



Does Your Company Have a Common Service Language?

How to build a powerful vocabulary to improve external and internal service.

Improving your organization's service culture is a multi-faceted and long-term undertaking. The place to start is - Building a shared vocabulary to focus the attention and actions of your team.

Left to their own devices, no two departments will have the exact same vision of excellent or uplifting service. They will naturally pay attention to different things. They will have different understandings of what the customer experience should be and how to improve it.

For example, operations managers may evaluate quality service by tracking how carefully procedures are followed, while frontline salespeople will care more about the ratio of compliments vs. complaints they receive. Your finance team might seek to improve on-time collections while your sales team targets to improve the company's flexibility to match customers' budget cycles. As each group works to improve service—as they see it—they may follow different paths or even work at cross purposes to each other.

Creating a Common Service Language can help align your team and keep them growing in the same direction. Here are a few examples of a Common Service Language “at work”:

- Singapore Airlines wanted to raise service standards on the ground to match their outstanding reputation in the air. To achieve this, a service education program was created: “Outstanding Service on the Ground” (OSG). Though the program has been retired, OSG persists in telex messages like this: “PLS DAPO OSG PAX @ LAX.” Translation: “Please do all possible to provide Outstanding Service on the Ground for this passenger on arrival at Los Angeles International Airport.”
- Parkway Health developed a language to connect their core values with specific service behaviors. STAND UP: take personal responsibility. SUIT UP: present a professional appearance. SPEAK UP: initiate positive interactions. STEP UP: exceed expectations. STAY UP: consistently deliver surprising service.
- For years, Microsoft tracked “first contact resolution” with numbers: targets, percentages, and time. Working with UP, the company added a column called “Service Classification”. Now, alongside these statistics is a ranking of customer experience in more qualitative terms: Criminal, Basic, Expected, Desired, and Surprising. With this language, managers have a more personal understanding of customers' experience, and appreciate more fully, the need for speedy resolutions.
- Starbucks' Common Service Language is so strong, it permeates society at large. Before Starbucks, the most common phrase associated with coffee in America was “the bottomless cup.” Today, customers and baristas share a language of talls, grandés and ventis (cup size), with or without room (for extra cream or milk), wet or dry cappuccinos (varying the amount of foam), skinny or full-fat lattes (choosing calories and milk), and extra pumps of flavor (including chocolate, butterscotch and more).

Questions to Help Build Your Common Service Language

As your company develops a Common Service Language, here are some useful questions to consider. Use these to evaluate where you are today, and to design new actions for the future. Discuss these questions with your colleagues and then with the team at Uplifting Service.

First, Determine If You Already Have a Common Service Language

Ask leaders and employees from each department to describe what they believe the customer thinks, feels, and experiences when interacting with your company. This will help you to determine if your company has already developed a shared service language. This may also help you identify disconnects and misunderstandings you need to bridge with a better language.

1. Is there any slang or jargon about customers and service that is unique to your company or to specific departments?
2. Do your employees use clichés like, “The customer is always right”? Or, negatively, “That’s not in my job description”?
3. Do you have documented scripts for delivering customer service? Do you have scripts for internal service between departments?
4. Do your employees use specific words or phrases when discussing service complaints, compliments and suggestions?

Create Your Common Service Language

Creating a Common Service Language (or updating an existing one) is not about using familiar buzzwords or already popular language. The words and phrases you choose, help you to deliver a better service experience while reinforcing your service goals and values. Consider the following questions:

1. How does your company create value for customers? What terms do you use to describe the value you deliver?
2. What phrases would you most like customers to use when they describe their experience with your company to others?
3. How does your organization create positive experiences for employees? What terms are used to describe that?
4. What phrases would you like employees to use when describing their employment with your organization to their family or friends?
5. What aspects of your service differentiate you from other organizations?
6. What levels of service does your organization offer? Uplifting Service teaches The Six Levels of Service™: Criminal, Basic, Expected, Desired, Surprising, and Unbelievable. How would you describe each level?



