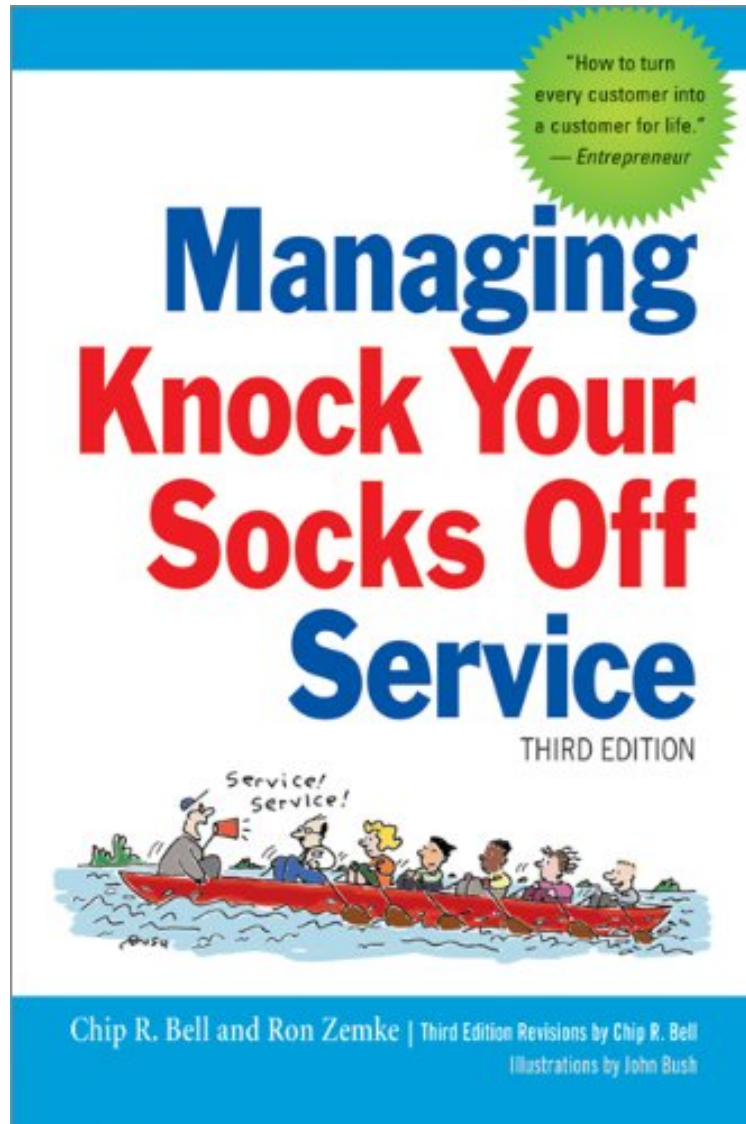


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Managing Knock Your Socks Off Service (Knock Your Socks Off Series)

Chip R. Bell, Ron Zemke

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In our increasingly connected world, customer service can make or break a business. Companies that excel keep customers coming back—and those who don't soon discover that word spreads fast. The difference is in how managers train, coach, and support frontline employees. Extensively revised with today's empowered, web-savvy consumer in mind, *Managing Knock Your Socks Off Service* shows managers and supervisors how to: **Find and retain service-oriented people**; **Understand customer needs, expectations and desires**; **Build a service vision**; **Design a user-friendly service delivery process**; **Involve and inspire employees**; **Recognize and reward good performance**. The third edition features new chapters on: **learning from lost customers**; **inciting passion and incentivizing service**; **fostering trust**; and **delivering great customer experiences online**. In short, everything readers need to ensure their frontline employees become their company's biggest asset.

From the Back Cover *Through Managing Knock Your Socks off Service*, authors Chip Bell and Ron Zemke have for years been teaching leaders how to create environments that not only satisfy the customer, but keep those customers coming back time and time again. — Stew Leonard, Jr., CEO, Stew Leonard's Dairy Stores *If you're a business leader and you haven't read this book, you likely won't be a leader for long! I read the book (couldn't really offer an opinion unless I did) and it's a great read!* — Bryce Conrad, President and Chief Executive Officer/ *Preacute;sident et chef de la direction, Hydro Ottawa Holding, Inc.* *A practical, comprehensive, fast-paced and wise book from two of the pioneering writers on service quality.* — Leonard Berry, Ph.D., bestselling author of *Management Lessons from Mayo Clinic* and *Discovering the Soul of Service* With so many shopping options, if today's customers aren't treated well they won't stick around. But in *Managing Knock Your Socks Off Service*, authors Chip R. Bell and Ron Zemke draw on insights from top companies, including Zappos, Marriott, and Costco to show managers and leaders how to boost their bottom line by skillfully managing the design and delivery of great service. They'll get the tools and techniques for creating a motivated service team, starting with the basics: hiring, training, and empowering high-potential employees—and building a bond of trust and respect with service staff. Featuring the witty cartoons of John Bush, this revamped third edition includes vital new information and proven techniques for: **Delivering service excellence in the online world**; **Learning from lost customers**; **Understanding customers' expectations and perceptions**; **Building and maintaining a service vision and customer-centric delivery processes**; **And more** This is a book no manager will want to miss. It will not only help train, empower, and support the service superstars on which fast-growing companies are built, but also provides solid guidance for creating an outstanding service experience that will transform satisfied customers into delighted, loyal advocates and evangelists for your organization. Chip R. Bell is a popular keynote speaker and the author of nineteen books, including *Wired and Dangerous*, and is the senior partner and founder of The Chip Bell Group, a consulting firm specializing in customer loyalty. His work has been featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Fortune*, *Fast Company*, and other major media. Ron Zemke was the founder of Performance Research Associates and a world-renowned leader of the service quality revolution. He was author or coauthor of thousands of articles and more than 40 books, including the best-selling *Delivering Knock Your Socks Off Service*. About the Author CHIP R. BELL is the founder of The Chip Bell Group and author of many popular books including *Wired and Dangerous*. His work has been featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Fortune*, *USA Today*, *Fast Company*, *Business Week* and other major media. RON ZEMKE was founder of Performance Research Associates and considered one of the leaders of the service quality revolution. He was coauthor of the bestselling *Knock Your Socks Off Service* series. Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. 1 **Recruit Creatively and Hire Carefully** Development can help great people be even better—but if I had a dollar to spend, I'd spend 70 cents getting the right person in the door. — Paul Russell, Director of Leadership and Development, Google On Interstate 4 southwest of Orlando, Florida, a striking cream and tan building fronts the freeway. A big—very big—sign defines it in one eloquently simple word: casting. It's the Walt Disney World personnel office. That one word says a lot about not just Disney but all companies that are focused on becoming known for *Knock Your Socks Off Service*. They don't "hire" people for "jobs" in an organization; they "cast" people for a "role" in a service performance. In service-focused companies, customer service jobs are thought of less like factory work and much more like theater. At a play, the audience files in, the curtain goes up, the actors make their entrances and speak their lines, and—if each and every cast member, not to mention the writer, director, stagehands, costumers, makeup artists, and lighting technicians, has prepared themselves and the theater well—the audience enjoys the show and tells others about it. Then again, the whole production can be a magnificent flop if just one person fails to do a job on which everyone else depends. In today's service-driven business world, you are more director than boss, more choreographer than administrator. Your frontline people are the actors, and your customers are the audience for whom they must perform.

