

Leading and Making a Difference

by John Tschohl, President and Founder, Service Quality Institute – January, 2020

“The greatest leader is not necessarily the one who does the greatest things.

He is the one that gets the people to do the greatest things.”--Ronald Reagan

Being a leader in customer service (working hard to serve others), generating excitement, innovation, and a focus on continuous improvement, like I teach, creates a culture that’s hard to build otherwise.

Oracle co-founder Larry Ellison

Born in Brooklyn, New York, to a single mother, Ellison was raised by his aunt and uncle in Chicago. After his aunt died, Ellison dropped out of college and moved to California to work odd jobs for the next eight years. He founded software development company Oracle in 1977, which is now one of the largest technology companies in the world.

Leonardo Del Vecchio

Del Vecchio, one of five children, was eventually sent to an orphanage because his widowed mother couldn’t care for him. He would later work in a factory making molds of auto parts and eyeglass frames.

At the age of 23, Del Vecchio opened his own molding shop, which expanded to become the world’s largest maker of sunglasses and prescription eyewear, including the brands Ray-Ban and Oakley

John Paul DeJoria

Before the age of 10, DeJoria, a first-generation American, sold Christmas cards and newspapers to help support his family. He was eventually sent to live in a foster home and even spent some time in a gang before joining the military.

With a \$700 dollar loan, DeJoria created John Paul Mitchell Systems and sold the shampoo door-to-door while living in his car. He later started Patron Tequila, and now invests in other industries.

Starbuck’s Howard Schultz

In an interview with British tabloid Mirror, Schultz says: “Growing up in a housing project I always felt like I was living on the other side of the tracks. I wanted to climb over that fence and achieve something beyond what people were saying was possible”.

Schultz ended up winning a football scholarship to the University of Northern Michigan and went to work for Xerox after graduation. He then took over a coffee shop called Starbucks, which at the time had only 60 shops. Schultz became the company’s CEO in 1987 and grew the coffee chain to more than 16,000 outlets worldwide.

These four gentlemen went through personal and financial difficulties but kept on looking forward to accomplishing their goals and making a difference. Their financial status is in the billions for each of them but, their goal was to “make a difference” in people’s lives. They did what Marc Cuban did...they worked harder.

According to Marc Cuban, “It’s not about money or connections. ***It’s the willingness to out-work and outlearn everyone.***”

Hard work is the great equalizer, Making a meaningful difference in other people’s lives re-quires significant effort. Hard work can *always* be your difference. Because how hard you work is the one thing you can always control

In my book, *Achieving Excellence Through Customer Service*, I expound on the value of hard work/service. Great leaders know that service is what your customer says it is. Here are five questions to ask yourself about your customer’s perception of your company.

- 1. What business are we in?** Usually you conclude that you are in the business of providing customers with a variety of “services”. Make a list. Many firms still do not realize that they are in the service business
- 2. Do we have customer needs and wants at heart?** Identify all market segments all customer groups. It is important to determine needs and wants of all customers.
- 3. Are we listening?** Set up the systems for listening to customers. The way to find out what they want is to make it easy for them to communicate with you.
- 4. Do we communicate?** Be proactive and try to eliminate problems before they happen. Having a strategy based on delight or ‘wow’ is not likely to pay as well as a strategy that eliminates disappointment first.
- 5. Are we using Speed.** Are you eliminating friction so it is easy for customer to do business with you and want to come back.

A true competitive advantage goes to leaders of companies that get it right

-- John Tschohl



John Tschohl is a professional speaker, trainer, and consultant. He is the President and founder of Service Quality Institute (the global leader in customer service) with operations in over 40 countries. John is a self-made millionaire traveling and speaking more than 50 times each year. He is considered to be one of the foremost authorities on service strategy, success, empowerment and customer service in the world. John’s monthly strategic newsletter is available online at no charge. He can also be reached on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.