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UPLIFTING SERVICE

The Proven Path

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

RON
KAUFMAN

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KAUFMAN

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“UPLIFTING SERVICE: The Proven Path to Delighting Your Customers, Colleagues, and Everyone Else You Meet”

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C H A P T E R 6

The Journey to Magnificence

It was April of 2010. Eager crowds of people waited anxiously outside glass doorways—hoping to experience something magnificent. Inside, there were more than 4,000 team members in one of the biggest “pep rallies” of all time. This was not a high school pep rally. This one was for keeps. An unprecedented \$5.7 billion had been invested, and the company’s survival was hanging in the balance.

Tom Arasi stood on the other side of those glass doors. He watched the facial expressions. Tom felt the anticipation, and he took a deep breath.

“We knew we had built it,” said Mr. Arasi. “And let me tell you, staring out into the sea of people, we expected challenges.”

This is what happens when someone builds something great. There comes a time when all the vision, leadership, and effort align and combine into a single, unified structure. And that’s when it takes on a life of its own.

Consider the Roman Coliseum. Think about the Eiffel Tower, the Sydney Opera House, the Golden Gate Bridge, or even Cinderella's Castle at Disneyland. All of these structures were built to serve a purpose. And, when they were finished, they became global icons.

Now consider the global icons of service. How were they built? What purpose did building a service culture serve? And at what point does an uplifting service culture take on a life of its own?

What does it take to build an icon? How do you create a miracle out of cement, glass, and steel? That was Tom Arasi's job as founding CEO of the Marina Bay Sands integrated resort, an enormous hotel, a convention center, a shopping mall, a museum, a theater, restaurants, and a casino all connected.

"There was a lot of pressure," said Mr. Arasi. "The process of building this place was intense. People who understand how aggressive this project was to undertake often ask if I would do it again—would I put myself and other people through that level of stress again?"

Mr. Arasi paused.

"I would," he said. "When I see what we created, and how much can be accomplished by getting people to see a shared vision, and how we felt when we realized that we had created something bigger than a really amazing building, yes, I'd do it all again. It's been a magnificent journey. And I would do it without pay. This property, and the human capital it took to deliver the performance, was nothing short of a once-in-a-lifetime phenomenon."

Let's backtrack to understand the aggressive process Mr. Arasi is referring to. In fact, just for a minute, consider the magnitude of activity required to build what is quickly becoming one of the

world's most iconic pieces of architecture, a luxurious integrated resort that provides the stunning physical foundation for an emerging and iconic service culture.

To appreciate the achievement, it's crucial to understand that before Marina Bay Sands was built, gambling was illegal in Singapore, the landmass where it stands did not exist, and the world was in the midst of an economic catastrophe.

Yet, one of the most majestic and magnificent pieces of architecture known to humankind was built—for your pleasure, surprise, and delight.

Now, before you type “Marina Bay Sands” into a search engine to view a spectacular photograph of the building (which I do highly recommend), imagine one of the most unique examples of architecture in existence. First, the foundation of a massive multilevel convention center with over 1 million square feet of conference and exhibition space, an enormous shopping mall lined with 300 designer stores, more than 60 food and beverage outlets spread throughout the complex, with recreational amenities including two spectacular theaters, a world-class museum, an ice skating rink, and a casino.

Now, imagine three hourglass-shaped towers curving upward, each 57 stories tall, containing 2,600 hotel rooms, rising high above the foundation to overlook the ocean on one side and the city of Singapore on the other.

Incredible? This is only the beginning.

Now imagine those three tall towers connected at the top by an ocean liner looking structure that is host to a lush park including trees, flowers, and greenery 57 stories in the sky. High above

the city, the 3,900-person-capacity Sands SkyPark is neighbor to restaurants, lounges, overlook posts, and an infinity swimming pool whose water meets the Singaporean sky.

Impressive design. Impressive construction. Impressive vision. And, impressive results. Marina Bay Sands is by far one of the most magnificent architectural, commercial, and cultural undertakings of our time—a completely integrated resort on one property and operated by one management team.

Still not enough for your imagination?

