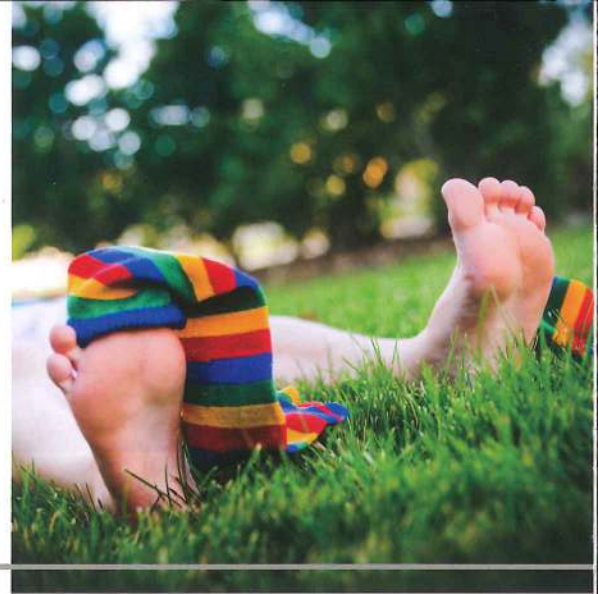


WRITING A KNOCK-YOUR- SOCKS-OFF SERVICE CULTURE PLAN

by John Tschohl



One of the major weaknesses of most organizations is the top management's lack of a service strategy. They fail to realize the strategic opportunity on how to use superior service as a vehicle to build market share and market dominance.

Sam Walton, the founder of Walmart, one of the most powerful retailers in the world, built a service role model. Sam built Walmart on Customer Service. They are now known for price only. The value of their company as a service leader has dropped dramatically. They have lost their focus on customer service. I always had trouble understanding why the new management for Walmart has eliminated the customer experience and has simply focused on price alone.

When organizations know what is important to their customers, and when they realize the shortcomings of their current service, then they are ready to write a Service Plan.

Along came Amazon. Jeff Bezos, Amazon's CEO, is officially the world's richest person as of late 2017. He built his company to become far and away the most trusted and well-liked brand, more so than its current smart home rivals Apple and Google. (This is according to a survey conducted by The Verge in partnership with consulting

firm Reticle Research.) No one can challenge them. Walmart is so far behind!

Consumers trust Amazon and freely give them personal details about what they purchase and data about their interests. The one thing that is claimed by most customers is: By far, Amazon has THE BEST customer service of any company they have ever dealt with. Customers have said that they only had to explain half the problem for Amazon to solve 200 percent of it.

Mr. Bezos has been responsible for creating more than 100,000 new full-time jobs over the past year for the American economy and is on schedule to create more with the new ventures he is working on. Jeff Bezos definitely has a working Service Plan.

Use these guidelines in making decisions about the features of your Service Plan:

1. Under-promise and over-deliver.

Set customer expectations at the right level. As defined by McGraw-Hill, "under-promise and over-deliver" is a service strategy in

which service providers strive for excellent customer service and satisfaction by doing more than they say they will for the customer or exceeding customer expectations. Deliver on your promises. Don't make a promise you can't keep, and keep the ones you make.

2. Only the customer knows what he or she wants.

- Make it easy to do business with your company.
- Customers want speed of service.
- Customers want to talk to a real live person.
- Return phone calls immediately.
- Always deliver on your promises.

3. Communicate, communicate, communicate.

Not all customers who buy the same service or product have the same service needs. Be like Amazon and have a "relentless" focus on customer service through reg-

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John Tschohl is a professional speaker, trainer, and consultant. He is the President and founder of Service Quality Institute (the global leader in customer service) with operations in over 40 countries. John is a self-made millionaire traveling and speaking more than 50 times each year. He is considered to be one of the foremost authorities on service strategy, success, empowerment and customer service in the world. John's monthly strategic newsletter is available online at no charge. He can also be reached on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

Writing a Knock-Your-Socks-Off Service Culture Plan

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CONSUMERS TRUST AMAZON AND FREELY GIVE THEM PERSONAL DETAILS ABOUT WHAT THEY PURCHASE AND DATA ABOUT THEIR INTERESTS. THE ONE THING THAT IS CLAIMED BY MOST CUSTOMERS IS: BY FAR, AMAZON HAS THE BEST CUSTOMER SERVICE OF ANY COMPANY THEY HAVE EVER DEALT WITH. CUSTOMERS HAVE SAID THAT THEY ONLY HAD TO EXPLAIN HALF THE PROBLEM FOR AMAZON TO SOLVE 200 PERCENT OF IT.

ular communication, and make sure you can deliver on their individual needs.

4. Continue to drive the plan strategically.

According to Jeff Bezos, "Focus on the things that don't change. Bezos built Amazon around things he knew would be stable over time, investing heavily in ensuring that Amazon would provide those things—and improve its delivery of those things. (Inc.com Nov. 6, 2017).

Management must drive a customer service program with continuous training for all employees with reinforcement by means of rewards for high-performing service employees, and with management standards that are regularly reinforced.

When management is committed to customer service by daily word and deed, the result is a well-established infrastructure that facilitates free communication inter-

change internally and that yields organizational "culture."

In my book "Achieving Excellence Through Customer Service," I state that long-term strategy must be developed and then implemented by hardheaded analysis, talented management of people, intense concentration and commitment—and serious spending.

As essential as strategy, objectives and support systems (infrastructure) are to a foundation for a Service Plan, the entire program probably would wilt like an un-watered lily without:

- (1) a corporate culture to sustain it; and
- (2) a chief executive who is just as committed to customer satisfaction as he is to stockholder satisfaction. Just look at Jeff Bezos! ■

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