



## Section 5: Phenomenal Operations Systems

**Operations** is everything you do to serve your clients. **Phenomenal Operations** delivers a meaningful service experience that engages, educates and entertains your client, making them feel special. A Phenomenal Operations **System** is a group of working parts that **duplicates results** consistently (without you having to be there).

Michael E. Gerber, author of the E-Myth books says "most business owners are not entrepreneurs, they're technicians". If you are like most small business owners, this may be the strongest area in your business, but you might be surprised to find out that being strong in this area is creating your biggest weakness. If you aren't able to duplicate your technical skills, you won't have a system, which means you'll remain a slave to the business.

Chances are you went into business doing what you do because you had skill in that industry. Maybe you worked for someone else, or maybe you knew someone else who was successful in that business. The fatal assumption as Michael Gerber calls it, is to assume that since you're the best pie baker, the best teacher, the best trainer, the best plumber, or whatever it is that you do, that you will be successful in business. Nothing could be further than the truth. But like the other four areas, this one is just as vital to the success of your business. The question is whether you'll be successful turning your technical expertise into a system.

### ***The Most Phenomenal Service Experience Ever!™***

If you want to know what the most phenomenal service experience ever™ looks like, look no farther than The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company and their "legendary" service. One of my best friends, Luis Hernandez and I go to Puerto Rico together sometimes and last year I took my mama with us since it was her 75th birthday (yes, when you're from Alabama, it's "mama", not "mom"). I wanted to do something special, so we stayed at the Ritz-Carlton in San Juan.

The staff there literally jumps to attention when a guest is present. They call you by name and make a big deal about you. My good friend Joseph Michelli wrote a book about it called *The New Gold Standard*. In that book, he unpacks the philosophy and the strategies. The Ritz-Carlton has been very successful building a business by providing the most phenomenal service experience ever.

As I write this piece, I'm on a remote island on the Great Barrier Reef off of Australia. As I was booking the trip, I researched my travel book and looked up the website of the resort online. The website was absolutely amazing and the island looked stunning. I booked the trip completely online and any correspondence I had was by e-mail. The confirmation e-mail was one of the best I've ever seen. I took a helicopter from the mainland over to the island so I could see the reef from the air, and the view of the little island among the dots of reef encased in emerald waters was breathtaking. As the helicopter made its slow, rocking descend onto the helipad, I imagined I had arrived at Fantasy Island (remember that TV show?).

Excitement swelled up in me as I walked up the little sand path to reception. Within 5 minutes I knew the service experience wasn't going to match the incredible island. The front desk clerk seemed bothered. The more staff I met, I found they all seemed to have a chip on their shoulder. This is a completely different experience than I've had in the rest of Australia. Almost everywhere I've been, the people have been super nice. The flight attendants actually smile and stop to "chat a bit".

Not at this resort. In fact, they don't even make eye contact. If this were a Ritz-Carlton property, they would greet you and ask you how you are doing. Because of the incredible beauty of the island and the unique location, they have the opportunity to create the most phenomenal service experience ever. Someone is asleep at the wheel.

You see, there's a difference between providing a functional service and providing the most phenomenal service experience. Before I started my first business, I was a waiter. I worked in high-end restaurants where we did tableside cooking. I wore a tuxedo to work, and each dish that was prepared at the table was flamed as a finale'. Back in those days, you could smoke inside. When someone pulled out a cigarette, a lighter was front of

him or her immediately. We "waited" just far enough away to give them their personal space, but were close enough to anticipate their needs before they occurred. Water or ice tea was topped off before they had to ask for it. We hovered without being a bother. It was the most phenomenal service experience ever.

In this chapter, I want to unpack what this can look like in your business, regardless of what you do. If you're a doctor or dentist, when your patient walks in, you want them to have the right experience. If you have a gym, what kind of experience does your member have when they come in? The same goes for the retail store, the church or any organization that wants to make a unique impression.

