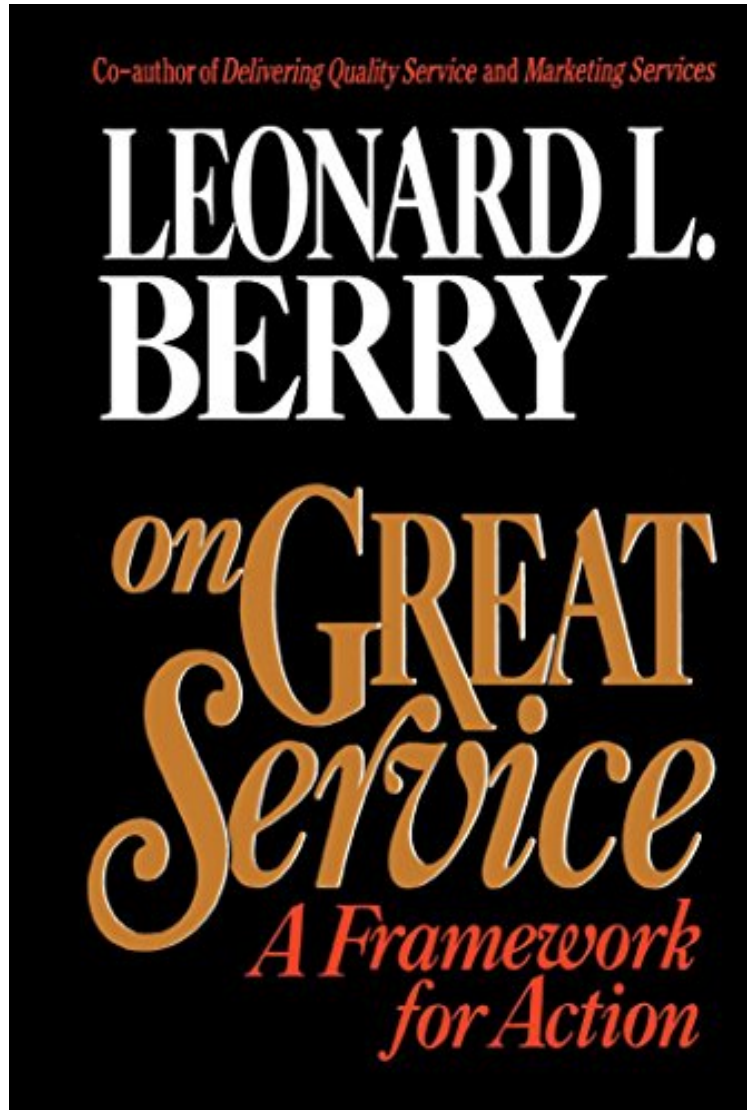


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## On Great Service: A Framework for Action

*Leonard L. Berry*

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**Leonard L. Berry : On Great Service: A Framework for Action** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised On Great Service: A Framework for Action:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Insights and counsel even more valuable now than ever before By Robert Morris I recently re-read this book (1996) and Berry's subsequently published *Discovering the Soul of Service* (1999), 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. In this volume, he presents what he characterizes as "a framework for action" to provide and then sustain great service. The word "sustain" is critically important. Those organizations whose people