Everyone else is support crew, charged with making sure the theater is right, the sets ready, and the actors are primed and prepared. You have to prepare your cast to know their cues, hit their marks, deliver their lines, and improvise when another cast member or someone in the audience disrupts the carefully plotted flow of the performance. And, of course, once the curtain goes up, all you can do is watch and whisper from the wings. You're not allowed on stage. You'd just get in the way!

Balancing Efficiency and Effectiveness

Given all the currents flowing under and around the hiring process today, the last thing you want to do is rush into a decision that can make or break how the critics—and your customers—rate the quality of your service performances. Once the casting decision has been made, your entire production's reviews are going to depend on the person you've chosen for the role. It's as easy to be taken in by an attractive external facade as by a well-proportioned reacute;smeacute;. Neither may be truly indicative of whether someone can play the part the way you need it to be played. Yes, the show must go on. But if you've been building a good, versatile cast, you should have understudies ready to fill in while you look for new additions to your service repertory crew. Despite the pressures for output or scarcity of talent, don't rush the process. Invest the time and effort needed to get the right person. When you do, you'll find you're in good company. In our research of companies with exemplary service practices, we found painstaking thoroughness built into every step of their selection process for service employees. Rather than focusing only on metrics like cost-per-hire or time-to-fill open jobs, these organizations were just as concerned with finding the right fit—in both an applicant's technical skills as well as hard-wired attributes like personality and values—for customer contact jobs. Customer-centric companies understand that success in service roles is as much about having the right temperament or the desire and emotional fortitude to deal with customers day in and out, as it is about product knowledge or mastering new technologies. While plenty of job prospects are blessed with good social skills, not all have a high level of tolerance for contact—the ability to engage in many successive short bursts of interaction with customers without becoming overstressed, robotic, or unempathetic.

Casting a Role, Not Filling a Job

Filling out your service cast with people who can star in their roles is the key to success. But casting your customer service play is far more involved and difficult than hiring "somebody" or "anybody" to sit in a chair and answer a phone or stand at a counter and take orders. Consider the following three key differences between merely filling a slot and finding someone capable of playing a part.

1. Great service performers must be able to create a relationship with the audience. From the customer's standpoint, every performance is "lived" and hence unique. It earns the best reviews when it appears genuine, perhaps even spontaneous. And it should never be rigidly scripted—certainly not canned. **Implication:** Customer service cast members must have good person-to-person skills; their speaking, listening, and interacting styles should seem natural and friendly and appropriate to the situation—neither stiff and formal nor overly familiar. As Jim von Maur, president of Iowa-based Von Maur department stores, says of his own company's hiring philosophy, "My Dad had a theory: We can train them to sell. We can't train them to be nice—that was their parents' job."
2. Great service performers must be able to handle pressure. There are many kinds of pressure—pressure of the Recruit Creatively and Hire Carefully 5 clock, pressure from customers, pressure from other players in the service cast, and pressure from the desire to do a good job for both customer and company even though the two may be in conflict. **Implication:** Members of the customer service cast must be good at handling their own emotions, be calm under fire, and not be susceptible to "catching the stress virus" from upset customers. At the same time, they have to acknowledge and support their customers' upsets and problems and demonstrate a desire to help resolve the situation in the best way possible.
3. Great service performers must be able to learn new scripts. They have to be flexible enough to adjust to changes in the cast and conditions surrounding them, make changes in their own performance as conditions warrant, and still seem natural and knowledgeable. **Implication:** Customer service cast members need to be lifelong learners—curious enough to learn from the environment, comfortable enough to be constantly looking for new ways to enhance their performance, and confident enough to indulge the natural curiosity to ask, "Why is that?" and poke around the organization to learn how things really work. Those who are comfortable with change and handle it well can be the most helpful to customers and need minimal hand holding from their managers.