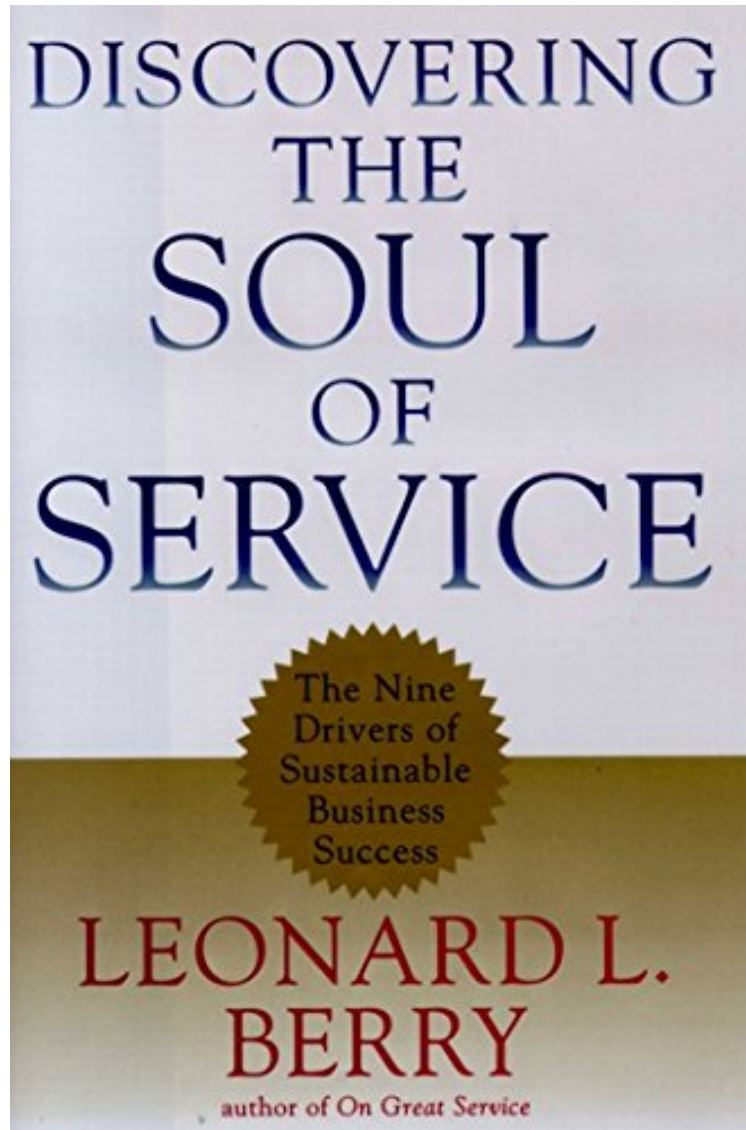


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Discovering the Soul of Service: The Nine Drivers of Sustainable Business Success

Leonard L. Berry

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Leonard L. Berry : Discovering the Soul of Service: The Nine Drivers of Sustainable Business Success before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Discovering the Soul of Service: The Nine Drivers of Sustainable Business Success:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Sustaining High Levels of Service Performance!By O. HalabiehLeonard summarizes the main premise of this book as: "My purpose in this book is to identify, describe, and illustrate the underlying drivers of sustainable success in service businesses. Creating a successful service operation is

