

Achieving Business Excellence with John Spence

Customer Service: It Will Save Or Kill Your Business

09/22/2013 By John Spence



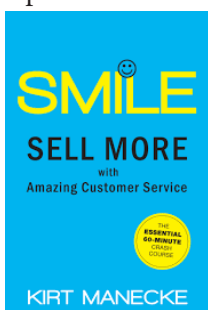
About a week ago I got an e-mail from an author I've never heard of, [Kirt Manecke](#), asking me if I would like a copy of his book so that I might do an honest review on Amazon (it is one of the best perks of my job that I get offers like this all the time – and who in the world am I to pass up free book?). A few days later a small 89-page book entitled: “[SMILE – Sell More with Amazing Customer Service](#)” showed up in my mailbox. On the cover it touted that it was, “*The Essential 60-minute Crash Course*,” so I shoved it in my briefcase to read on the plane during my two week speaking tour across Canada. Well, it didn't even last 60 minutes; I read it while on the tarmac waiting to take off from my hometown of Gainesville – 45 minutes tops.

To be frank, the book was a little fundamental, extolling such basic customer service practices as: smile, answer the phone with a smile, say please and thank you, make good eye contact, be enthusiastic, dress for success, keep professional, don't make the customer wait... stuff that every single customer-facing employee on the face of the earth should know and do for every customer. However, in the last few days since I left for this trip I have wished to God that someone had given this book to every single service provider I have dealt with. I have been met by rude attendants, uncaring employees, unprofessional staff, long waits, and generally crappy service at nearly every place I've been in the last week. If only someone had made them sit down and read this little book – twice or three times – I feel they probably would've done a much better job and I might actually be going back to some of those establishments and giving them my business again!

Let me make this as Awesomely Simple as I can: for the vast majority of businesses today the ONLY competitive differentiator you have is the level of service you deliver to your customers. People can copy your product, your price, your location, your hours, your decor, your uniforms, your marketing and advertising... they can copy just about everything you offer... except the quality of the service your front-line employees deliver and the relationships they build with your customers. For many of you reading this blog, **Amazing Customer Service – or lack thereof** – will be the sole determinant as to whether you are successful in your business or not. Please take a moment to read that last sentence again and think about it very carefully!

As your Trusted Business Adviser here's what I'm going to tell you: make sure that you spend a significant amount of time, energy, effort and resources training and retraining your customer-facing people to deliver absolutely world-class service –PERIOD. I highly recommend this book as a perfect “handbook” that every one of your service folks should read, but don't stop there... show them videos, send them links to blogs, send them to training classes, reward them when they do a great job and quickly point out when they're not delivering the service-level expectations you have set.

Remember: You can only hold people accountable to deliver the level of service you have trained them to deliver, and the service expectations you have set for them, so use this book, use other books, use every resource available to set exceedingly high service expectations and then hold your people fully accountable for delivering them flawlessly for every single customer, every single day.



To me, this is one of the most powerful strategies for creating a highly successful business, one that everyone knows, but few businesses do – which means it is a great opportunity for you to create a powerful and valuable differentiator in the marketplace.

***Quick gut-check: on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being world-class, what would you honestly score your business right now on the overall level of service you deliver to your customers? Even more important, what would your customers score you??