

# A Study of Dancing Service\*

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## ABSTRACT

Despite the ubiquitousness of service in the 21st century, service still tends to be terrible. A lot of people think it is getting worse. I'd like to point out that all of your company's efforts in marketing, advertising, and providing high quality service and products can be either surpassed by or ruined by the actions of just one person. Each employee must have a strong service orientation and understand not only the workings of their organization, but the motivations and desires of their customers as well. Service providers must be able to understand their moment of truth and how it relates to the entire service cycle in providing a quality experience for the customer. If they accomplish this, then the "elephant" will truly learn to dance with grace, ease, and style.

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*Key words* : *Dancing Service, Service Provider, Service Leader, Quality Service, Service Cycle*

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## I . Introduction

Everyone knows about service. Every day we are served—someone does something for us. It may be something simple like your spouse handing you your morning cup of coffee, or something more complicated like your real estate agent and lawyer closing a real estate deal for you. It might be something in between, like being checked into or out of a hotel, or a waiter bringing you your meal at lunchtime. No matter what the scale, though, service is pervasive in our lives. It's everywhere. We all know about it. Despite the ubiquitousness of service in the 21st century, service still tends to be terrible. A lot of people think it is getting worse. Why is this happening? Although you might think that providing good service is simple, straightforward, and easy to do, that is hardly the case. Providing good service is probably one of the most difficult and challenging tasks to perform on consistent basis, and requires a whole specific body of knowledge and practice to support it. This body of knowledge and practice is growing rapidly but has not yet gained the attention of the general public—both those providing and those receiving service. For that reason it's probably fairer to say that while everybody provides and receives service in some way, nobody really knows about service.

To begin with, we first need to understand the core metaphor of "Dancing Service". Let's start with this question then: as a service provider or service leader, how well do you think you understand the nature of your customers? When customers come into contact with a business, they are often confused as to who they need to talk to in order to have their complaints and problems properly addressed. A service provider or manager who can learn to see the business from the customer's point of view can provide a customized, responsive service product. Service leaders must be able to see their own businesses through the eyes of the customer in order to provide consistently high-quality service.

What is the most important thing to remember in providing quality service? In the today's high-tech information age, many people place a high importance on their qualifications as a specialist in their field. The problem

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is, overconfidence in one's qualifications can actually have a negative effect on service quality. Of course, having the technical skills and knowledge to perform your job is extremely important. As a service provider what's even more important to ensuring a quality experience for the guest is knowing enough about all the operations of your organization to be able to assist him in getting his problem solved. The reason for this is that the customer sees the "whole elephant".

When the customer comes into contact with a service company, they don't just look at one minor aspect of the organization. Rather, they see the whole thing. In service management theory we often refer to the MOT the point of contact at which the customer has a n opportunity to evaluate and form an impression of the organization and when these are linked together they are called the "service cycle." From the moment when the customer becomes aware of your organization until the moment they have completed their transaction, the succession of MOTs becomes, from the point of view of the customer, your entire organization.

On the other hand, however, service providers usually focus only on the MOT for which they are directly responsible. While the customer has in their mind a paradigm of the entire organization, employees usually focus on their narrow segment of the service cycle, and do not take much interest in or responsibility for the parts of the cycle covered by others. This is the familiar "it's not my job" response, which is extremely frustrating to customers.

When employees don't recognize their place in the service cycle, and understand the effect that their moment of truth has on the guest's total service experience, even though they may believe that they're performing their own tasks correctly, the end result for the customer can be quite negative. Moments of truth along the service cycle are not isolated: they are interrelated codependent events.

What does the elephant represent? The following poem illustrates the difference between the point of view of the customer and that of the employee.

## II. The Blind Men and the Elephant

It was six men of Indostan  
To learning much inclined,  
Who went to see the Elephant  
(Though all of them were blind),  
That each by observation  
Might satisfy his mind

The First approached the Elephant,  
And happening to fall  
Against his broad and sturdy side,  
At once began to bawl:  
“God bless me! but the Elephant  
Is very like a wall!”

