

BE RELENTLESS THEN SIT BACK AND REAP THE REWARDS

Who do you admire, and why? Entertainers? Entrepreneurs? Athletes? Authors? Do you admire them because they're leaders, or because they're wealthy or successful?

I'll tell you what they have in common – in a word, they're relentless.

People don't just become successful accidentally. They set goals and work hard. They practice, study, and do whatever it takes to move ahead and become the best at what they do.

What does relentless look like? It's a self-directed passion for continuing to learn, improve, and exceed expectations in everything we do. It's a race without a finish line.

Let's meet some successful people who are relentless in their commitment to serve their customers.

Tom Raffio, president and CEO of Northeast Delta Dental, knows that being relentless is critical to serving and attracting customers. Under Raffio, the company's revenue grew from \$57 million in 1995 to over \$483 million in 2023. In part, it was the result of a Guarantee of Service Excellence that backs up seven facets of service with a customer refund. The guarantees address everything from resolving inquiries immediately, or guaranteeing an initial update within one business day, to processing claims within 15 calendar days.

Ed Basitan, who served as Delta Airlines' CEO during COVID in 2020, was relentless in serving Delta's customers – he contacted each one of them to announce that Delta was extending its SkyMiles Medallion Status for almost two years, and would make re-booking flights free for two additional years.

Jeff Bezos built Amazon on customer service. Amazon anticipates its customers' complaints and concerns even before they know they have them. It acknowledges an order immediately, sends an email when the order ships, lets customers track their packages easily, and includes a visible link to make returning or replacing items equally easy.

When Steve Jobs founded Apple, he insisted on two principles:

quality products and superior customer service. Apple does everything right – it's what made Apple one of the world's most profitable companies. Apple has proved that relentless customer service is fundamental to superior performance.

To build a business that is relentless in serving the customers, you must hire people who are personable and train them in the skills and attitudes that will transform them into customer service heroes. You must trust and empower your employees to make decisions that will satisfy the customer who has a problem with your company or your products. You must blend people and technology to make it easy to do business with you. Finally, you must build speed into everything you do – do it faster, and do it better.

A critical element of relentlessness is service recovery: resolving the issues customers have with a product or service they purchase from you. It involves four steps: acting quickly, taking responsibility, making empowered decisions, and compensating the customer. Do all four, and your customers will never leave you.

Mark Cuban, Shark Tank investor, entrepreneur, and author, said, "Treat your customers as if they own you...because they do. You have to re-earn your customers' business every day."

No matter what you're selling, it's the customers who provide your income stream. Being relentless in serving them will forge your path to success.

For more information on John Tschohl and the Service Quality Institute, visit www.customer-service.com.

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John Tschohl is the founder and president of Service Quality Institute, a global leader in customer service. He is considered one of the world's foremost authorities on all aspects of customer service, and has developed 18 customer service training programs – including his best-selling book, Relentless. His monthly strategic newsletter is available online at no cost at www.customer-service.com.

