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

ISBN 978-981-07-1832-9 — hardcover (Singapore)

Published in Singapore by Ron Kaufman Pte Ltd.

Printed by Tien Wah Press (Pte) Ltd

Originally published in the USA by Evolve Publishing, Inc.
www.EvolvePublishing.com

ISBN 978-0-9847625-5-2 — paperback

978-0-9847625-0-7 — hardcover

978-0-9847625-9-0 — ebook

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Table of Contents

Preface:

A Personal Path to Service..... ix

Introduction:

The Problem with Service Today xix

SECTION ONE: **WHY?**

1 Journey into a New Culture 3
2 The Gateway to Possibility..... 15
3 The Proven Path 27

SECTION TWO: **LEAD**

4 Taking the Lead 41
5 Leading from All Levels 57
6 The Journey to Magnificence 73

SECTION THREE: **BUILD**

7 Common Service Language..... 89
8 Engaging Service Vision..... 95
9 Service Recruitment 103
10 Service Orientation 111
11 Service Communications 119
12 Service Recognition and Rewards 125

13	Voice of the Customer	131
14	Service Measures and Metrics	139
15	Service Improvement Process	151
16	Service Recovery and Guarantees	159
17	Service Benchmarking	175
18	Service Role Modeling	187

SECTION FOUR: LEARN

19	Learning Takes Practice	197
20	The Six Levels of Service.....	203
21	Your Perception Points	211
22	The BIG Picture	225
23	Building Service Partnerships	237
24	Taking Personal Responsibility	257

SECTION FIVE: DRIVE

25	Your Implementation Roadmap.....	269
26	Learning from Experience	281
27	More Than a Business Philosophy	297

	Author's Acknowledgments.....	303
	Index.....	307

	Tools for Your Journey	320
	Join the Uplifting Service Community	322
	About UP! Your Service.....	324
	Meet Ron Kaufman	325



CHAPTER 10

Service Orientation

Your Service Recruitment Process worked like a charm, and now it is the first day at work for your new employees. How will you orient them to connect and contribute to your culture of uplifting service?

Unfortunately, many company orientation programs are far from uplifting. Often they are little more than robotic introductions: this is your desk; this is your password; those are your colleagues; these are the tools, systems, and processes we use; I am your boss; and if you have any questions, ask. Welcome to the organization. Now get to work.

OK, it isn't really that bad. Or is it?

Do you remember your first day or week on the job? Were you comfortable with all the new customers, colleagues, and expectations? Did the organization have a well-planned program to help you get connected, get settled, and get going? Did people go out of their way to make you feel wanted and welcome? If so, you know how much it means to someone new. If not, you know how much can be missing.

Basic inductions and introductions are important. New employees need to know where to go, what to do, and how things are supposed to work. But induction only gets them going on their job—it doesn't connect new employees to the company or the culture in a welcoming and motivating manner. You only get one chance to make a positive first impression with a new customer. Leading service organizations know the same is true with every new team member.

Service Orientation goes far beyond induction. Orientation provides valuable context as well as helpful content. It encourages good thinking and provides good answers for important questions like: Who are we? Who are our customers? Who are our competitors? How are we different? What's working? What's changing? What greater value can we create for our customers, our community, and for each other? What is the service culture we are committed to building here? And, most importantly, What can I do as a new employee to help make our service culture even stronger?

Zappos has gained global media attention for its four-week cross-department orientation process. It's an example of new-hire orientation at its finest—deeply embedding and delivering on the company's brand and core value, "Deliver WOW Through Service." Zappos pushes the process further by offering a "quit now" bonus during the four-week orientation process. If you think the culture isn't a perfect fit for you, the company will pay for the hours you've put in so far, plus a cash bonus to leave now with a smile. The bonus started at \$100; was soon increased to \$500, \$1,000, \$1,500; and now stands at a whopping \$2,000 to walk out the door. And the CEO, Tony Hsieh, thinks the company might raise the amount again since not enough people are taking the money. You might say that paying new employees to walk away from the job is a little weird (which is another of their core values

and is another reason why they do it), but this seemingly strange practice results in totally committed new team players who are completely aligned with the culture. The goal isn't to get rid of good people; it's to make sure the right people stay.

If the Zappos approach sounds wildly aggressive, that's because most organizations are simply crossing their fingers hoping new hires are happy. And that's too bad, because a simple online search of "effective orientation programs" reveals a flood of supporting statistics: effective orientation leads to greater productivity, higher employee engagement, longer staff retention, and better internal and external service. Clearly, the results are worth the effort.

You can focus your orientation efforts with these four proven steps: think and plan long term, connect your people and your culture, provide a reality check, and plan for continuous improvement.

1. Think and Plan Long Term

Effective orientation happens over time. New employees arrive with basic induction questions—How does the phone system work? Where do people meet and eat? When and how do I get paid?—and these should be answered quickly. After the initial settling-in phase, these questions will change and mature—How am I being appraised? How can I suggest changes and new ideas? and How can I get good guidance and support?

Avoid the temptation to "get it all over with" in one long and overwhelming session. Instead, stretch out the orientation process and encourage new employees to build their understanding over time.