The Second, feeling of the tusk,  
Cried, “Ho! what have we here  
So very round and smooth and sharp?  
To me 'tis mighty clear  
This wonder of an Elephant  
Is very like a spear!”

The Third approached the animal,  
And happening to take  
The squirming trunk within his hands,  
Thus boldly up and spake:  
“I see,” quoth he, “the Elephant  
Is very like a snake!”

The Fourth reached out an eager hand,  
And felt about the knee.  
“What most this wondrous beast is like

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Is mighty plain," quoth he;  
" 'Tis clear enough the Elephant  
Is very like a tree!"

The Fifth, who chanced to touch the ear,  
Said: "E'en the blindest man  
Can tell what this resembles most;  
Deny the fact who can  
This marvel of an Elephant  
Is very like a fan!"

The Sixth no sooner had begun  
About the beast to grope,  
Than, seizing on the swinging tail  
That fell within his scope,  
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant  
Is very like a rope!"

And so these men of Indostan  
Disputed loud and long,  
Each in his own opinion  
Exceeding stiff and strong,  
Though each was partly in the right,  
And all were in the wrong!

So oft in theologic wars,  
The disputants, I ween,  
Rail on in utter ignorance  
Of what each other mean,  
And prate about an Elephant  
Not one of them has seen! 」

The six blind men of Indostan, unable to come to a conclusion as to what an elephant looks like, decided to go and find out for themselves.

Although each one of them, once they'd found the elephant, was able to confirm first-hand what the elephant seemed like, being blind, none of them were able to really get the picture of the whole elephant. Each of the six maintained their conviction that elephant looked like something a wall, a spear, a rope, a fan but they could not agree with one another, and of course none of them were quite exactly right.

The elephant in the fable represents the service organization. If the elephant is the organization, then who do the six blind men, and in the fable their guide, represent? The blind men, claiming to understand the whole from their own perception of a part, represent the service employee, while their guide, fully able to see the entire elephant, represents the customer. Remember: the customer sees the whole elephant.

Let's take a look at a typical bank transaction as an example. A customer entering a bank probably first comes into contact with a teller(one part of the elephant) and then may move on to a loan officer (an entirely different part of the elephant) and in this way gets to see the "whole elephant" in other words, experience the entire range of the bank's service offerings. However, just like the six blind men, the tellers on the first floor of the bank and the loan officers on the second floor focus on their own specific tasks, taking little thought of what the other departments do. This makes it difficult for the customers and employees to understand their transactions from the same point of view, and can give rise to many problems during the service delivery process. Typical examples of interdepartmental conflict and territorialism can be seen in restaurants, between dining room and kitchen staff; in hotels between the rooms department and the catering department; and in airlines between flight staff and ground staff.

### III. Role of the Service Provider

Service providers within a larger organization tend to focus on their own tasks and are often unfamiliar with the work of others in different parts of

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the organization. In most large companies, marketing, human resources, accounting, operations have little understanding of each others' work and conflict inevitably results. On the other hand, customers, trusting in the ability and professionalism of the "whole elephant", often don't understand why employees acting in the best interests of their own duties actually create a negative experience overall. A simple example of this would be a coupon offering or other promotion sponsored by the marketing department but about which the operations department is unaware. A customer presenting a coupon or asking for a special discount or rate that the operations employees are unaware of is disappointed at best, and more likely to be embarrassed and frustrated.

What is the most basic role of the service provider? Simply put, to solve the customer's problems. Fulfilling this role by reducing the physical distance or length of time between the customer and the desired solution therefore becomes the task of the service provider. Let's look at an example of how this works. Consider a customer who approaches an employee and explains that he has a problem. What might the employees' response be?

1) "Sorry, that's not my job. Why don't you go ask at the 'information' desk?"

2) "Sorry, but I'm not really sure how to handle that, why don't you ask someone else?"

3) "Yes, let me connect you with someone who can help you with that."  
(But the connection never goes quite right, with the customer being shuttled here and there, never getting to the right person)

4) "Yes, Mr. X in our Y department can help you with that. Let me introduce him to you." (And then the customer is ushered directly to the person who actually solve their problem.)

