



TACT: The Roots of Legendary Service Training Series

Article by Jesse L. Dunn

If you are taking the time to read this article, I am humbled. I congratulate you for being that unusual person who:

1. Looks for ways to grow, improve and enlarge your personal capacity to lead a life of significance in your business, in your family, in your professional and personal relationships and in your community; and
2. Takes ACTION by investing time and effort and resources to really make it happen.

You know, very few in this world ever make the effort to raise themselves up. Why do you think that is? For whatever reasons, they fail to get a vision, to cast light on that vision, and invest to achieve that vision. In the final analysis, it boils down to those who work deliberately and intelligently to improve and grow and those who may wish for better days, but don't have the inclination or take the initiative to do the real work necessary.

Those in the latter group often end up disappointed and give up, blown along like a tumbleweed by the winds of dusty default rather than living life and running their business by design.

Those in the first group get disappointed, too, but instead of defeat they keep going, learning the lessons, persisting stubbornly, avoiding excuses until problems become solutions, barriers yield to breakthroughs, "I can't" turns into "I can," and defeats transform into victories.

You see, they learn and understand that it's about three differentiating sets: Mindset, Skillset and Action set. We help you in powerful, direct ways to build up and energize all three sets during this course, as it unfolds in this series.

So, congratulations for being here and once again, WELCOME!

Quick quiz: Fill in the blank, one word. *When it comes to my business life, my career, my family life and my personal life, success is synonymous with _____.*

What came to your mind? Lots of answers could go in that blank, couldn't they?

In business, maybe you could put product superiority or best in market pricing or best in sales or customer networking.

In relationships you might think of loyalty, or love, or trust.

Personal life you might think of words like integrity or contentment or spiritual enlightenment or physical well-being.

Whatever came first to your mind in responding to the query, *success is synonymous with _____*, your answer is correct and you should pay serious attention to what came immediately to you. What you thought of first is likely very important in your current stage of growth and development.

Yet, to possibly stimulate a new view, may I suggest that there is one word that you could fill in the blank that works across all life's dimensions, business, family and personal. That word is **service. Success is synonymous with service.**

In this course, we'll explain what we mean by service as 1) a comprehensive philosophy for life that you can happily guide your lifetime by, and 2) as a tangible business asset that attracts and keeps customers, enhances your personal value and substantially grows your bottom line. In fact, I have taught these principles to thousands of agents in several dozens of companies resulting in, to date, \$51 million added to bottom line (and I'll show how this can be pure net to you, since as a percentage the investment is ridiculously low to achieve these improvements), 33 marriages effectuated, reports of families strengthened, testimonials of personal development and at least one life literally saved.

Success is synonymous with service.

At this roots-level view, we will come to realize that more than some obligatory platitude, success really is synonymous with service.

Now don't take offense at this next statement, please. But in the business world in general, service sucks. Bad service is the rule. In fact, we become so accustomed to it as customers that we simply accept it until it becomes so terrible and so painful that we finally notice it and, in a minority of incidents, try to bring it up to someone who should know better and do something about it.

Actually, legendary service is rare enough that it sometimes gets attention in media outlets—even though it should be the usual, everyday occurrence! But mostly our businesses seem to go out of their way to make sure the customer has a lousy experience. Consider these recent examples:

[United Airlines—PAINFUL!] On April 9, 2017 just before 5:20 p.m., O'Hare International Airport police forcibly removed passenger David Dao from United Express Flight 3411 after he refused to depart the airplane upon the demand of management. Dao screamed as officers pulled him out of his seat, and his face hit an armrest during the struggle. Officers then dragged him, apparently unconscious, by his arms on his back along the aircraft aisle past rows of onlooking passengers. He was later seen with blood around his mouth. Prior to the confrontation, managers offered compensation to passengers to vacate their seats to make room for four airline employees who needed to travel to the destination, Louisville International Airport, but none of the fliers accepted. Four passengers were then selected for involuntary removal from the flight. Three other passengers complied, and Dao was selected to be fourth. Republic Airline operated the scheduled passenger flight on behalf of United Express, a United Airlines regional branch.

Video of the incident recorded by passengers went viral on social media, resulting in outrage over the violent incident. Politicians expressed concern and called for official investigation. U.S. President Donald Trump criticized United Airlines, calling treatment of their customer "horrible".

The next morning United CEO Oscar Munoz issued a statement which appeared to justify the removal of the unwilling passenger, referring to it as "re-accommodating the customers". Munoz

also sent an email to United staff commending the crew's actions for following established procedures, and referring to Dao as "disruptive" and "belligerent."

