

WRITING A “RELENTLESS” SERVICE CULTURE PLAN

A major weakness of most organizations is top management's lack of a service strategy – the leaders fail to understand the powerful strategic opportunity of using superior service to build market share and market dominance. (It's why I wrote my book, *Relentless*.)

Sam Walton, one of the world's most powerful retailers, built Walmart on Customer Service and Price. Now that Walmart is known for price only, the company's value has dropped as it has lost its focus on customer service, starting when Lee Scott took over as CEO in January 2000. When Scott left in January 2009, the stock value was less than when he arrived. I've had trouble understanding why Walmart's management have focused on price alone for the last 13 years.

The \$1000 I invested in Walmart and eight other service leaders in May 2003 is only worth \$3,499 as of October 2022. On the other hand, my \$1000 investment in Amazon is now worth \$73,478, Costco \$19,648, and Home Depot \$14,858. I think it's worth noting that all four of those companies are committed to providing Relentless Customer Service.

Very few executives understand the financial impact of providing Relentless Customer Service, year after year. COVID gave most of the world's firms an opportunity to abandon Customer Service – which proved a fatal mistake.

Meanwhile, along came Amazon. Jeff Bezos, Amazon's founder and Executive Chair, is one of the world's richest persons with a net worth of \$138.6 billion as of October 2022. Bezos built his company to become the most trusted, well-liked brand. Today, no one can challenge Amazon – Walmart is so far behind!

Bezos is responsible for creating more than 352,000 new full-time jobs since 2020 for the American economy, and he's on schedule to create even more.

When you're making decisions about your service culture plan, I recommend that you keep the following in mind:

- 1. Under-promise and over-deliver.** Don't make promises you can't keep.
- 2. Only the customer knows what he or she wants.**
 - a. Make it easy to do business with your company.
 - b. Customers want speed of service.
 - c. Customers want to talk to a live person.
 - d. Return phone calls immediately.
 - e. Always deliver on your promises.
- 3. Communicate.** Be like Amazon – have a relentless focus on customer service through regular communication.
- 4. Continue to drive the plan strategically.** Listen to Jeff Bezos: “Focus on the things that don't change.” Bezos built Amazon around the things he knew would remain stable over time.

In my book, *Relentless*, I claim that if you want to grow and succeed long-term, you've absolutely got to be a great service leader – and, to accomplish that, you've got to be relentless at it.

As I like to remind business leaders: “Also essential is a chief executive who is just as committed to customer satisfaction as he is to stockholder satisfaction. Just look at Amazon, Costco, and Home Depot!”

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