Ensure Your Service Language Is Effective

Once you have a clear vision for the service values, goals, and experiences you want to provide, make sure your Common Service Language describes these in phrases that are easy to understand and will apply in real situations. This makes the difference between creating jargon and creating a language that supports living and improving service culture. Ask these questions about your Common Service Language:

1. Is it memorable and easy to understand?
2. Does it have an emotional component and impact?
3. Does it inspire uplifting attitudes and actions?
4. Does it apply to real external service situations with customers?
5. Does it apply to real internal service situations with employees?
6. Does it make sense at all levels, from the front line to the board room?
7. Does it take you outside of your point of view and help you understand what someone else is experiencing?
8. Does it help your team coordinate internally to deliver better external service?
9. Does it reinforce other aspects of your service culture?
10. Does it translate easily into other languages?

Ensure Your Common Service Language Being Used, Now and In the Future

To be highly effective, your Common Service Language must be used frequently and not only when people are reminded. It must become a natural feature of everyday conversations and interactions.

1. Is your Common Service Language embedded into processes, procedures, and practices?
2. Do your leaders actively use, promote, and role model the language?
3. Do your leaders recognize and reward employees who use the language?
4. Is your Common Service Language used consistently in your internal communications?
5. Is your Common Service Language used during your interactions with customers?
6. Is your Common Service Language used in marketing and advertising materials?
7. Do you regularly review, revitalize, and refresh your Common Service Language?
8. Can employees provide feedback to improve and evolve your Common Service Language?

Want to See the Bigger Picture? Uplifting Service Can Help You Assess and Improve Your Service Culture.

“Common Service Language” comprises only one building block of a proven architecture that you can use to create an uplifting service culture. Contact UP for a more in-depth cultural assessment, to compare relevant case studies, and to learn more about the proven path to building a sustainable cultural advantage.



Uplifting Service is a global consulting and education firm based in Singapore, serving multi-national clients worldwide. We help clients develop a culture of service excellence, aligning the entire organization to win the hearts and minds of customers. We work with leaders who seek to harness the power of service excellence and seek the impact of a strong and sustainable service culture.

UP's proven proprietary methodology aligns, integrates, and accelerates organizations in three essential areas: Service Leadership, Continuous Service Improvement, and The 12 Building Blocks of Service Culture. This proven approach leads to an action-oriented culture, empowering everyone to delight customers and colleagues with consistently uplifting service.

Client Results

Enquiry@RonKaufman.com
www.RonKaufman.com



"We use the proven Uplifting Service tools and methodology to design our global customer centricity program. UP has an unrivalled approach, enabling companies build a strong and sustainable culture of service excellence."



BNP PARIBAS

"Uplifting Service addressed the problem we were trying to solve – getting over 10,000 employees to all move in the same direction. UP is really good at understanding our challenges and helping us address these by leveraging a highly effective methodology."



"I appreciate the change. I can see and feel a shift in the way Crown approaches our team, in the way they speak and the way they ask. They focus on what we are working on to achieve as a business and how we can become better partners to move our agenda forward."



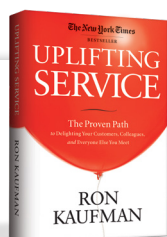
"UP gives insights to change mindset. Now we focus on end to end thinking. I can put myself in someone else's shoes and evaluate what is important."



"Uplifting Service helps us create a culture of obsession for the customer for the entire organization, inspiring everyone to work as one to take the next step up."



"Uplifting Service is the cornerstone that helped STERIS revitalize focus on our Customer, helping us differentiate our offers in a price-sensitive marketplace and drive customer loyalty."



The New York Times
BESTSELLING AUTHOR

Ron Kaufman founded Uplifting Service in 2003. He is one of the world's most sought-after educators, consultants, thought leaders on the topic of service excellence and customer experience. He is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller, *Uplifting Service*.