always provide great service (e.g. Nordstrom, Ritz-Carlton, The Container Store) consider perfection break-even. Berry carefully organizes his material within 13 chapters. In the first, he introduces the aforementioned "framework for action" (Exhibit 1-1 on page 5); in the last, he shares his thoughts about "the artistry of great service." As he convincingly explains, great service is both an art and a science...and is the result of several factors which include a total commitment, enterprise-wide, to specific principles. "The purpose of this book is to teach the lessons of service quality [begin italics] implementation [end italics]. The book focuses exclusively on [begin italics] how [end italics] to improve service quality." With regard to the aforementioned principles, Berry observes that customers are most likely to do business with companies that "are reliable, excellent in interactive service, prepared to cover if the service fails, and eminently fair. These principles are the essence of service excellence." And they always will be. I especially appreciate Berry's focus on real-world situations in which these principles are clearly demonstrated. Specifically, in a variety of companies which include Longo Toyota and Lexus, Mary Kay Cosmetics, Hard Rock Cafe, Lakeland Regional Medical Center, Bank One Texas Trust Division, and Harold's. These exemplary organizations illustrate how to deliver great service, one customer at a time, day after day, month after month. Of course, that is not easy to do. "Nothing in this book suggests that the excellent service journey is easy. It is not. But it is immensely rewarding, not just financially, but spiritually. Excellence nourishes the soul." In the final chapter, Berry explains what "the artistry of great service," not only to customers and service-providers but indeed to entire organizations and even industries. With the passion of an evangelist but with the precision of a surgeon, he reviews all of the essential ingredients of great service. They include leadership enterprise-wide, a fundamental belief in human potential, having a reason for being...and doing, informed decision-making, collaborative, and an inspiration to excel. Are these "old fashioned values"? Of course. But keep in mind that Fortune magazine's annual list of the most profitable companies includes the names of many which are also on its annual list of the most highly admired companies. Year after year. That is not a coincidence. Berry's thinking is so clear and his insights are so sound that this book (although written more than ten years ago) will continue to guide and inform any organization's efforts to complete its "journey" from good to great service, whatever the size and nature of that organization may be. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. *Clientes, Clientes, Clientes* By Adonay Navarro Once again, Customers ALWAYS have the last word. Even it is an old book, it does not lose actuality. Good 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. *Great Book on Service* By John Marcus This is as good as it gets on service quality. Leonard Berry is great!

Improving service quality has finally become a top priority of management today, yet according to service quality expert Leonard Berry only a handful of companies have managed to determine exactly what to improve and how to improve it. For the past two years, Berry studied dozens of companies of all sizes renowned for their capacity to deliver what they promise and more. From his on-site observation of the strategies and practices of such companies as Mary Kay Cosmetics, Tattered Cover Book Store, Longo Toyota Lexus, Lakeland Regional Medical Center, and Hard Rock Cafe, Berry has constructed a dynamic new framework for improving service. This framework provides a roadmap for implementation found nowhere else in the service quality literature. In every chapter Berry draws on his twelve years of research in service quality to explain each part of the framework in detail. He provides rich insights and inspiring examples of great service -- including numerous examples unique to this book as well as the classic success stories of USAA, Taco Bell, and many more. Berry shows that a company must (1) develop service leadership skills and values -- a concept substantially different from developing general leadership; (2) build a service quality information system; and (3) create a comprehensive service strategy based on the four principles of great service: reliability, surprise, recovery, and fairness. He demonstrates how these four principles, when adopted by the leadership and infused into the systems of a service company, are the building blocks of the framework and form the anchor for implementation. Berry shows how the "artistry" of great service can be systematically created from this foundation through a company's organizational structure, technology, and often underutilized human resources assets. He challenges service managers to set their service quality aspirations higher, and his innovative, practical ideas will help them achieve those higher standards. Linking service excellence to value creation, Berry provides solid financial reasons for the necessity of great service. Here, at last, is the book for which managers in every service industry have waited: Leonard Berry's "operating manual" for turning plans for great service into action.

