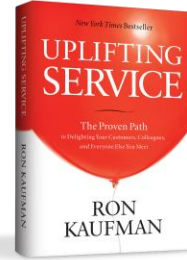


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P U B L I S H I N G

For Immediate Release

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The Power of *Please & Thank You*: Eight Ways to Be a Better Customer—and Get Better Service in Return

Customers wait on hold for an eternity. Complaints go unanswered. Smiles and a little extra help seem like too much to ask for these days. If you think customer service has taken a nosedive, you're right, says Ron Kaufman—but there's a lot you can do to change that. Read on for his tips for being a better customer.

New York, NY (March 2012)—You start your morning running late and sprint into your local coffee shop for your morning cup of joe. As you breathlessly place your order, you notice the barista doesn't smile at you. She utters a flat, "Here you go" as she hands you the steaming cup—*Why didn't she put the cardboard sleeve around it?* you wonder irritably—and moves on robotically to the next customer. As you bolt for the door, hands burning, you think *Well, she was unfriendly...when did customer service get so terrible?*

It's true, says Ron Kaufman: As the way our society does business has changed, customer service in general has fallen into crisis mode. But in the case of the rude barista, ask yourself this: Did you look her in the eye? Did you say "good morning"? Did you say "please" or "thank you"? In short, how much of the bad service experience do *you* have to own?

"Often, we get poor service because we're poor customers," says Kaufman, author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Uplifting Service: The Proven Path to Delighting Your Customers, Colleagues, and Everyone Else You Meet* (Evolve Publishing, 2012, ISBN: 978-09847625-5-2, \$14.95, www.UpliftingService.com). "It's a two-way street. When we're rude or impersonal to service providers, we get rude and impersonal treatment back. This creates low expectations on both sides, which affects our next service interactions."

In other words, bad customer behavior breeds bad customer service, which breeds bad customer behavior...and so on. To break the cycle and do your part to create uplifting service, be what Kaufman calls a “service champion”—someone who takes responsibility for uplifting other people’s experience, even when those other people are serving you.

“The crisis we’re facing has a lot to do with the way companies think about service,” says Kaufman. “They tend to silo it in one department rather than making great service a part of their overall culture, and that just doesn’t work in our global economy. Customers can’t do a lot about this, except take their business somewhere else. But what they *can* control is whether or not they contribute to the traffic of goodwill that flows equally between customers and service providers.”

In other words, he says, when you are an appreciative and considerate customer, service providers will often go the extra mile to serve you better. But if you rant and pound the table, people may serve you grudgingly, if at all.

Read on for proven steps you can take to be a better customer and enjoy receiving better service:

Be appreciative and polite. Remember, there is a fellow human being on the other end of your phone call, the receiving side of your email, or just across the counter. “Begin each interaction with a quick, ‘Hi. Thank you for helping me. I really appreciate it.’” advises Kaufman. “This takes about two seconds and can dramatically improve the mood of a service provider.”

Get your service provider’s name and use it. You can make this short and friendly by first offering your name and then asking, “Who am I speaking with, please?” Or if you are face-to-face, simply ask, “May I know your name?” “Once you know it, repeat it with a smile in your voice,” says Kaufman. “This creates a personal connection and makes it much harder for a service provider to treat you like an anonymous account holder or policy number.”

Be upbeat. Many service providers face customer after customer all day long. The routine can become tiresome. “When an energetic and smiling customer appears, that person often enjoys special care and treatment in return,” notes Kaufman. “What you send out does come back. Attitudes—positive and negative—really are contagious.”

Provide information just the way they want it. Many service providers need your data in a sequence that fits their forms, screens, and procedures. “Have all your information ready to go, but give it in the order they prefer,” advises Kaufman. “Saying, ‘I have all my information ready. Which would you like first?’ lets the provider know you are prepared and will be easy to work with. The time you take getting everything in order will save time in the service conversation, too.”

Confirm next actions. Repeat what your service provider promises to do. Confirm dates, times, amounts, responsibilities, and commitments. “This helps you move together through the service process, catching any misunderstanding and correcting it along the way,” says Kaufman. “Be sure you both understand what will happen next: what they will do, what you will do, and what both parties have agreed to going forward.”

When appropriate, commiserate. Sometimes service providers let their frustration show. A slow computer, a previous customer, high call volume, pressure from a manager, or some unwelcome personal event may have upset them. “When you hear an upset tone, be the one to soothe it,” suggests Kaufman. “You might say, ‘It sounds like things are tough right now. I really appreciate your help.’ This brief moment of empathy can be an oasis in their world.”

Show your appreciation. A sincere “thank you” is always appropriate. “If your service provider deserves more, give more,” says Kaufman. “A nicely written compliment can make a huge difference in someone else’s day, or even career. And who knows? The person you praise today may serve you again tomorrow.

“If you want to take showing your appreciation a step further, ask the service provider how they’d like to be recognized. For example, a realtor might prefer a testimonial for her Web site over having you send a complimentary note to her manager. A younger service provider might love it if you Tweet about them while an older generation service provider might find more value in a completed comment card. Show your appreciation in the way your service providers want to be appreciated; after all, they served you the way you wanted to be served!”

Spread the word. They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and in uplifting service that’s certainly true. The next time you receive uplifting service at your favorite coffee shop, at the hardware store, at the post office, wherever you are, ask the service provider if you can take their picture and then ask for their manager’s name and contact information. “Send the picture to the service provider’s manager with a message that reads, ‘This person’s service makes me admire and appreciate your organization.’” says Kaufman. “Expressing your satisfaction to their manager in this way will speak volumes to the service provider and will inspire not only the service you receive in the future, but the service they provide to all of their customers.”

“Keep in mind that while this advice will help you get better service from service providers, much of it can also be used to experience more joy and satisfaction from your relationships with your colleagues, friends, and other loved ones,” notes Kaufman. “What goes around really does come around.

“When you treat someone well, whether it’s your spouse, a vendor at work, or the person you meet at the coffee shop in the morning, he or she is more likely to step up and treat you well, too,” he adds. “We all live and work in a whole world of relationships based on service. As you uplift and upgrade the service you provide, the world will uplift you.”

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About the Author:

Ron Kaufman is a popular keynote speaker and is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Uplifting Service: The Proven Path to Delighting Your Customers, Colleagues, and Everyone Else You Meet* (Evolve Publishing, 2012, ISBN: 978-09847625-5-2, \$14.95, www.UpliftingService.com). He is the world's premiere thought leader, educator, and motivator for uplifting customer service and building service cultures in many of the world's largest and most respected organizations, including Singapore Airlines, Nokia Siemens Networks, Citibank, Microsoft, and Xerox. He is the founder of UP! Your Service, a global service education and management consultancy firm with offices in the United States and Singapore.

Ron is a columnist at *Bloomberg Businessweek* and the author of 14 other books on service, business, and inspiration. Ron has been featured in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, and *USA Today*.

With powerful insights from working with clients all over the world in every major industry for more than 20 years, Ron is an inspiration to leaders and managers in his high-content, high-energy speeches and impactful, interactive workshops. He is rated one of the world's "Top 25 Who's Hot" speakers by *Speaker* magazine. He is passionately committed to uplifting the spirit and practice of service worldwide.

About the Book:

Uplifting Service: The Proven Path to Delighting Your Customers, Colleagues, and Everyone Else You Meet (Evolve Publishing, 2012, ISBN: 978-09847625-5-2, \$14.95, www.UpliftingService.com) is available at bookstores nationwide and all major online booksellers.