If you are a service company like plumbing, office equipment repair, telephone systems installation, cable TV, carpet cleaning, air-conditioning, or something of that nature, what are the steps of providing the most phenomenal service experience ever?

If you are an independent professional such as an insurance agent, Realtor®, or sales professional, what are the things you can do to make your clients feel special? We used to have a financial adviser that handled the 401k type stuff for one of my companies. This guy would come in, sit down and read the paper. When it was time to get up and speak to our team, he puts a chart up on the wall and begins to speak what might as well of been Greek. Needless to say, he is no longer with us.

The guy we have now goes out of his way to build a relationship with each employee. Just before Thanksgiving, we got the biggest goodie basket I've ever seen in my life. It was HUGE! Of course it had some Starbucks stuff in it for me (hint), and it had something for every single employee. Master stroke.

### ***WIIFM***

You may not feel that you are up to providing that level of service experience. You may feel it is beneath you. You may be thinking "how in the world could I get *my* staff to act that way?" I'm here to tell you that not only can you change your culture; I want to offer you some benefits of creating a phenomenal service system. Perhaps if we can tune into your

favorite radio station, WIIFM (What's In It For Me), you'll be more likely to put the work into making this happen.

What's In this For You:

1. Your clients will be happier, which means you'll have fewer headaches
2. Your staff will be happier, which means they'll stay longer and work harder
3. Your service experience will no longer require you to make every client happy
3. You'll make more money...

Remember the PLV (Potential Lifetime Value) of a client that we talked about in Phenomenal Sales Systems? Before looking at the economic value of a client, let's talk about the fact that they *deserve* to be treated right. Customers deserve a positive, friendly experience at minimum. Customers deserve to be valued for the simple fact that they are a human being that should be highly regarded. That is the minimum standard. God's phenomenal creation standing in front of you!

John Maxwell says when you don't value people, you de-value them. This is the core issue surrounding customer service. How we value people has a direct impact on how we treat them. You can say you value someone, but your actions show the true value. The only reason you need to value your customers is because they deserve it. They pay your bills for you. We should all be grateful for our customer's support. Without them we have nothing.

### ***What You Need To Understand To Put This Together***

To create and deliver the most phenomenal service experience ever™, you'll need to first understand the emotional state of your niche prospect. When your clients buy your product or service, what is their emotional state? Excitement? Fear? Uncertainty? Pride?

For example, when I arrived on "Fantasy Island", I was very excited because visiting the Great Barrier Reef was on my bucket list. I would be relaxing and writing my book. It would be a special time for me. But because they never connected to that, and never took the time to understand, I'll never be back.

Imagine you do weddings. What is the emotion of a soon-to-be-bride? Excitement. But at the same time fear. Fear that someone or something could ruin the most important day of her life. If we don't connect with that, and we focus just on the product, we are missing a humongous opportunity. In a service business where you are invited into the most private areas of someone's home, do you think there is some fear and uncertainty in the homeowners mind the first time they use your service? You bet there is. And we must connect with it.

A good start to connecting with the emotional state is by following step two in the sales presentation - having a statement that you understand what they are feeling. Now, of course if you have gone through the sales process already, you have built some rapport and trust. But if someone walks into your restaurant or your retail store, you must engage him or her properly.

Recently, I walked into a restaurant and I was in a hurry. After a few minutes of no one even showing up at the table, I knew that the rest of the experience would most likely be slow as well, so I got up and left. Now, keep in mind that this restaurant had been specifically recommended by the hotel. I went straight there without shopping around. Can you see how you can do a phenomenal job marketing and closing the sale, only to have everything fall apart at the service level?

So, engage your client and make them feel like they are the most important person in the world right now. And they are! Your life goals are connected to this vehicle called your small business. If you don't have service, you have nothing.