unquestionably a difficult task. However, sustaining success can be even more difficult. Services are performances, and the challenge of sustaining the performers' energy, commitment, skills, and knowledge day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year--especially as the organization grows and becomes more complex--is daunting. The greater the involvement of people in creating value for customers, the greater the challenge. This is a book on the lessons 14 outstanding service companies teach about sustainable success. And the lessons they teach are clear indeed. Although the sample companies differ on the outside - the nature, size, and structure of their businesses--to a remarkable degree they are the same on the inside, sharing the drivers of their ongoing success."Below are key excerpts from the book that I found particularly insightful:1- "Three specific challenges in sustaining success are accentuated in enterprises that create value for customers primarily through services. The more labor-intensive the services, the greater the challenges of: operating effectively while growing rapidly, operating effectively when competing on price, retaining the initial entrepreneurial spirit of the younger, smaller company."2- "A set of core values permeates the high-performance service companies studied for this book. These values are remarkably consistent among the companies. The values of excellence, innovation, joy, teamwork, respect, integrity, and social profit underlie the ongoing success of the sample firms. Unchanging, these core ideals, principles, and philosophies define the very soul of these dynamic companies."3- "Values-driven leaders continually convey by their words and actions the meaning of success. They not only make palpable the dream (where we are going, why we are going there), they define the indicators of progress (how we know we are getting there). A key factor in sustaining success is combining a compelling dream that inspires commitment with a success definition that is reinforcing rather than contradicting."4- "A smaller group of companies has been able to sustain high levels of service performance and continue to improve. What they hold in common is a strong set of values that tap into employees' own core values, and a strong set of leaders who teach model, and cultivate the values. Values-driven leadership sustains the high discretionary efforts of human beings to individually and collaboratively achieve and gives root to the eight other success drivers set; discussed in the remainder of this book."5- "Brilliant strategy is insufficient to drive sustained success. The total product that customers experience from a company is its strategy executed. A poorly executed strategy openly invites competitors to imitate the strategy, execute better, and take away the business. Excellent service companies not only have focused strategies, but they also focus on execution. They continually raise their standards of service delivery and constantly strive for perceived superiority over competitors."6- "Control of destiny is largely attitudinal. If sufficiently determined, companies need not relinquish control of their future to other parties. If they do not allow the lure of growth to impede operational effectiveness, if they stay totally focused on creating superior value for customers, if they continually strive to get better than they are-- companies can control their future."7- "Trust-based customer relationships honor these friendship rules. Excellent service companies may not have a personal relationship with their customers, but they are effective in personalizing service transactions and counteracting the anonymity that customers so often experience with companies. Relationship companies look for ways to please their customers, to do something extra or special for them, just as friends would do for one another. As in friendships, relationship companies do not take advantage of customers. They respect, honor, and trust them. They value the relationship and invest time, effort, and money in strengthening it."8- "Customers can teach companies how they want to be served. Relationship companies that capture and use this knowledge make it more difficult for customers to leave the relationship."9- "The initial days and weeks of employment offer a wide-open window for learning about the company's values, traditions, history, strategy, customers, competitors, policies, and procedures. Like actors on a stage, service providers need to know the play; to perform their role well, they need to know where their part fits in the overall performance."10- "How can service companies that depend on energized, resourceful, committed people to deliver value to customers reap the benefits of smallness when no longer small? The answer lies in a blend of values-driven leadership, innovative structure, customer- and employee-focused information technology, and ownership attitudes."11- "The sample companies are strategic in their generosity. They not only are extraordinarily generous, they are effectively generous. Rather than giving for the sake of giving, they invest with a plan in mind, with 1 long-term goal. Rather than spreading their resources thinly in numerous initiatives, they concentrate their resources to have a powerful impact and make a meaningful difference. Rather than investing time, energy, and money outside the mainstream of their business, they invest in concert with the business's overall purpose and strategy. Thus, generous acts not only benefit society, they benefit the company too, seating a stronger company and enabling more generous acts in the future."12- "Values-Driven Leadership: Humane organizational values sustain human excellence. Stable leadership stabilizes values. Values-driven leadership propels all other success sustainers...Strategic Focus: Constancy of purpose leads customer value creation. Strategic focus inspires innovation...Executional Excellence: A well-executed strategy diminishes opportunity for competitors. Attracting great people is the first rule of execution...Control of Destiny: Pursue success on your own terms...Trust-Based Relationships: Sustaining service success requires trust...Investment in Employee Success: Investing in the performer contributes to the performance...Acting Small: In services, acting small is big. High touch and high tech are mutually supportive...Brand Cultivation: Branding the company means performing the service...Generosity: Generosity drives service success."9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. How and why humane core values sustain human

service energy

By Robert Morris

I recently re-read this book (1999) and Berry's previously published *On Great Service* (1996), curious to know how well they have held up since they were first published. My conclusion? Rock-solid. In fact, both books are even more relevant - and more valuable - now than they were when Leonard Berry wrote them. That is amazing...and commendable.

