
- Stay Positive and Friendly
- Practice Fantastic Body Language
- Treat Every Guest as a Cherished Friend
- Make It Easy
- Thank Every Guest

[For a deeper dive into this framework, check out my books:](#)



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So the secret is to inspire these values in your team. How you might ask? That is what can separate you as a leader and what can set your business apart.

Here are 7 tips to help you improve your Customer service mission:

1. **SET YOUR EXPECTATIONS.** Too often Front Line Associates have no idea what great service looks like. Often, if you are employing those who have never had a job before, there is good reason for them not knowing this. How would they? If you are a high school sophomore what do you care about great service? You could also be employing those who aren't at the top of their profession and consequently aren't very good at what they do. That doesn't mean you should give up - you should make sure that your Customer service mission is crystal clear.

2. **TRAIN LIKE YOU MEAN IT.** Webinars, electronic learning courses, and pocket reference cards are all great starts - but they aren't going to get you where you need to go. You have to take the time to train from day one and instill that service culture. And by the way, don't lament that your company's Customer service training is bloodless and terrible - take it to the next level and use your passion to inspire. Let's face it, for the most part they all say the same thing - it comes down to you to translate that vision into success.

3. **STOP HIRING TERRIBLE FOLKS.** Let's face it, it is so much easier to drive great service when you have a great team. Hire the right folks at the right time for the right role. Don't fear the blank line on the schedule and don't settle for the next warm body that walks in. Use every resource you have during the interview process and make sure that you ask real questions during the interview. Talk less, listen more, and focus on "what would you do if" type questions. Use colleagues to get a second opinion on candidates and if you have doubts, don't hire the person.

4. **SET A GREAT EXAMPLE.** Your team will follow your lead, so don't ever think that they aren't watching you to see how they should behave. Your actions matter and will be emulated by your team. Leaders attract those who



have like values and work ethic – and then folks fall into lock step with their boss’s actions. Note that I said “actions” and not “words.” Most often they don’t pay nearly as much attention to what you say as what you do. Set a great example and show them your commitment to amazing Customer service by delivering it to every Guest.

5. **COACH GREAT BEHAVIORS.** When Leaders are deeply involved in their daily business and know what is happening, they are poised to coach and train in the moment. This idea of **OWNING YOUR DIRT** can lead to fantastic results when managers are visible and available in the locations they manage. Folks stand up straighter when their Leaders are around, and Customers never have to look very far for those who spend a majority of their time walking their spaces. Don’t be an absentee landlord.

6. **RECOGNIZE AND CELEBRATE GREAT SERVICE:** The other benefit of being out in yours business every day is that you can see great service in action. Folks will repeat what you reinforce, and there is no better way than to praise great service. Whether you are giving out verbal praise, thank you notes, movie tickets, or other spot awards, the impact is so meaningful. If you ignore the great work your team does each day, they will quickly give up.

7. **LISTEN TO YOUR TEAM:** Engaged teams, who know what great service looks like, readily share new ideas. Those who deal with Guests on the front lines know best about service challenges and how to correct them. Listen intently to these amazing ideas and make sure you take them into consideration. Even if you can’t implement them all, your great listening and communication will ensure that folks continue to share ideas.

So these are the first seven steps. Once you have these under control you can move on to your next critical moves. But if you need a jumping off point, these 7 principles will serve you very well.



*Let's
Get to
Work*

*Thank you for reading. . .
Now let's get to work!*

Let's Get to Work

Thank you for taking this journey with me. There are so many demands on our time every day that I understand the commitment it took to read this book.

Now that we've spent this time together you have a choice as you read these last pages. You can make the commitment to use these tips, tricks, and best practices or you can ignore them. I hope you find as much value in reading this book as I did in writing it. If you follow the roadmap we just reviewed together, you'll find that your Customer service, employee engagement, and Leadership acumen will all improve substantially.

This won't happen overnight, but it will happen.

Remember that delivering quality Customer service takes daily commitment and you have to own it minute by minute. You also must inspire your team to help you advance this mission - otherwise you'll find that your voice is only one in a vast marketplace.