Then imagine this: it was built in just three years. And by the end of its first 12 months of operation, Marina Bay Sands had generated a staggering one billion dollars of EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization). And the building hadn't even been finished.

Not Just a Pretty Face

Staring up at the three towers of Marina Bay Sands sent chills down the spines of Ryan Williams and his wife Sarah. Ryan had traveled to Singapore just once before. His first trip was business. This time, it was his honeymoon.

Williams had heard about Marina Bay Sands from a co-worker. He wanted his arrival with his bride to be perfect. He wanted her to be in awe. He wanted the next seven days of his life to be magical.

The unique architecture of Marina Bay Sands can impress just about anyone. And we already know that the new couple was excited. After all, they were on their honeymoon. They had landed and experienced the amazing interiors and friendly people at

Changi Airport. They hired a special taxi, and the driver had offered them a warm welcome and great service on the ride to Marina Bay Sands. But what happens to their once-in-a-lifetime experience if they don't receive magnificent service at one of the most magnificent resorts in the world?

Imagine how quickly the romance of the trip could be squashed if the check-in line at the resort took too long? Or, if the bellman wasn't friendly when delivering their bags? Or, if upon entering their room, they didn't find it impeccable, with every piece of furniture polished and every amenity in place?

Marina Bay Sands had a vision of becoming iconic to the world—in structure and in service. They were building the property during one of the worst economic downturns in history. They battled with deadlines and budgets and cleared construction and legal permit hurdles. And they were on a blazing path to hire enough new team members.

“We went from 100 to 6,500 team members in just 100 days,” said Tom Arasi. “Every morning it was like walking into a new company—so many new faces.”

This type of rapid hiring—especially recruiting department heads from all over the world—creates a new and even bigger challenge. How does an organization build an iconic service culture when new staff members are joining the company daily, by the hundreds?

Mr. Arasi couldn't just send out a memo that said, “Treat the customer well.” He was in charge of one of the world's newest and most carefully watched premier resorts—an integrated property where service standards and service experience needed to be the number one focus at every touchpoint. And it needed to be number one

for customers from all over the world, served by brand-new team members from all over the world.

“We realized that we had built something magnificent,” said Arasi. “But we also realized that we needed to focus just as much on building a service culture. And we needed to do it quickly. Not only was this a critical success factor for our operation. The entire country of Singapore needed us to deliver on the *magnificent* promise in support of the country’s bold initiative to elevate its game on the world tourism scene.”

Imagine the newlyweds, Mr. and Mrs. Williams, sitting down for a romantic dinner by candlelight in one of the many fine restaurants at Marina Bay Sands. The food is spectacular. The view is spectacular. The waiter goes out of his way to make recommendations for fine wines to pair with the couple’s dinner selections. It’s all perfect. Right?

“What time does the museum open in the morning?” asks Mr. Williams.

“And can you tell us how to get tickets for *The Lion King*?” asks Mrs. Williams.

“I’m sorry, I don’t know anything about those things,” replies the waiter. “I only work here in the restaurant.”

Magnificent service? Well, it’s not horrible for the waiter at a restaurant not to know the operating hours of a museum or the ticketing details for a famous show. But imagine how the evening would have been so much more delightful if the waiter had responded in a different manner.

Imagine the waiter says to Mr. Williams with a smile, “The museum is fabulous. And there is an amazing Salvador Dalí exhibit on display there right now. It opens at 10:00 in the morning and stays open until 10:00 every night, even on holidays.

“And tickets for *The Lion King*? I saw it myself. It’s great!” he says turning to Mrs. Williams. “The show starts at 8:00 every night except Monday, and on weekends there is a matinee at 2:00. I can contact the concierge if you would like tickets.”

Now think about what those two simple statements require: a common service vision that spans the property, the wide range of product knowledge a waiter must learn and master, and the active cooperation of people and systems across so many departments.

“Just because you hire the right people, build an incredible resort, and offer the world the finest activities and amenities, doesn’t mean you’ve created the ultimate experience,” said Arasi. “If we didn’t build a solid service culture, the whole thing could come crashing down on us. And I’ll be blunt. Those first frenetic and tense days that we were open, we learned very quickly the importance of getting our cultural building blocks in place.”