Speaking of engagement, another big customer service mistake I see on a regular basis is employees engaging with one another, while ignoring the customer. Have you been to a grocery store and the cashier and the bag boy are chatting it up and the only thing they say to you is "5.95"! Drives me crazy!

Now, I know they haven't been trained, so it makes me want to go and grab the manager. Of course the manager hasn't been trained, so now I want to talk to the owner. Well it's corporate owned and you can't really talk to anyone. This is why small business owners can have more influence in the marketplace than any other man made institution. We can make a

difference in the lives of others! Have you ever been on a flight and the flight attendants are having a phenomenal time together, but when you ask for something, they scowl. Make sure this doesn't happen with your business. Thoroughly train your staff on the mission.

### ***The Mission - Providing Your Unique Service Experience***

As we discussed earlier, the first vital component of a system is the mission. Your client has a problem and you have a solution. The solution is delivered by providing a unique service experience they can't get anywhere else. Have your employees memorize that mission. Every conversation, every meeting and every coaching session is in context of your mission.

"The most important thing in any company is it's culture" - Dr. John C. Maxwell, the world's #1 leadership expert.

You see, when we accomplish the mission (or not), a culture is developed. A culture is the result of the values we live by and how we act. The culture is built through how we live out our values. You can change your culture by living out different values.

### ***5 Values that Create the Most Phenomenal Service Experience Ever***

Do you remember the five things I shared with you in the marketing message earlier? Reputation, Experience, Education, Systems and Guarantee? What would happen if we thoroughly communicated and trained our staff on how to live those values out?

What if we talked a lot about what affects our reputation (positively or negatively)?

What if we helped our staff gain more experiences they could pass on to the client and showed them how it helps us accomplish our mission? What if we immersed ourselves in education at every level? What if we had a step-by-step system at every level of the company that was proven to result in the client feeling that they had the most phenomenal service experience ever? What if we actually did what we said when it came to our guarantee?

What a wonderful world it would be! Can you see how training your staff on the same 5 points you are offering your client result in exceeding client expectations? We can't say one thing and do another.

## ***How to Make Your Clients Feel Special***

Mary Kay Ash built an amazing company culture. She always said "imagine every human being you meet has an invisible sign around their neck that says *make me feel special*". Zig Ziglar said "You can have everything in life you want, if you just help enough other people get what they want". What do your clients want? They want to feel special.

Start by using your client's name. Dale Carnegie said "the sweetest sounding music to a person's ear is their own name". By the way, this benefits you outside of serving your clients also. When you begin to recognize others by name, they will respond differently. I travel a great deal and make it a habit to call anyone who serves me by name. Whether it's a flight attendant, front desk clerk, waiter or waitress, or a bellhop, I ask them their name if they don't have a nametag.

I first started doing it so I could get better at remembering names. But I soon realized I got better service when I did that. Instead of having a flight attendant scowl, many times they check with me personally every time they pass by! One flight attendant moved me to first class after the airplane doors were shut (which is illegal post 911). It is amazing to me that such a small thing makes a difference, but it does. It just goes to show you how much people are starving to be recognized. Your clients are no different. They crave attention. Give it to them and you'll be the star. Recognize them by name.

I prefer calling people by their last name if I am serving them, but if you have a casual atmosphere like Southwest Airlines, you might call them by first name.

Anticipate their Needs Before they Happen. Remember the high-end waiter example? The water was filled before they needed it. We knew someone would pull out a cigarette, so the lighter was ready.

## ***Work is Theatre and Every Business is a Stage***

The book *The Experience Economy* that I mentioned in Phenomenal Marketing Systems has a subtitle that says, "Work is theatre and every

business is a stage". A Phenomenal Operations *System* is a theatre production designed to create the right *experience* consistently.

Now, I can't tell you too much about the theatre first hand because I'm not allowed to go to a show with my wife any longer. That ended about 10 years ago because of one simple thing: I fall asleep. Yes, that can be a problem when a lot of money has been spent on tickets and you're snoring, or drooling on some lady's mink! I get up early to write, think and plan. I drink strong coffee in the morning and I'm full throttle all day. As soon as I sit down in the evening, I'm out. If we turn on the news or a great movie, it's rare that I'll make it through.

