

UNCOMMON SERVICE

How to Win by Putting Customers at the Core of Your Business

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MAIN IDEA

Despite the fact delivering great service is an imperative, it's not enough simply to demand that your employees deliver service excellence whenever and wherever they can and then hope for the best. Instead, you've got to design excellence into the very fabric of your organization. Or put another way, you've got to design your business model so average employees – not just your exceptional people – deliver excellent service as an everyday occurrence. Outstanding organizations create offerings, funding strategies, systems and cultures which set their people up to excel.

So how do you deliver uncommon service by design? There are four questions you have to answer:

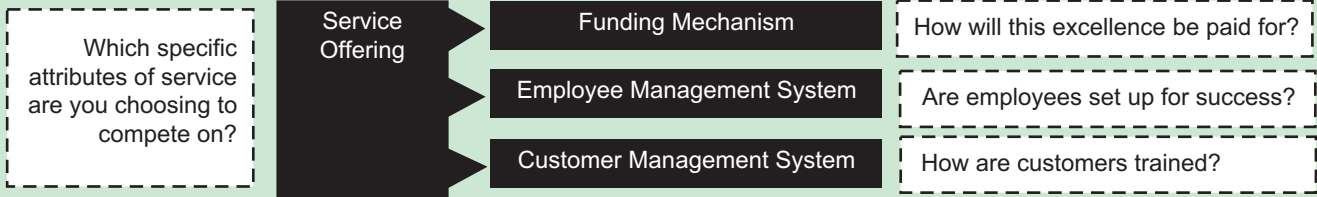


Figure out the answers to these four questions and put the building blocks in place and you have the cornerstones for delivering uncommon service on an ongoing basis using the people you have rather than forever relying on service heroes.

1. Service Offering – You can't be good at everything Page 2

As counterintuitive as it may sound, the first step in delivering uncommon service is to acknowledge you can't be good at everything. Somehow, somewhere, you've got to make trade-offs. To deliver standout service in one area, you've got to be willing to underperform somewhere else – on the dimensions which your customers value the least. You have to decide where your service offering will shine and where you will choose to be merely adequate.

2. Funding Mechanism – Someone has to pay for it. Page 3

To be sustainable, service excellence must be funded one way or another. This requires that you either find a palatable way to charge more, you reduce your costs in low-value dimensions, you make service enhancements which also reduce costs or you get customers to do some of the work for you. Choosing which of these four options will work for you is a matter of understanding your industry dynamics and the relationship you have with customers.

3. Employee Management System – It's not your employee's fault Page 4

Getting great people is helpful but you should never make retaining those people a make-or-break proposition for your firm. What's better is that you design your service model in such a way that average employees are set up to excel as a matter of routine. Set up a business model which enhances rather than undermines your people's capacity to serve.

4. Customer Management System – You must train your customers Page 5

If you can find ways to involve your customers in creating an exceptional service experience, they will love you for it. This does, however, present some special challenges you should be aware of. To contribute, customers will need training and tools. To help them use these, you will need to provide guidance and help – or in other words, management.

5. Bringing it all together – Build a culture which reinforces and unleashes Pages 6 - 8

To provide uncommon service, you'll need to unleash your service model in an organizational culture which reinforces and amplifies what you're trying to achieve. Once you get your business model right, create a culture which is aligned with your model. If customers are going to be involved in creating uncommon service, you'd better make sure you have no secrets you're hiding. Your culture amplifies how you think and act in this way:

Service Excellence = Design x Culture