Carl Sewell President, Sewell Motor Company The definitive guidebook to great customer service. About the Author Leonard Berry holds the JCPenney Chair of Retailing Studies at Texas A&M University, where he is also Professor of Marketing. A former national president of the American Marketing Association, he is coauthor of *Delivering Quality Service* (Free Press, 1990) and *Marketing Services* (Free Press, 1991). Dr. Berry and his colleagues are creators of the service quality gaps model used throughout the world. Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Chapter 1: A FRAMEWORK FOR GREAT SERVICE Manager, West Point Market July 14, 1994 1711 West Market Street Akron, OH 44313 Dear Sir or Madam: I feel compelled to write to tell you how much I enjoyed my trip to the West Point Market last weekend, and particularly how good the service was at the market. From time to time, I drive all the way from Columbus to shop at your market because I have found no place like it in the State. What

a delight it is to be able to find everything I could possibly need for even the most exotic recipes in one store! Last weekend, in addition to the wonderful food, I found that the service was particularly good. In the produce department, a young woman got a special container to pack my fresh figs in, so that they would not get smashed on the trip back. Also while I was shopping for my produce, I asked one of the employees what lychee nuts were. She not only explained where they come from and how they are served, but she sliced one open and offered me a sample. Then I ordered my lunch at the deli counter, and found when it arrived that I could not carry my tray very well because I was holding my baby son. An employee who was apparently on her lunch break gave up her place in line right behind me to carry my tray to the table. The young men at the checkout counter also noticed that I had my arms full of baby, and packed all of my groceries in bags with handles. One of them then helped me out to my car and loaded the groceries inside. Each of the employees who helped me out did so without my asking, and seemed happy to be of assistance to me. It is so rare to find such service at any store these days. Please know how much I enjoy and appreciate the top-notch service and the delightful shopping experience that West Point Market offers. I intend to shop there for many years to come. Very truly yours, Ronda Shamansky

West Point Market delivers great service. Doing business in Akron, Ohio, since 1936, it is a gem of a retail store that sells specialty foods of exceptionally high quality. What makes the store so special, however, is that the service is of exceptionally high quality, too. Ronda Shamansky's letter conveys the attachment many customers feel toward this store. Customers love West Point Market, principally because West Point Market loves its customers. West Point Market's prices are not low. It doesn't matter. Without low prices, it still competes on value. Many customers, including Mrs. Shamansky, come from out of town just to shop at the store. Infused throughout this book are practical lessons from West Point Market and many other companies that deliver great service to their customers. Among the companies readers will meet in this book are: \* Longo Toyota and Lexus, one of the most successful automobile dealerships in the world \* Mary Kay Cosmetics, a magical company that has produced more female millionaires than any other company in the world \* Roberts Express, a trucking company, and De Mar, a plumbing, heating, air conditioning and refrigeration company, that operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and thrive on helping customers with emergencies solve their problems \* Tattered Cover Book Store, one of America's largest independent bookstores that is remarkable in its passion for books and customers whom they help find that one elusive title \* Hard Rock Cafe, a restaurant and merchandiser that attracted hordes of customers on its first day and still does more than 20 years later \* Lakeland Regional Medical Center, a pioneer in introducing patient-focused health care in America \* Bank One Texas Trust Division, which made service quality the centerpiece of its strategy, and grew to more than \$4 billion in trust assets in its first three years of operation \* Harold's, an upscale clothing store in business since 1950 that grows more than 10 percent each year despite infrequent sale events and a location long past its prime