A few years ago, I was working on a joint-venture project with a multi-billion dollar company. We were meeting all the "big Whigs" in Las Vegas. My contact called me and told me they were taking us to a show. "Oh..." I said. "Yes, how did you know we're going to see "O" (a Cirque de Soleil show), aren't you excited?" "Ohhhhhh" I said (thinking to myself, this is going to be really bad). Here these high level guys are taking us out for a big dinner and a show and I'm going to fall asleep! Not good!

I made sure I had a pocketful of sunflower seeds (I use those to stay awake when I drive). I drank a Venti Starbucks right before the show, but believe it or not, I can go right to sleep after drinking one of those things. I told my friends that were on the team to make sure I sat as far away from the head guys as possible. And I told my buddy next to me that he had my permission to do *whatever* he had to do to keep me awake.

Fortunately, I found a new solution to my problem. I clapped as hard as I could after every scene. So hard that my hands hurt after the show. But it kept me awake, and the best part is, because of the excessive clapping they all thought I loved the show. Of course that could become a problem in the future, if we ever go to Las Vegas together again!

When you think of theatre, what is it? It's entertainment. What does entertainment do? It takes you on an emotional journey. My wife loves the movie *The Sound of Music* partly because it was the first movie she saw at a theatre. What emotion do you want your experience to invoke? Excitement? Concern? Passion?



Remember that customers always buy on emotion. Always. And when you create a phenomenal service experience, you have built in the emotion you want to help your client feel. Let me pause to remind you not to manipulate. You have a responsibility not to cross the line. Using undue pressure or fear is out of line. Make sure that what you are offering and how you present it and serve it is with the utmost of integrity and make sure it's a win for everyone involved.

Now think about this - the "show" is repeated night after night, invoking the same emotion at the exact point in the production each and every time. This is what needs to happen in your business. What does the set look like? This is your store, your vehicles, your materials. Who are the characters? What do they look like? What do they act like? What do they wear (the costume)? What is the script? Can you see how creating a system of production is much like a theatre production? It's a show. Treat it that way.

### *Niche Appeal*

Here's a striking statement from *The Experience Economy*... "Too many workers behave no differently on stage than they do in their private lives". One of my best friends, Jim Bardwell who worked with me as I grew my first company understands "creating the experience" like few I've ever seen. In my early seminars, Jim often did presentations for me (sometimes in costume!). He used to teach, "In the service business, you've got to have "universal appeal." In other words, whoever your audience is, your character must appeal to them.

If your clients are conservative, you probably don't want to look like a biker. On the other hand, if you work at Harley-Davidson, that would be an advantage. We live in such a "me" world today, that we don't really think about customer service. And if you think about it, our children really haven't learned how to serve. In a world of instant gratification, where we tap our foot in front of the microwave, they don't really know what service is.

Most likely, they have never had to serve (unless smart parents intentionally had them do so - in which you have my deepest respect). Modern conveniences have eliminated the need for each other in many cases. Many can't help their neighbor with finances because they are just as broke and in debt. If the parent does go to the neighbor's house to help fix

a car, or cut up a fallen tree, where are the children? Usually playing a video game, talking on the cell phone, or watching YouTube videos. We are creating a generation that doesn't know what service is, so we must be very intentional about teaching it to them.

Make sure your image, scripts and procedures resonate with your niche target market. Think of Ritz-Carlton again. Their guests are high profile, wealthy individuals. Can you afford body piercings, sloppy clothing or speech? No. The experience must be created to engage and entertain your target market. If you have a business where it's all about speed and efficiency, then focus on that. Do everything you can to make the entire experience that way. The point is that you must create the experience that will give your perfect niche market what they want - and more.