For example, Marina Bay Sands begins an unofficial orientation process even before recruitment is complete. The resort hosts a

colorful and interactive “Sands IQ” page on Facebook where job seekers can explore, and successful applicants can learn about, the many restaurants, hotel rooms, convention and exhibition halls, retail outlets, theaters, the museum, and other facilities located throughout the integrated resort. Applicants who want to grow their careers at Marina Bay Sands can demonstrate interest by learning important facts even before their first day on the job. And those who are hired can accelerate their orientation by visiting the Facebook page often and can contribute to new team member recruitment by sharing it with their friends.

By contrast, at Singapore Press Holdings (SPH), the media conglomerate that publishes many of the nation’s newspapers, magazines, and online publications, a unique orientation program is available only for those who have already been in their jobs for at least six months. The SPH Management Orientation Program (SMOP) brings together team members from editorial, marketing, production, distribution, human resources, finance, facilities, IT, and other departments. Over five days, this diverse group learns how each job function has an impact on every other function. And they discover that only the whole team, working together and serving each other, can deliver the essence of its media brand: “Engaging Minds. Enriching Lives.”

2. Connect Your People and Your Culture

At Changi Airport, new staff orientation includes every agency and company in the airport. Airline staff members meet employees from Starbucks, Billabong, Lonely Planet, and American Express. Cleaners, taxi representatives, and baggage handlers meet newly assigned members from Police, Customs, and Immigration. This combination breeds an intimate airport community where passengers are cared for across all job functions, employees respect

all positions in the airport, and they begin to care about each other as if they were a large and well-connected family.

New employees are not the only ones touched by Service Orientation; managers, staff, peers, customers, suppliers, and even families back home are also affected. Each group has different questions and concerns that you can address by providing them with an active role in the orientation process. Buddy systems, lunch meetings, panel discussions, visits to other parts of the organization, family days, online portals, pages, conference calls, and virtual video meetings—you can use all these methods to *connect your people and your culture with your purpose*.

Seeing your name identified with an organization is critical for building connection. Make your new employees feel welcome with something that identifies they've officially joined your team: business cards, a name plate, a personal welcome letter from senior executives, a mention of their name in the company newsletter, their photograph on the intranet or website. At NTUC Income's award-winning contact center, new hires are asked to write a personal pledge to keep "Service Alive!" The following week, their pledges are proudly posted on the wall with photographs for everyone to see.

3. Provide a Reality Check

No workplace is perfect. Make sure your orientation is not a fantasy tour of what you wish the company would be. If your program shows only the bright side of the business and the happy side of daily work, don't be surprised if your new employees are disillusioned after a few weeks on the job. Before you send new hires out to love their jobs and serve the world, warn them of the realities they might face: burnout, rejection, and stress.

One technology firm in the middle of a wrenching transformation developed a new employee orientation program along the following theme: “You will know more about the problems we are facing today than some of the people who have worked here for years.” This novel approach created new staff members who understood the past, who appreciated the present, and who were ready to contribute to make the future better.

And let’s face it, sometimes it doesn’t work out, and a new hire doesn’t fit with the company culture. You may not offer \$2,000 to walk away, but you can provide a dignified opportunity for new hires to leave after a short trial period if they choose. You might help them find appropriate positions in other firms you work with. Or give them honest advice about where to look for jobs that suit their manner.

It’s always best to part as friends when people have shown sincere interest in your organization. They might apply for another position with you in the future. Or recommend a better-suited colleague to apply. Perhaps they will form an impression of what your organization is *really* like on the inside and share that widely on the outside. Whenever someone does not fit and leaves the job behind, they should know your culture cares enough to encourage them going forward.

4. Plan for Continuous Improvement

Orientation is your first opportunity to create open communication with new employees. Begin your working relationship by showing new hires that you will offer feedback and you want feedback from them. Don’t let your orientation become a one-way stream of information. Let newcomers explore the company, research the competition, meet your customers—and then generate their own questions for you and your colleagues to answer.

You can also get your new employees more involved by asking them to help welcome the next batch of new employees with an even better experience. This ensures that your orientation program stays fresh and relevant. It also makes the group of new employees feel like valuable contributors: knowledgeable, involved, and useful.

Is all this effort worthwhile? Well, poor orientation of new employees can cost you dearly, because those who don't start right don't tend to stay long. And when they do leave, they don't speak well about your organization to others. And to top it off, high staff turnover means you must recruit, hire, and orient more new staff all over again. In new staff orientation, it pays to pay attention, and get it right the first time.

Questions for Service Providers

- What can you do to help new employees feel welcome and appreciated?
- How can you teach what you know best to the new people on your team?
- How engaging and effective was your Service Orientation when you started working? What suggestions can you offer to make it better?

Questions for Service Leaders

- Is your Service Orientation program for new employees welcoming, uplifting, and at the same time realistic?
- Do new hires complete your Service Orientation feeling engaged and eager to contribute?
- What changes will improve your current Service Orientation program?

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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978-0-9847625-0-7 hardcover (USA)
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978-0-9847625-9-0 ebook (USA)
978-981-07-1832-9 hardcover (Singapore)