One early example of how much Marina Bay Sands needed to implement the building blocks of a common and uplifting service culture was during the property’s grand opening of the world-famous play *The Lion King* in the theaters at Marina Bay Sands. *The Lion King* was a natural choice for the opening show in “The Lion City” of Singapore. It was promoted heavily in the city and throughout the region. Marina Bay Sands expected—and enjoyed—a massive response.

But here's the rub. To the hotel guests on opening night, to those customers who traveled across the globe to experience the magnificence of Marina Bay Sands, the stage was completely dark. Throughout all the promotion, the marketing, and the dollars invested in advertising the opening night, Marina Bay Sands forgot to inform their own in-house guests. The first audience to see *The Lion King* included just four guests of the resort.

What would your perception of service be if you flew into Singapore, stayed at Marina Bay Sands, and read in the paper the following day that you could have seen the opening night of *The Lion King* in your resort?

"We built the property quickly," said George Tanasijevich, the President and CEO who followed Tom Arasi's almost two-year tenure. "Tom Arasi got Marina Bay Sands built and took us through our first difficult year of operation. Now we need to build a world-class service culture even faster."

The Architecture to Build an Uplifting Service Culture

Over the past 25 years I've studied countless companies and seen their service philosophies in action. I've interviewed thousands of team members and their leaders. I am deeply inquisitive when exploring how people's attitudes, policies, and practices evolve in an organization, and seeing how it all comes together when building an uplifting service culture.

I have witnessed winning service cultures rise to great heights. I have seen service cultures form in different industries and countries all over the world. Some have been driven by their struggle to compete, to overcome difficulties, or to solve a persistent problem.

Some were motivated by ambitious goals to achieve, mergers to complete, or new markets to penetrate and conquer. And some were simply inspired by people who saw the world through a wider lens—who believed in creating an uplifting service culture as a purpose greater than themselves.

There is an amazing constant among the successful companies and organizations I have encountered. A clear architecture for engineering a powerful service culture emerges over and over again. This common architecture involves many areas and activities that major organizations already use. They require thoughtful planning, coordinated activity, and lead to rewarding results.

Even more intriguing, I could see which elements were missing, or out of alignment, each time I encountered an organization with a struggling or failing service culture. And the reason was also clear: while these areas may all be active inside an organization, they are often managed by different departments and are not planned, deployed, or integrated with a unifying purpose or vision. This leads to disjointed and disconnected efforts and to confusing and even contradictory messages to team members.

At the top of this proven architecture is Service Leadership, which we have explored in this section. Actionable Service Education forms a vital foundation for continuous learning and service improvement. You will discover the fundamental service principles of uplifting service—and how to apply them in every job, role, and situation—in section 4, Learn.

Connecting service leadership with service education is a set of important and interconnected areas I call “The 12 Building Blocks of Service Culture.” In the following chapters, we’ll explore each of these essential building blocks in detail:



1. Common Service Language

Widely understood and frequently used by service providers throughout the organization, a Common Service Language enables clear communication and supports the delivery of superior internal and external service.

2. Engaging Service Vision

Eagerly embraced and supported, an Engaging Service Vision energizes everyone. Each person sees how the vision applies to his or her work and takes action to make the vision real.

3. Service Recruitment

Effective Service Recruitment attracts people who support your service vision and keeps out those who may be technically qualified but not aligned with your vision, spirit, and values.

4. Service Orientation

Service Orientation for your new staff members must be welcoming and realistic. New team members should feel informed, inspired, and encouraged to contribute to your culture.

5. Service Communications

Vibrant Service Communications inform and educate. Creative communication channels reach everyone with relevant information, timely customer feedback, uplifting service stories, and current challenges and objectives.

6. Service Recognition and Rewards

Service Recognition and Rewards motivate your team to celebrate service improvements and achievements. Acknowledgment, incentives, prizes, promotions, and praise—all help to focus attention and to encourage greater results.

7. Voice of the Customer

Voice of the Customer activities capture your customers' comments, compliments, and complaints. These vital voices must be shared with service providers throughout your organization.

8. Service Measures and Metrics

Measure what matters to focus attention, design new action, and create positive service results. Your people must understand what is being measured, and why, and what must be done to hit the bull's-eye.

