

## **Beyond Service Excellence to Service Innovation**

Customer innovation is the constant self-improvement of product, promotion, process and people as well as the rigorous focus on executive to deliver value to customers in an ever-changing environment.

Let me unpack this for us.

### **Constant Self-Improvement**

Organizations cannot afford to stagnate. Strategies must keep on modifying. Plans need revising as new factors are thrown in. Fresh ideas need incubating and germinating.

Management guru Peter Drucker puts it most succinctly. The modern organization must embrace this four-change mindset.

1. A systematic abandonment of the obsolescent, obsolete, the unsuccessful and the already attained
2. A systematic and continual improvement
3. A systematic exploitation of successes
4. A systematic innovation

This constant striving for improvement must be self-driven. It is an inner passion and drive for service innovation. In one sense, we must forget about the competition. We improve and innovate because we want to. Not because the competition demands it but because it is what we stand for. This must be the mindset of service innovation leaders.

### **Rigorous focus on implementation**

Constant push for implementation must be mantra. How many strategies and plans have failed due to failure in execution. As one CEO laments, “We have too many plans but too few successful executions.” Making it happen involves leadership’s vision and drive, manager’s constant motivating and monitoring as well as staff ownership and cooperation.

### **Product, Promotion, Process, and People**

Service excellence involves four key aspects of a business, namely: product, promotion, process and people.

Product shelf-life is getting shorter. Today’s customers constantly seek something new and fresh. Their antenna is always on the look out for more innovative products. Unless there is a constant tap on our product offerings, people will get jaded. This constant strives for product improvement involves “creative destruction”.

Promotion has to do with the market segmentalization, marketing and selling. Great products don’t guarantee results. Many have died because of failure in promotions. They spend too much time developing the products and too little time in marketing and selling them.

Efficient process helps make things happen. Very often, service providers forget the back room is as important as the front office.

According to Christopher Bartlett, staff must be seen as “Volunteer Investors”. Volunteers because they have a choice. They decide who their employers are, they decide whether they will pour their energy in the company and they decide how they will serve their customers. Hence, it is imperative to

keep our volunteer investors motivated and engaged. Only then, can they implement the plans and provide quality service internally and externally.

### **Giving Value to Customers**

Value proposition is the new name of the game. What emotional linkage do they have with your brand? What benefits do customers get in buying your products and services? Why should customers buy your stuff vis-à-vis your competitors? In short, what value are you giving to your customers?

### **Changing Environment**

Without a doubt, the business environment today is in a constant flux of change. Unpredictability is the name of the game. No one can be certain of the future. Ask CEOs today and they will tell you one of their greatest fears is the fear of the uncertain future. When one senior politician was asked how he felt about the future, he replied, "I don't know."

Service innovation is not an option. It must be a key driver in business excellence.

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