The good news is that I am here to help you continue to improve your Customer service mission.

I am available daily through email and 24 hours a day on my website.

Email: Tony@IGNITEYOURSERVICE.com

Web: IGNITEYOURSERVICE.com

Twitter: [@ServiceRecipe](https://twitter.com/ServiceRecipe)

***FOR ADDITIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE INSPIRATION,
BOOK A CUSTOM KEYNOTE OR WORKSHOP
FOR YOUR BUSINESS FROM MY WEBSITE.***

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EPILOGUE:

Post-Coronavirus

As I write this most of the nation is still in the grips of the coronavirus outbreak. I have been socially distancing and virtually working for about a week now and most of us have been watching businesses close or limit services – and the stock market has been declining steadily.

But it will end soon. Hopefully as you read this we are coming to the end of it and we are all settling into what the “new normal” will look and feel like.

That said, as the country comes out of this state of isolation and services being to normalize, we must consider what customers will value in the marketplace.

Let’s take a moment to talk about 3 items that you should prioritize as a part of your hospitality strategy.

CLEANLINESS WILL TAKE ON NEW MEANING

Most often when I write about sanitation and cleanliness those not in restaurants, healthcare, or hotels switch off a bit, I think. I am urging you to hang in there and think about cleanliness going forward. We are experiencing a time when cleaning supplies have been some of the most purchased items (or at least a close second to bathroom tissue). Finding hand sanitizer has become a lot like spotting a unicorn and there is a newfound appreciation for proper handwashing.

Our obsession with cleanliness and sanitation won’t be going away any time soon. You will find that in locations like restaurants and hotels, the focus will go from “is this clean?” to “is this disinfected?” In retail and other storefronts no longer will dust, clutter, and lack of organization be tolerated. Even if you

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run a repair shop or maintenance facility, where stacks of parts and lackluster cleanliness have often been tolerated, you will need to tighten up your game as well. In the marketplace that emerges post-coronavirus, cleanliness and safety will be even more an expected price of entry.

SERVICE IS GOING TO FEEL A LITTLE STAND-OFFISH FOR A MOMENT

There will be a general chill to customers at first as they come back into restaurants, bars, hotels, and retail. You will likely not only get comments that something isn't clean enough or doesn't "feel sanitary" but social cues will change a bit as well. You may find people don't stand as close. You may notice they are less willing to shake hands. You may also find that your customers who used to hug and touch don't do so as much anymore.

And that's okay.

Lean into what your customers need and give it to them. Remember not to take it personally and to prepare your teams for this reality. Try not to be offended and know that in time, some of this behavior will come back to center.

But mostly customers will be happy - and perhaps even more appreciative - that they have your services. There is a real chance that deeper kindness and understanding may come out of this terrible situation and that is never a bad thing.

BE PREPARED TO CHANGE AND ADAPT

We don't know what may come from these events that we haven't even thought about yet. The last time I remember something that impacted us so hard nationally was 9/11. That national tragedy forever changed us and this event may do the same. We have a deeper sense of country and also a heightened sense of airport security as a result. What will we look back ten years from now and say "that was because of Covid-19?" It's hard to tell, but I hope a deeper

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appreciation of the service industry, better handwashing, and maybe a little more civility.

But whatever it is, all industries must be ready to learn, adapt, and modernize based on our shared national experience.

Finally, in closing, don't forget to bring your team in close.

If you are an industry that had shutdowns, furloughs, remote work, or layoffs during the coronavirus outbreak, you are hopefully starting back up or are getting ready to do so. As your team comes back online be sure you do a check in with them and make sure they feel your appreciation. If you still have folks on remote work or layoff, stay connected to them until they do come back to work.

They are feeling anxious and uncertain - and can become disengaged if you don't communicate with them regularly and intentionally during their time away.

Never forget that how you treat your teams in times of stress and uncertainty makes a tremendous difference - and tells them about your character as a leader.

Thank you for your leadership in these uncertain times - and for ensuring that you keep your customers, teams, and your family at the center of everything you do.

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