If the answer in your organization is number 1 or number 2, what might your customer's response be?

"They're ignoring me again..." or "They have no clue!", "How stupid can these people be" might be some of their responses.

What about answer number 3?

Although this response shows some effort on the part of the customer, it

does show a lack of expertise on the part of the employee. As the customer gets shuttled from one post to another, without ever arriving at a solution, they begin to feel as if they're trapped in a maze with no way out.

The best answer is number 4, in which the employee confirms to the customer that they do indeed know how their organization works, and also results in a quick and efficient solution for the customer.

#### IV. Dancing Service

Thus far I have explained how the service organization must operate as a whole, in the eyes of the customer, but haven't really spoken about how this is "Dancing" service. How does excellent service compare with dancing? Let's talk about dancing itself to understand why.

Have you ever watched professional dancers perform on stage? Professional dancers effortlessly perform movements that are extremely difficult for the rest of us to do. The performances of world-famous dancers like Baryshnikov seem effortless, seamless, natural, and from this comes the beauty of their performances. But like any other talent, dancing is not something that only a few people are capable of, but is something that with good teaching and diligent practice can be learned by anyone.

Service can be compared to dance in the following ways: first, most dances are not performed by solo artists. In the case of large companies in particular, services are rarely provided from start to finish by a single employee. Of course dancers like Baryshnikov are the stars of the show, and similarly, a particular service provider or MOT can stand out as the "star performance" of the entire service cycle. However, just as behind Baryshnikov there is an entire corps de ballet, behind the frontline service providers there is a support staff who are integral to the quality of the service delivered.

To continue the metaphor: a dancer on stage must know exactly where the other dancers are, and must know the choreography for the entire performance from start to finish. Just imagine what would happen if the

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female lead in a ballet production leaped into the air when Baryshnikov wasn't expecting it: he'd be unlikely to catch her and the whole performance would be ruined. Similarly, service providers must be aware of what is going on in other parts of their department and other parts of the company in order to solve the customers' problems without errors.

Consistently providing high quality service may seem a difficult task to an organization that hasn't attempted it, but a company that has a strong training program and regularly practices their service delivery process makes it look easy. Customer service that seems natural and effortless has the effect of fostering deep trust on the part of the customers. On the other hand, when employees seem clueless, when customers feel bound by complicated policies and procedures, and employees finish one step of a process only to be confused and muddled as to what the next one is, customers have a very hard time developing a sense of trust and security about the organization. Results of a 2002 customer survey at Everland indicate that one of the most influential factors on a customer's experience is the park employees' "confident, natural behavior". This is what I refer to as "Dancing Service."

## V. Conclusion

How then is it possible to get the elephant the entire organization to dance? Elephants, being so big, are often very difficult to handle. Large, multi-outlet multi-function service companies are equally difficult to control. Elephants, just like people, have their own feelings and habits, and have the free will to either accept or resist learning new concepts. If an elephant's trainer knows what they're doing, they can achieve excellent results; but if the elephant has already learned bad habits or has a bad temper, it's nearly impossible for the trainer to get the elephant to do what they want. Similarly, bringing about revolutionary change in an organization with a deeply-rooted culture is extremely difficult. Employees, managers, and even leaders in such a company will often rally around the cry "But we've

always done it this way!" in an effort to resist change.

Even so, change is possible. Making a change in an organization with a monolithic culture is very much like training an animal or teaching a child the skills it needs in life. There are two basic principles which must be followed in any of these cases: first, you must demonstrate that the change is possible, and second, you must provide motivation for the change.

If you've ever raised a child or trained a pet, you know that the first step to getting them to enact a particular behavior is showing them that it is possible. Children who see their parents tie their own shoes understand that tying one's own shoes is possible to do. A dog that sees another dog respond correctly to the command "Sit!" then understand that he, too, can sit when commanded to do so. If you've ever taken dance lessons, you might remember a similar process: the instructor doesn't just explain the dance steps and say "okay, now you do it," they actually show the class what the dance looks like first, and then get the class to imitate what they did.

