How to Make Best Use of This Book

Before beginning to read this book you should understand that it takes time to build a skill. Going by the wisdom of the famous saying ‘Rome wasn’t built in a day’, you should strategically read each chapter and then implement it in your workplace before proceeding to the next chapter. Successful implementation of an idea or a concept will help you to convert the knowledge gained into a skill. If you have any doubt during implementation, read the chapter again. Then sit back and assess your comfort level in terms of implementing the skill just understood.

Do not try to practise a new skill until you have perfected the previous one. Just like an audio tape, it may erase the skill learned earlier. It takes time, but a skill once learned remains with you forever and helps you to offer a delightful customer experience. This will ultimately help you to get an inner satisfaction which is much more than any reward or promotion.

Happy Reading

Vivek Mehrotra
Neelesh Kapoor
The customer has always been the focal point of any business. However, in today’s highly competitive business world, ‘customer service’ is the only differentiating factor. Effective and efficient customer service is the latest mantra for success. The better the service a customer receives, and more importantly perceives, better are the chances that the business will evolve and grow. It is a proven fact: a satisfied customer becomes the source of word-of-mouth advertising and also continues to remain a loyal customer.

To have an edge over competitors, organizations must provide the ultimate experience to each and every customer. Good-quality customer service helps organizations to create positive moments of truth in their interaction with customers leading to unparalleled advantage over competitors. Hence, it is necessary to reinforce the earlier positive experience of customers in future interactions with them. Also, it is important for you to understand that your role is more than just a job. It is an opportunity to connect with customers, and to brighten their day, to possibly make a difference in the way they shop.

In order to serve better, you first need to identify:

- the issues and concerns that restrict you from offering good customer service
- different ideas and better ways and means to deliver world-class customer service to every customer
- what you need to do in order to make customer service a priority
- how you can exceed customers’ expectations so that they remain loyal to your organization

This book will help readers decipher the mantra for success: ‘How to serve your customers with a smile’. The examples shared in this book may or may not be directly related to the type of product or service you offer
As in the predecessors to this book, *Why My Horse Doesn’t Drink: Learn to Motivate People around You* and *Why My Horse Doesn’t Listen: Learn to Communicate Effectively*, we reiterate that we firmly believe in what T.S. Eliot once said: ‘Bad poets borrow, however, good poets steal’. The famous CEO of GE Jack Welch coined another phrase for the same thought: ‘Steal shamelessly.’ The key message from both these geniuses remains the same: there is no harm in taking an idea from anywhere in the world, as long as one can further elaborate on it. In fact, it helps everyone, as many who might not have read the original great idea get to know of it while reading its reused version by someone else.

We are not like Abhimanyu who knew the art of breaking the *chakravyuha* even before he was born. While writing this book it was our earnest endeavour to adopt (steal) ideas and concepts related to customer service from all possible sources. What we did was to first absorb the idea, understand its importance and relationship to the relevant chapter, and then rework it to suit the topic. There are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of articles available on the topic ‘customer service’ on the web. Besides reading several such articles we took help from the many books written on this subject. We also discussed various issues with the concerned authorities in the field of customer service. Even while attending workshops or seminars conducted by great orators and management consultants, we noted down the points that helped us to relate the concepts to real-life situations. Unfortunately, sources were not always noted or available; hence, it is not possible for us to mention the names of everyone whose ideas we have used in our book. We make a heartfelt attempt to acknowledge their hidden contribution to the book. We would also like to convey a special thanks to our organizations Reliance Retail Ltd and Tata Teleservices Ltd. They helped us to understand the nuances of customer service while attending and conducting various
Customer service traces back to the old principle ‘service before self’, and what better way to do it than to have two practising customer service professionals transfer their experience into practical and easy-to-use concepts.

*Why My Horse Doesn’t Smile* will certainly be relevant to students, fresh entrants and industry professionals. In a lucid and free-flowing style, the book takes us along the various elements of customer service. The book is written in a simple and communicative style, replete with narrations and with lots of practical examples along the way. Extensive use of proverbs and anecdotes helps us reflect and also internalize the central theme.