With regard to the title of this book, consider this brief excerpt from the concluding chapter: "Great service companies have a soul that underlies their strategies and day-to-day operations. The company's soul - its value system - is its foundational center, its inner core." Berry fully understands how difficult it is to achieve and then sustain a great service company, noting that such companies are "humane communities that humanely serve customers and the broader communities in which they live." Decision-makers, especially in companies which have problems attracting and then retaining the talented, skilled, and principled people needed, would be well-advised to consider very carefully the meaning and significance of Berry's concluding observation. The same can be said for companies which have problems keeping valued customers and don't know why.

As Berry explains, his purpose in this book is to identify, describe, and illustrate the underlying drivers of sustainable success in service businesses. Creating a successful service operation is unquestionably a difficult task...The greater involvement of people in creating value for customers, the greater the challenge." He examines 14 outstanding service companies which include The Container Store, the Charles Schwab Corporation, Chick-fil-A, Enterprise Rent-a-Car, the St. Paul Saints AAA baseball franchise, and USAA. He suggests what lessons can be learned from them. Although quite different in terms of their size and nature, they demonstrate the same nine drivers of success, to each of which Berry devotes a separate chapter.

One of his key points is that humane core values sustain human service energy as organizations grow and mature. When the "product" is a human performance, values-driven leadership is at the center of sustainable success. He focuses on often-neglected or under-appreciated basics and explains how the superior service to which the exemplary companies are wholly committed creates for each of them a significant, perhaps decisive competitive advantage. The core strategies seems obvious: focus on serving a specific market need rather than on marketing a specific product for that need, focus on serving underserved market needs, and focus on serving the chosen markets with executional excellence. When stressing the importance of "trust-based" relationships, Berry includes everyone involved in the given enterprise. Hence the importance of what he characterizes as "humane organizational values" and he correctly insists that such values depend on values-driven leadership which must permeate the organization, at all levels and in all areas of operation. Stable leadership stabilizes values and propels all other success sustainers.

Of special interest to me is what he has to say about Cora Griffith in Chapter 8, "Investment in Employee Success." She is a long-time waitress for the Orchard Cafe in Appleton, Wisconsin. According to Berry, she implements each day the nine rules of success: she treats each customer like family, she is an alert listener, she strives to anticipate her customers' wants, she is attentive to significant details ("simple things make the difference"), she "works smart" by constantly scanning all the tables, maintains an on-going effort to improve her skills while learning new ones, and is contented in her work. "Cora is a team player, an all for one, one for all employee." She takes great pride in her work. And credits her employers, Dick and John Bergstrom, for convincing her how important it is to take good care of each customer and who gave her the "freedom" to do it. How many service providers have you encountered lately who measure up to Cora Griffith's standards? The sad fact is that most service providers could but, for whatever reasons, don't.

It is to Berry's great credit that he recognizes the importance - and significance -- of the Cora Griffiths in this society at a time when most books which discuss superior customer service focus almost entirely on companies such as Nordstrom, Ritz-Carlton, and Southwest Airlines. They are indeed exemplary organizations but two points need to be made: Each has its own significant number of Cora Griffiths, and, the same high level of customer service can be provided by all other organizations, even by a hotel restaurant in a small midwestern town.

With all due respect to Mies van der Rohe, God may not be in the details but "the soul of service" certainly is.

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. True, sustainable recipe for successful Customer Service

By Alfredo Ramirez

It is very difficult for me to work with "interviews and case study" based books since they are almost invariably full of "brilliant" quotes and "success and beyond-duty" stories that, to say the least, sound too good as to be of a sustainable nature in real world. This book is based on experiences and what seems very solid research and, for sure, is not free of this type of passages; and yet, it is one of the most useful and often-referenced books that I own and work with. So, if you will yourself through it, you'll find one of the best and most down-to-earth books on Customer Service. The author identifies nine drivers that can make any organization successful, all of them emphasizing the human nature of the relationship with customers (customer-centered). It is truly a recipe for success, more easily applicable to on-going enterprises rather than to start-ups. From this book the reader can produce very useful check-lists to diagnose the company and its strategic practices regarding their service approach. It can also be used as a guiding document to move a company to a truly customer-awareness territory and, most important, to keep it there. Of special relevance is the author's brilliant exposition in the final chapter "Lessons from World-Class Service Companies", where the reader obtains a rarely seen synopsis of all the good things that excellent companies do "to sustain their excellence". If nothing else, this chapter by itself justifies buying this book and incorporating it to your professional library.