Munoz and United were sharply criticized for their initial statements. Two days after the incident Munoz issued an additional statement, apologizing and promising that this type of incident would never happen again on United aircraft. He said, "No one should ever be mistreated this way." Munoz was denied a previously planned promotion to chairman as a result of the incident. Dao reached an "amicable" settlement with United on April 27, the terms of which were not announced. OUCH!! Painful.

By the way, the immediate impact of the horrible customer service incident on UA's value showed nearly a 4% drop in stock price by mid-day following reports of the episode, sparking outrage globally. That's a drop of almost 1 billion dollars US! While trading closed a little better by the end of the day (investors swooping in to take advantage of the sharp decline), the self-inflicted pain for the company caused by a poorly handled situation was enormous! OUCH!!

Wal-Mart *Depressing!*

> Pct. "poor" ratings: 14.7% according to Zogby survey results reported by 24/7 Wall Street (earning the retail giant a place on the Customer Service Hall of Shame for last year)

Despite recent efforts to improve employee morale and public perception, Wal-Mart finds itself yet again among the companies with the worst customer service. The share of respondents who ranked their experience with the company as poor actually increased from 13.8% last year to 14.7% this year.

Survey respondents cite knowledgeable and friendly staff as the most important aspects of good customer service. A low customer service ranking therefore often reflects poor training and discontent among company employees — and retail giant Wal-Mart, the largest private sector employer in the country, is infamous for treating its workers poorly, at least in the perception of those reporting in the mass media to the public. The company has been accused of gender and age discrimination, for example. While the veracity of the claims may be debated by certain facts, in the eye of many, the perception stubbornly persists and that's a service problem.

The retail giant has attempted to improve its service. In the face of lagging sales in recent years, Wal-Mart aimed to improve company morale through several policy adjustments. Last year company executives relaxed the dress code and, most importantly, increased hourly wages for more than 100,000 of the company's U.S. workers. What? That's getting to the root of the problem? Changing the dress code?

OUCH!! Apathy inducing! Depressing!

Verizon Communications *FRUSTRATING!*

> Pct. "poor" ratings: 15.5%

With approximately 135 million subscribers, Verizon is the largest wireless carrier in the country. It's the big dog and monopolizes parts of the country. It's not surprising, therefore, that customer service in the company's core business is suffering. Verizon — along with the nation's other three largest mobile carriers — ranks as having some of the worst customer service out there.

My wife and I live in a mountainous, somewhat remote area of the United States and our choice of cell phone providers is rather limited. Basically, by default, we have Verizon. Recently, my wife experienced some mysterious phenomena with her mobile phone. Voice messages she left for

her contacts enigmatically escaped into the graveyard of dropped signal and weak transmission. Text messages were not received by either party. In some cases, the phone and its apps simply froze.

She contacted the manufacturer, thinking the problem was the device, and twice was sent a brand-new unit. Still no luck. So, she contacted Verizon. Six times. She was transferred from customer service agent to customer service agent, each time having to repeat her problem, each time requiring up to three hours to describe the problems and the result of the different remedies suggested by different Verizon agents.

OUCH!! Frustrating. Indeed, frustrating would be a very generous description of her experience.

Small, local businesses get into the customer shame game, too. I'm certain you could come up with all kinds of examples where you as the customer were put out by your local grocer or automobile repair shop or landlord or Internet retailer or post office or government agency or bank and on and on. I once hired a bookkeeper to maintain the financial records of some of our business ventures. She presented a strong resume, good references, promises of superior service. Things started off great. She was very personable, optimistic. After one month, the reports looked okay—but I noticed some slight inaccuracies from missed accounts payable entries. Those corrections were made. The next month the report was over one week late, again with some inaccuracies. And so it went until the quarterly report was not completed at all. She stopped returning phone calls and ignored email messages. The one thing she had going for her—her “personable, optimistic” piece—soured. I couldn't get any information returned from her. Obviously and unfortunately, she had to go.

OUCH!! Disappointment. OUCH!! Anger.

It's not just particular companies that make things tough on us as customers to do business. Sometimes entire industries or business models create customer pain. Consider, if you will, the *tyranny of the Password*. We all desire and appreciate secure transactions on the Internet. We all want confidence that what we do there remains private. Huge service problem. Companies large and small are hacked and passwords don't always provide the barrier or security we think we are getting. But the problem for me is that I keep getting login errors because I've entered an invalid password. Invalid password? I set it up to begin with! So, I have to click a “forgot password” link (you know, the one that makes you feel like a complete incompetent because you forgot this one out of the 27, 383 passwords you've set up in your life!) Then it says I'll get an email with further instructions. When that arrives (and sometimes it doesn't actually arrive!), I have another link to click on which directs me to enter a *new* password. It has rules about it, too, like it must be at least 8 characters long, a capital letter, a number, a special symbol. You see, it's not about helping me remember what I supposedly forgot. I have to do it all over again. OUCH! Aggravating! And then when I visit my account for that vendor again in a month or six months or a year, I often have to go through the whole mess again, because I'm a complete incompetent, you'll recall). OUCH!! Double aggravation!!