9. Service Improvement Process

A strong Service Improvement Process ensures that continuous service improvement is everyone's ongoing project. Keep your methods vibrant and varied; keep participation levels high.

10. Service Recovery and Guarantees

When things go wrong, bounce back! Effective Service Recovery and Guarantees turn upset customers into loyal advocates and team members into true believers.

11. Service Benchmarking

Discover and apply best practices from other organizations inside and outside your industry. Service Benchmarking reveals what others do to improve service and points to new ways you can upgrade yours.

12. Service Role Models

Everyone is a Service Role Model. Everyone is watching. Leaders, managers, and frontline staff must walk-the-talk with powerful personal actions every day.

While you will see a method to the order in which I present and explain these building blocks, you may employ them in a different order in your organization. You may choose to focus first on any building block for which there is a current need or challenge in your organization. You may choose to start where there is low-hanging fruit, with fast results available from relatively little effort. You may choose to tackle a difficult or complicated area sometime later. Or you might work on an area in which the need is great or the impact will be most apparent.

Two things are certain from all my years of study and in all the organizations I have had the privilege to help. First, these 12 areas are often seen as the responsibility of management, but everyone at every level can contribute with his or her ideas and actions. Second, when these building blocks are connected, when they are aligned to support each other, you will enjoy powerful synergies that are currently untapped and experience a dramatic acceleration in performance.

Successful Architecture Is the Key

“Is that a flower?” asked Todd. He was standing on the 57th floor of the SkyPark and pointing at a white floral-structured building far below the towers of Marina Bay Sands. “That building is shaped just like a flower.”

I explained that he was seeing the new ArtScience Museum from above, its petals pointing toward the sky, an open blossom inviting the people and the prosperity of the world to come enjoy a visit.

“Now look over there,” I said, pointing in the opposite direction. “They’re constructing a whole garden of buildings; it’s called

Gardens by the Bay. It's an immense botanical garden filled with elegant shops and world-class restaurants.

“And look there,” I said one more time, pointing in a third direction. A huge wheel with large pods each holding up to 30 people arced high over the ground. The Singapore Flyer was offering another wide and clear view of the harbor and the city.

“This is amazing,” Todd responded. “It's hard to believe these are buildings. How do they build those? It almost seems impossible.”

His question was ironic given the perch from which he stood, 57 stories in the air next to an enormous swimming pool that curved through the clouds.

“It's all in the architecture,” I said. “Anything is possible with the right architecture. You can build amazing buildings, and you can build cultures of service that are equally amazing.”

Meet Ron Kaufman

Ron Kaufman is the world's premiere thought-leader, educator, and motivator for uplifting customer service and building service cultures. Ron is the author of 14 other books on service, business, and inspiration.

Ron provides powerful insights from working with clients all over the world in every major industry for more than twenty years. Ron is an inspiration to leaders and managers with his content rich and entertaining speeches, and his impactful, interactive workshops. He is rated one of the world's "Top 25 Who's Hot" speakers by *Speaker Magazine*.

Ron has been featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, and *USA Today*. He is passionately committed to uplifting the spirit and practice of service worldwide.

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A breakthrough book
that will surprise, delight, and uplift you,
your organization, and your team.

In *Uplifting Service*, Ron Kaufman takes you on a journey into the new world of service. Through dynamic case studies and best-practice examples, you will learn how the world's leading companies have changed the game, and how you can successfully follow this path to an uplifting service transformation.

“Read this book, apply the steps. Watch your culture transform and your perspective on service change forever. Ron Kaufman has unlocked the mystery of service. Get ready for a magnificent journey into a new world.”

Marshall Goldsmith

Bestselling Author of *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*

“Ron Kaufman has pinpointed a massive wound in society, and offers a strategy to uplift the world around us. For mankind, it's transformational. For business, it's a clean and clear path to a sustainable competitive advantage. This book is long overdue, and will create a legendary shift.”

Thomas Moran

Director, Customer and Partner Experience
Microsoft Operations



Ron Kaufman, the founder of Uplifting Service, is the world's premiere thought-leader, educator, and motivator for uplifting customer service and building service cultures.

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