This wise and inspiring book by Leonard Berry, moves far beyond his pioneering work in services marketing and service quality to explain how great service companies meet their toughest challenge: sustaining long-term success. In a world where customers regard flawless products as a given, service is the key differentiator between competitors in any field. From Berry's exacting study of fourteen mature, highly successful, labor-intensive companies comes an astonishing revelation: the single most important factor in building a lasting service business is not a matter of savvy business practice, but of humane values. In all fourteen award-winning companies -- Bergstrom Hotels, The Charles Schwab Corporation, Chick-fil-A, The Container Store, Custom Research Inc., Dana Commercial Credit, Dial-A-Mattress, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Midwest Express Airlines, Miller SQA, Special Expeditions, St. Paul Saints, USAA, and Ukrop's Super Markets -- values-driven leadership connects with strategic focus, executional excellence, control of destiny, trust-based relationships, generosity, investment in employee success, acting small, and brand cultivation to drive customer satisfaction, innovation, and growth. Dedicating a chapter to each of these nine drivers, this book is the most far-reaching and insightful vision ever presented of the principles and step-by-step actions that continuously bring success to life in a company. Berry's comprehensive model reveals the soul that underlies the strategies and day-to-day operations of great service companies, guiding the thousands of daily decisions of individual employees. Clear, compelling, pathbreaking, *Discovering the Soul of Service* is essential reading for managers everywhere.

Leonard L. Berry examines some of America's great service companies and finds "nine drivers of excellence" that are behind them all. *Discovering the Soul of Service* looks at 14 diverse businesses, including the St. Paul Saints minor-league baseball team, Dial-A-Mattress, Midwest Express Airlines, and two of the world's fastest-growing service companies--Charles Schwab and Enterprise Rent-A-Car. "The lessons they teach are clear indeed," writes Berry, a marketing professor and director of the Center for Retailing Studies at Texas A M University. "Although the companies differ on the outside--the nature, size and structure of their businesses--to a remarkable degree they are the same on the inside, sharing the drivers of their ongoing success." The "nine drivers" that Berry uncovers are the following: Leading with Values, Strategic Focus, Executional Excellence, Control of Destiny, Trust-Based Relationships, Investment in Employee Success, Acting Small, Brand Cultivation, and Generosity. Berry, whose previous books include *On Great Service: A Framework for Action* and *Delivering Quality Service*, writes that the basis of a successful service organization is value-driven leadership and "building a humane community that humanely serves customers and the broader community in which they live." *Discovering the Soul of Service* is inspiring--and potentially profitable--reading for anyone in business today. --Dan Ring Stanley Marcus Chairman Emeritus, Neiman Marcus

Leonard Berry holds the black belt in customer service. From the Inside Flap

In a world where customers regard flawless products as a given, service is the key differentiator between competitors in any field. This wise and inspiring book by Leonard Berry, our leading service expert, moves far beyond his pioneering work in services marketing and service quality to explain how great service companies meet their toughest challenge: sustaining long-term success. From Berry's exacting study of fourteen mature, highly successful, labor-intensive companies comes an astonishing revelation: the single most important factor in building a lasting service business is not a matter of savvy business practice, but of humane values. In all fourteen award-winning companies -- Bergstrom Hotels, The Charles Schwab Corporation, Chick-fil-A, The Container Store, Custom Research Inc., Dana Commercial Credit, Dial-A-Mattress, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Midwest Express Airlines, Miller SQA, Special Expeditions, St. Paul Saints, USAA, and Ukrop's Super Markets -- values-driven leadership connects with strategic focus, executional excellence, control of destiny, trust-based relationships, generosity, investment in employee success, acting small, and brand cultivation to drive customer satisfaction, innovation, and growth. Dedicating a chapter to each of these nine drivers, this book is the most far-reaching and insightful vision ever presented of the principles and step-by-step actions that continuously bring success to life in a company. Berry's comprehensive model reveals the soul that underlies the strategies and day-to-day operations of great service companies, guiding the thousands of daily decisions of individual employees. Clear, compelling, pathbreaking, *Discovering the Soul of Service* is essential reading for managers everywhere.