And don't even get me started on TSA humiliation tactics at the airport, which can test the patience of the most saintly among us. OUCH! OUCH!

That's the common experience of man, woman and child in trudging through the impediments to legendary service. PAIN. DEPRESSION. FRUSTRATION. DISAPPOINTMENT. ANGER. AGGRAVATION.

OUCH!

Now, it's not that most vendors are especially *trying* to give really poor service that damages their customers. It's not like they wake up every morning, fiendishly rub their bony fingers together and deviously plot ways to torture the very hand that feeds them. No. I suspect they truly recognize that hurting their customers hurts their profitability. And even if only motivated by pure self-interest, businesses will spend (and often waste) thousands and even millions of dollars on training. But it tends to be training that does little more than touch on the superficial leaves and branches of service, almost never identifying and strengthening the ROOTS. To me, it's sort of like putting whipped cream on a pile of manure and passing it off as a delightful dessert, you know, a "customer special." It's the old "lipstick on a pig" proverb, same old tune, different setting.

So, how is NVC's training any different? What will we achieve together in this course? We focus on true fundamentals, the stuff that actually transforms the learning at a roots level into a tangible business asset driving real results. It's a unique system not taught anywhere else. And that can make the difference between a thriving enterprise or a barely surviving one. Let's jump in, and think together about some things for a moment.

Legends. Heroes. All-Stars. Champions. Winners. Whether we are just beginning our climb up the success mountain or find ourselves at the top where we have panoramic vistas of all we purview, who does not dream of experiencing a little more of victory in our lives? Who does not want to realize the worthwhile visions, goals and ideals driving us in our daily work? Who among us does not want to taste the sweet joy and peace of bringing to pass something excellent and significant and noble in our lives?

The fundamental premise of the T.A.C.T.[™] program is that success is synonymous with service. What is success? You must decide that for yourself. Define it however you want, in whatever aspect of life that you want, or however broad or limited in scope you want. Success is whatever you want that is worthy of you. No matter how you define it, we come back to this basic postulate: ***Success is synonymous with service.***

Our lives are richest and most complete when we strive to make the world better and happier. There is profound truth in the paradox of finding ourselves by losing our lives in the service of others.

How can that be? Well, the paradox is true because in service we grow. We enlarge. We become bigger human beings.

In our work and business, we grow financially.

In our families, we grow healthy, mature, whole, productive relationships.

In our personal lives we grow and enlarge our talents, resources and capacities to contribute, to become a person of significance within our respective spheres.

And as we grow through service, we become better and bigger people. You see, that's how we find ourselves by losing ourselves. There is simply so much more of us to find!

How is that important to you? ***Your rewards in life will always be in proportion to the service you render.*** That's a big one, so let me repeat it. ***Your rewards in life will always be in proportion to the service you render.*** Whatever you seek in terms of rewards in your life, you must first earn it by service to others.

If you are not progressively having the visions and realizing the goals that define your success, examine the extent and quality of your service.

If your business is stale, not in sync with the exciting rhythm of our era, review its unique and differentiating contribution to your customers.

If you are not satisfied with your income or place in life, evaluate how to increase your rewards by expanding your service in the world.

Now I'm not criticizing you. You simply haven't been taught. You just don't get this stuff in your schooling. And honestly your on-the-job training is incomplete when it comes to the fundamentals that make the difference. Surprisingly little attention has been spent by the education or business establishments training to the fundamental roots of successful happy lives, including serving others.

This is not to say there have not been large investments in trying to solve the problems. There have. Companies spend millions of dollars each year on training programs of every kind, on consultants to teach and instill "quality, continuous improvement" processes, and on market research to figure out what customers really want.

Does it work? Well, the answer is a resounding... sometimes, sort of. It works on a selective basis for certain specific problems. It works by helping front line staff contend with difficulties temporarily, for a time, until the changing climate of the business world requires a new set of rules. It's kind of like an American football coach who teaches the team how to stop the running attack. They work day after day at it during practice, recruit the best personnel to overpower the other team's blocking tactics, learn to fill the gaps, and so on. They get pretty good at stuffing the progress of the opponent, temporarily at least—until the other team stops running the ball and starts to pass the ball and march down the field against a coach and team that did not have all the fundamentals in place.

So, have these programs or initiatives permanently improved the quality of service or changed lives in harmony with the fundamental law that returns are in proportion to the service given?

On that score, the report card generally shows a failing grade. Survey after survey show that, in the business world, for example, only between 10 to 20 % of customers identify the service they receive as legendary or even more than merely satisfactory. Between 10% and 20%! Hardly the stuff from which legends are made.