Great service is rare, but it is not an impossible dream. American companies in every industry are delivering great service and profiting handsomely from their excellence. The companies just mentioned and numerous others discussed in this book are role model companies that have implemented great service and are highly successful because of it. The purpose of this book is to teach the lessons of service quality implementation. The book focuses exclusively on how to improve service quality. The book's research and writing required one and one-half years. Site visits and interviews at each of the companies just mentioned composed part of the research. Considerable secondary research and follow-ups with many other firms also were undertaken. My service quality research collaboration since 1983 with colleagues A. Parasuraman and Valarie Zeithaml, a research stream sponsored by the Marketing Science Institute, provided the vital backdrop for this work. The inspiration to write this book was borne of frustration over the many companies that are investing large sums of money to improve service but still are struggling mightily to succeed. Even more frustrating are the companies that are not even trying to improve service, companies whose managements deem service quality a low priority or a fruitless pursuit. Everyone loses when service is poor. Customers lose. Employees lose. Senior managers lose. Suppliers lose. Shareholders lose. Communities lose. The country loses. Poor service has no redeeming virtue, nor does mediocre service for that matter. Service excellence is more profitable, more fun, and more conducive to a better future. Delivering great service, one customer at a time, day after day, month after month, is difficult. Nothing in this book suggests that the excellent service journey is easy. It is not. But it is immensely rewarding, not just financially, but spiritually. Excellence nourishes the soul. Why "great service?" What is wrong with "good service?" Good service isn't good enough to insure differentiation from competitors, to build solid customer relationships, to compete on value without competing on price, to inspire employees to want to become even better at their work and at their lives, to deliver an unmistakable financial dividend. Most companies need to set their service aspirations higher. This does not mean throwing money breathlessly at service improvement. It does not mean dozens or hundreds of task forces and projects followed by an overnight conversion to the service quality religion. Rather, it means an integrated, holistic improvement journey that never ends, a journey anchored in a mission of high purpose, rock-solid values, and a fundamental belief in the capacity of human beings to rise to excellence. The seeds of great service are sown in the collective commitment to daily improvement. In a 1993 presentation at a meeting of services marketing professors, ATT executive Merrill Tutton stated that it was high time to "get excellent service off of the viewgraphs and into the market place." I agree. The "talking-about-quality" era is past. This is the "improving-quality" era. It is time to replace the struggling with genuine

progress. It is time for action. This is a book of ideas on how to pursue great service. The ideas are presented within a framework of essential steps, a road map for implementation. The framework, Exhibit 1-1, is a picture of the book. Each part of the framework is a chapter in the book. Chapter 2 emphasizes the leadership qualities that inspire service achievement in organizations. It discusses ways to nurture service leadership skills and values throughout the firm. Chapter 3 stresses the need for systematic listening to the voice of the customer. Conducting a study is insufficient. Companies need to build a service quality information system. Research approaches that can be used in such a system are discussed. Listening to the customer provides the basis for establishing an overall service strategy, the subject of Chapter 4. The service strategy is a company's "reason for being"; it provides the focus and inspiration that is characteristic of all great service companies. Because quality service underpins value creation for customers, it always must be emphasized in the strategy. Chapter 5 discusses four principles of service quality -- reliability, pleasant surprise, recovery, and fairness -- integral to the strategy. The nature and importance of these principles are described and suggestions for implementing them are presented. Chapters 6 through 12 discuss implementing the service strategy through structure, technology, and people. Chapter 6 presents structural forms that companies should consider in organizing for service improvement. Special emphasis is on service delivery teams. Chapter 7 examines the need for a technology strategy to implement the service strategy. Guidelines for technology investments and technology's service-improvement roles are discussed. Chapter 8 discusses the pivotal issues of whom to hire and how to attract the best applicants. When the product is a performance as in service businesses, competing for talent helps a company compete for customers. Chapter 9 stresses preparing service providers to perform through ongoing skill and knowledge development. Job-relevant learning builds competence and confidence -- essentials for great service. Chapter 10 addresses the issue of empowerment but probably in a manner dissimilar to many readers' accustomed understanding of the subject. Ways to create feelings of ownership within the organization are emphasized. Chapter 11 conveys the theme that quality is a team sport. Methods for nurturing collaborative power are presented. Chapter 12 discusses the roles of performance measurement and rewards in building an achievement culture. The integration of measures and rewards into a broader human resources approach that fits the service strategy is stressed. Companies compete with value in the 1990s. Value is not price. Value equals benefits received for burdens endured. Price is but one burden to endure. Rudeness, incompetence, inconvenience, carelessness, inflexibility, unfairness, lack of concern or caring -- these are a price that many customers refuse to pay. High quality directly affects the value of a service by increasing its benefits and decreasing its burdens. How to deliver great service need not be a mystery. We have a road map. It is time for action. Copyright copy; 1995 by Leonard L. Berry