The first two chapters prepare us for customer service as a career. The next few chapters cover the physical dimensions of customer service. It brings to mind a favourite saying on customer service – ‘The extra *smile* has no traffic jams.’ The book continues to delve upon the role of communication in customer service in the following chapters. The soft skills and capabilities required to perform the role are then elaborated upon in the following chapters. The narration continues course and sums up the challenges and grievances which a customer service professional needs to prepare himself for.

Customer service is a key discipline nurtured through training and close mentoring. It is certainly an area which seeks attention in an increasingly fast-paced environment that we work in.
Customer Service Representative: The Profile

It is well known that customers prefer to deal with companies that offer excellent customer service. A satisfied customer is the source of word-of-mouth advertising and continues to remain a loyal customer. Today, numerous options are available in order to offer world-class customer service. Companies are investing in sophisticated Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Electronic Customer Relationship Management (ECRM) software solutions, help desk applications and call centres to manage inbound customer inquiries. However, technology can never substitute human beings. Therefore, to have an edge over its competitors, organizations employ customer service representatives (CSRs). It is common knowledge that unlike software, human skills cannot be replicated by competitors. So, apart from paying handsome salaries, organizations invest in training programmes to help CSRs understand the importance of customer service, and improve the necessary skills. This is because organizations want each and every interaction that a customer has with them to strengthen the earlier positive experience. This makes the job of a CSR invaluable to an organization.

If you do build a great experience, customers tell each other about that. Word of mouth is very powerful.

Job Outlook

The career prospects for a CSR are excellent. Probably it is the only segment where vacancies exceed jobseekers. Apart from the booming economy, an important reason is that more and more companies have realized that customer service is crucial to their success. Excellent customer service can
‘Excellence is not a destination, it is a journey’, is an old saying. This is true in every sphere of life. At no stage of your career can you say, ‘I have learnt everything about customer care’, or ‘I am able to provide the best customer service to each and every customer I come across’. There will always be room for improvement as it is rightly said, ‘The biggest room on this earth is the room for the improvement’. Hence, everyday before starting your work it is important to ask yourself:

- How can I make each and every customer feel that they have got the best deal?
- How can I make my supervisor feel that I am the best customer service representative in his/her team?

There are angry, happy, friendly…all types of customers. But what is the one thing common to them? Money!
Expressing Yourself: Grooming

It is rightly said, ‘Personality is to a person what perfume is to a flower’. How would you feel if you organize a formal party and someone comes dressed shabbily in torn jeans and a casual t-shirt? I am certain, you and the other well-dressed guests would not appreciate this and may not be interested in talking to that individual.

Imagine a visit to a retail outlet where the customer service representative who is attending to you has not combed his hair properly, or has not shaved, or is wearing jeans and a sports shirt? Would you be comfortable in speaking to or spending time with such a person? Wouldn’t you doubt the person’s ability to solve your problem? I am sure other customers would not like it too. It is said, ‘The first impression is the last impression’. You do not get a second chance to create the first impression. As a CSR you are the face of your organization. You are the first person with whom customers interact. Hence, as a customer care executive, you must work hard at grooming yourself and creating the right impression. Your personality is reflected in the way you walk, talk, and interact with people. Your appearance creates the first impression. Looking good is an integral part of our personality. The way you dress creates an instant impression about who you are.

The finest clothing made is a person’s skin, but, of course, society demands something more than this.

– Mark Twain

The Art of Looking Good

To create a positive first impression you must learn the art of looking good. In other words you must know how to keep yourself well groomed. Grooming includes:

- Proper dress sense
Charles Bell, an anatomist rightly stated, ‘Smile – one of the most ambiguous human expressions involving 26 facial muscles – conveys a thousand different meanings’. It is your smile that helps you to achieve customer satisfaction or customer loyalty. It is priceless. It is said, ‘The most expensive dress in your wardrobe is a smile on your face.’ However, most of us behave like a miser while using this priceless gift given to us by God. Researches have confirmed that we need fewer muscles to bring a smile on our face than for crying. Swami Vivekanand affirmed, ‘The smile increases the self-immunity automatically’. Whenever we smile, it brings a charm to our personality, captivates one and all and is a sign of love and affection, forgiveness and fortitude.

Every little gesture, every little action and that little extra effort, goes a long way in building strong relationship.