Trying any new task without the conviction that it is possible is a very difficult thing. Just as learning a new dance without some sort of demonstration from the instructor is nearly impossible, unless employees are shown that a particular desired outcome delivering consistent, high-quality service is possible, it is nearly impossible for them to actually do it.

Demonstrating that something is possible is not the end of the process, however. Showing a child that tying your shoes is possible does not mean that they will automatically know how to do it. Continuing effort and practice is necessary in order to make the performance a habit. Of course, before someone becomes adept at any new skill, they fail at it many times. An animal goes through the same process as it learns a new trick. Anyone learning a new dance is not a professional dancer from day one. Only through consistent practice do the steps become fluid and graceful.

Once a child or a pet has learned a particular skill or trick, continual feedback and rewards are required to motivate them to maintain their proficiency. I'm learning the tango right now, and my motivation comes from the instructor's compliments, suggestions, and tips. Without those little bits

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of encouragement, I'd probably lose interest and not bother to continue the lessons. My "reward" for learning the steps properly is my partner's enjoyment, and relief that I don't step on her feet.

Feedback and rewards should also be provided to service employees. Feedback should be immediate and positive in order to help the employee understand what they are doing correctly and what they need to improve on. Feedback should never come in the form of personal criticism such as "You still don't understand this?" or be insulting. Even employees who fail at first should be praised for attempting something new. An employee who tries something new with less-than-spectacular results and then is rewarded by being chastised by the boss quickly learns not to try anything new at all.

Rewards should have enough meaning to the employee to provide them with motivation. In other words, rewards should have some value to the recipient. Finally, rewards should not be withheld until the final level of success is reached, but should be meted out along the way as small successes are achieved.

In conclusion, I'd like to point out that all of your company's efforts in marketing, advertising, and providing high quality service and products can be either surpassed by or ruined by the actions of just one person. Each employee must have a strong service orientation and understand not only the workings of their organization, but the motivations and desires of their customers as well. Service providers must be able to understand their moment of truth and how it relates to the entire service cycle in providing a quality experience for the customer. If they accomplish this, then the "elephant" will truly learn to dance with grace, ease, and style.

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## <국문개요>

### 덴싱서비스에 관한 연구

이병원\* · 마크패턴\*\* · 김혜영\*\*\*

서비스에 대하여 논하는 이유는 21세기에 서비스가 어디에나 존재하면서도, 아주 미약하기 때문이다. 우수한 서비스를 제공하는 것이 단순하고, 쉬운 일이라 생각할 수 있지만 그렇지 않다. 견실하고 우수한 서비스를 제공하는 것은 어렵고 힘든 일이며 이를 지원하는 전반적인 지식과 훈련이 필요하다. 누구나 서비스를 주고받고 있지만 아무도 서비스에 대해서 제대로 알지 못한다는 것이다. 그러나 모두가 서비스에 대하여 알아야 한다. 학생, 학자, 전문직 종사자, 노동자, 직장인, 간부, 공무원 등 직업에 상관없이 누구나 서비스를 제공하고 있으며 서비스를 받고 있다. 훌륭한 서비스의 개념을 필요한 모든 사람들에게 알리고자 본 논문을 준비하였다.

마케팅, 광고, 친절 등 손님을 상대로 하는 모든 분야에 있어 서비스를 제공하는 사람의 모든 노력은 한 명의 종업원에 의해 올라 갈 수도 있고, 완전히 파괴 될 수도 있습니다. 따라서 종업원 한사람 한 사람 모두 서비스 지향적이어야 하고, 회사뿐만 아니라 손님을 제대로 파악하고 있어야 한다. 손님의 눈에 비쳐지는 전체 서비스 순환과 직원들이 각자 책임지고 있는 진실의 순간을 어떻게 조화시켜야 하는지 그 방법에 대해 아는 것이야말로 서비스 제공자에게 가장 중요하고 필수적인 요소이다. 그러므로 코끼리라고 언급한 서비스 업체도 아주 자연스럽게 멋진 춤을 출 수 있게 되는 것이다.

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주제어 : 덴싱서비스, 서비스 제공자, 서비스리더, 서비스 질, 서비스사이클

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