*A recent article in the *Harvard Business Review* reported that Bain & Company's survey of the customers of 362 companies showed that only 8% of them described their experience as "superior." On the other hand, 80% of the companies surveyed believed that the experience they provided was, indeed, superior.*

Why do 80% to 90% of all businesses in the United States apparently fail to understand that a greater yield at harvest time requires sowing and cultivating the seeds of greater service? Why haven't the "customer service" or "customer experience" or "customer satisfaction" programs been able to really deliver the bang for the buck when they seem to have so much potential and hold so much promise?

The answer is found in two very large problems. First, most of the programs deal with techniques or process rather than substance. For business managers, the focus is on customer efficiency when it should be on quality or effectiveness. That's how they are trained because that

trickles in the short view to certain financial metrics. We are trained to smile, to be courteous, to have good manners, to be skillful in turning around hostile conversations on the telephone, to greet properly, to exude the correct service image, to ask the right questions, to follow the right slogans, to dress the right way, and on and on, ad infinitum.

Or, we are trained to deftly shift the burden to increasingly complex computerized, digitized, roboticized technology. That passes for service these days, too. Complex algorithms are devised that approximate actual human service. Some of these are pretty clever—until you actually need a human to understand and solve something for you. Then—OUCH! It's like some companies are lured by the seductive song of technology Sirens and which, like the ancient sailors of Greek mythology, end up shipwrecked on the shores of poor or mediocre service.

In short, **we are trained how to give the *appearance* of service but rarely to develop the *soul* of service.** We are taught the *how* without ever learning the far more important *why*. The result is a bunch of external procedures and techniques that are so much bureaucratic burden because front line staff never actually internalizes them.

The second problem has to do with how we have traditionally approached the change process in general and expanding real service in particular. Every strategy, formula, program or list of procedures asserts that for any business to improve the quality of its service there has to be focused directives from top management.

This makes sense. Corporate culture emerges from vision and mission and goals and performance measures. Top management has the responsibility to articulate and communicate these ideals throughout the entire organization. In other words, program implementation has traditionally relied on a “top down” approach. And the traditional approach may work just fine for certain kinds of change programs. And we appreciate that unwavering commitment to the culture of service has to permeate the soul at every level, top-down and bottom-up.

Yet when it comes to permanent improvement in the quality of service, however, the traditional top-down approach is precisely 180° out of phase. Very few senior organization leaders have actually experienced the service dimensions of their companies. The kind of service that legends are made from is not best instilled by imposition from those often farthest removed from constant contact with the customer. ***Genuine progress requires an approach that recognizes the most important starting point is with the front-line people who provide the direct service every single hour of every single day.*** It demands a focus on the talent and resources of those operating at the point of actual service delivery. It must be front-line driven; it cannot be imposed from the “top-down.”

The T.A.C.T.TM System addresses the two major problems of the past. First, it is designed to teach the *roots of legendary service*, principles fundamental to internalized improvement. It identifies the two basic elements of excellent service: **performance competence** and **personal attention**. It teaches what each of the components of these basic elements are, why they are part of delivering legendary service and how to make them a part of your daily activity.

Second, T.A.C.T.TM System is designed as a training program intended for actual “rubber meets the road” front-line implementation. The evaluations and measurements, the plans and strategies for improvement come from those most responsible for carrying them out on a daily basis. Those in traditional management roles are taught how to encourage and foster this kind of grassroots revolution by leading as servants themselves.

I warn you that this is work. If you want a “feel good” course of affirmations, pats on the back, plug-and-play platitudes, this is not it. What you are about to embark on is something that takes thought and effort and commitment to transforming an elevated understanding of customer service delivery into a tangible business and tangible life asset.

The forms and charts and exercises will help each participant to evaluate his or her own service contribution. The program assists in assessing where you are, analyzing where you might want to go, identifying and planning steps for progress, and in implementing and testing your service plan. The principles are shown to cross every one of life’s dimensions such as home, business, and personal life. The program can be used to help improve service in any dimension. The focus of this training course will be presented in context of the business world. Yet, again, I emphasize the very same principles we apply to a business context are the same principles that will enlarge and enrich your home life and personal life as well. Life is a network of interconnected pathways, not a set of neatly segmented, compartmentalized boxes.

The only real hope of success you or I have is in helping others in some way, in improving their lives by some measure, large or small. This training handbook is a framework for success through service. It challenges each to break away from the traditions that have confined us in the past, to forge independent paths of ingenuity in winning the hearts and minds of the people we serve. It calls us to lift people to higher levels and to make our little part of the world as much better as we possibly can. It dares us to give the kind of service that legends are made from.

I expect to hear great things about you.

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