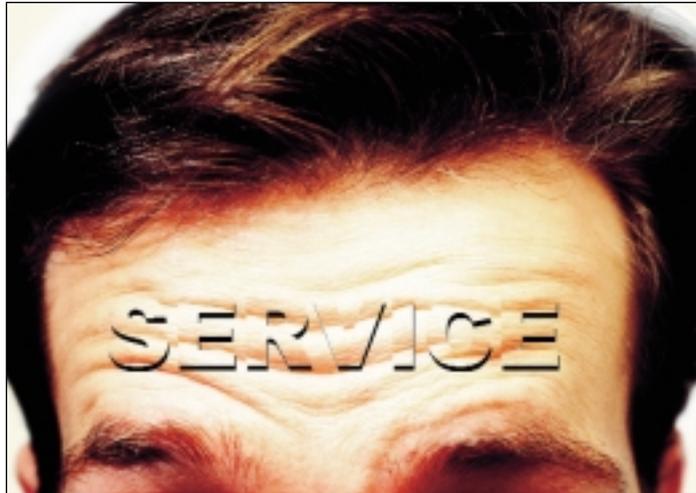


Creating the Service Mindset: Where Does it Start?

As I impatiently waited for the gate agent to finish her personal call so that I could be checked in for my flight, I remembered why I seldom fly this airline (which shall remain nameless) and so often fly Southwest instead. While I may hate Southwest's cattle call boarding system, I sure love the company's commitment (in word and deed) to service. No, no, no, this is not a commercial for Southwest Airlines. It is, however, an examination of the Service Mindset.



It was abundantly clear to me that the gate agent (for the unnamed airline) had missed all of her customer service training classes. She also forgot the manners her mother taught her. And, most notably, she did not have the Service Mindset.

What exactly is the Service Mindset? It is a clear, relentless, unwavering focus on the customer. It is a demonstrable understanding of the customer's needs, wants and expectations. It's an obsessive desire to satisfy! And, it extends to internal customers (co-workers), as well as external customers.

Do You Have the Service Mindset?

So, how do you know if you have the Service Mindset? You know you have it when:

- You talk about positive customer interactions more often than negative.
- You view negative customer interactions as opportunities to learn even more about the customer's needs and expectations.
- You create opportunities for customer contact.
- You view your work from the customer's perspective.
- You define your function with the customer in mind.

Once you have determined whether or not you have the mindset, you can work on strategies for creating it in your company.

I am a zealot for leaders doing more than talking about service. To create the mindset in question, you have to have strategic intent. No matter what type of remanufacturing business you

run, service matters. Outstanding service delivery should be a purposeful component of your business model. This means that you, the leader, have to understand that the service technicians aren't the first line of defense in the war to raise the bar on service — you are! You are responsible for creating a culture that values customers, even the difficult ones.

Building the Service Mindset

Here are five keys that will help you build the Service Mindset.

1) Measure regularly. Gather regular feedback from customers. Of course, you can use formal tools like surveys and focus groups, but you should also be using more informal methods like conversations and observations. These informal methods will alert you to patterns of complaints, problem equipment and questionable practices. Don't remove yourself from customer-related issues. Remember, revenues come directly from customers.

2) Measure internally. While you're measuring customer satisfaction, take the pulse on employee satisfaction as well. Are your people grumbling and complaining? What about? Invest time and energy fixing the things you can internally. Remember, charity begins at home.

3) Link. Link the results of your measurements to bonuses and compensation. Many companies link their bonus plans to measures of customer satisfaction. That kind of bottom-line approach makes everyone take notice of customer satisfaction. This requires systematic, regular measurement. It also requires on-going internal communication about the results of those measures. You'll need to overhaul your reward and recognition programs so that the emphasis on the customer is clearly reflected. Remember, behavior that gets rewarded gets repeated.

4) Communicate service standards. Build dialogue in the organization about acceptable levels of service. Use e-mail, staff



If you're really building dialogue that flows both ways, employees will be coming to you with ideas and solutions. The positive energy is contagious.

meetings, payroll stuffers and general conversation to keep reinforcing the high standards that you're setting in the organization. You'll have to repeat and vary the message so that it sinks in.

5) Strategize for service. You create a strategy and plan for every other important business initiative. Do it for customer satisfaction, too! Link customer satisfaction goals with other business imperatives. Be sure managers and supervisors are doing the same. Develop plans for building customer feedback into every aspect of the business. Then, do it.

So there you have it, the five keys to creating the Service Mindset. Now, how will you know when it's taking hold? You will

surely see a difference in the results on your measurements, (not your waistline, your customer satisfaction measurements). Customers will be complaining less and complimenting more. The same applies to employees. If you're really building dialogue that flows both ways, employees will be coming to you with ideas and solutions. The positive energy is contagious. Give it a try — the Service Mindset will give you a competitive advantage. 

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