### ***Customer Satisfaction is... WORTHLESS!***

My friend Jeffrey Gitomer wrote one of the best customer service books ever, called *Customer Satisfaction is Worthless. Customer Loyalty is Priceless*. The goal is to create loyalty.

In *Raving Fans* legendary leadership expert Ken Blanchard and co-author Sheldon Bowles, featured a loyalty ladder that goes like this:

- **Suspects** — These are people that fit your defined target market, information that you should know as you create your customer service vision. They may or may not become a customer. That depends on your **marketing** system.
- **Prospect** – This is a person that takes some form of action: visits your website or comes into your store. They may or may not become a customer. That depends on your **sales** system.
- **Shopper** (or Customer) — This is a person that buys something and confirms their details. They may or may not return, and whether they move up the ladder or not depends of your **operations** system.
- **Client** — People become clients when they buy a second time.
- **Member** — Clients graduate to members once they feel they are respected for their business and receive extra care and attention.

- **Advocate** — People become advocates when they are very satisfied with your products and services and tell others about your business.
- **Raving fans** — Someone is a raving fan of your business when they do the “selling” for you. The products and services exceed their expectations and they encourage others to buy.

Your **Phenomenal Operations Systems** along with your Phenomenal Client Base Marketing Systems is key to bringing them back to move them up the loyalty ladder.

### *Creating Your Phenomenal Operations System*

In order to create the experience and the system, you need to think about the steps that each customer goes through. Jan Carlzon described how he turned around struggling SAS airlines by creating what he called "moments of truth". Every customer interaction is a "moment of truth". The Experience Economy says every time the customer sees an employee, that it's a theatre moment, so we have to break down the steps of customer interaction and make sure we are creating the most phenomenal service experience system, step-by-step.

My good friend and colleague Ellen Rohr has a great way to think about this. Instead, of trying to think about each positive step you want to create from *your* perspective, think about what could go *wrong* from the *customer's* perspective.

She used a restaurant as an example:

Get in your car and drive down the road. Now, turn around and drive back to the restaurant. What could go wrong as you approach the restaurant? The sign is hard to see. Or, it's not lit. Now you approach the door. It's not clean. You step inside and maybe the hostess isn't there. Can you see how imagining what could go *wrong* can give you the steps to put in?

Wow. Brilliant!

I recently promoted one of my team members to Operations Manager of my service company. The main point I shared with him was "prevention".

Imagine what can go wrong and be proactive to prevent any level of service issue to happen in the first place. If it's foggy out, that's the trigger to remind the guys to be careful driving. Be diligent in training and making sure inventory systems are being followed so we aren't caught on a job without what we need.

Back to Ellen's restaurant example. Is there enough parking? Maybe there's trash in the parking lot. Whose job is that? Is that in the daily procedures? Now we are walking up to the building. Is the front door smudged? Is the hostess at her station? How is the decor? How is the dress code? How do the scripts sound? Is the kitchen ready? This reminds me of Kitchen Nightmares. What a phenomenal show for business owners to watch! Might not make a bad staff meeting either.

Maybe the first impression for your business is your website or brochure. Maybe they call you on the phone. Do you have a procedure to make sure the phone is answered? Do you have a script and a system where that person has been empowered to deliver the most outstanding service experience?

### ***Dressing for Phenomenal Success***

I mentioned earlier that people make 11 important assumptions about you when they first meet you - and that it happens in the first 30 seconds (before you even open your mouth).

The 11 assumptions are:

1. Trustworthiness
2. Economic Level
3. Educational Level
4. Social Position
5. Level of Sophistication
6. Economic Heritage
7. Social Heritage
8. Educational Heritage
9. Success
10. Moral Character
11. Future Potential

Your Phenomenal Service Experience is going to be carried out by front line team members that will either score high or low on these 11 points, so make sure you and your team is dressed and groomed well and that you have step-by-step service systems in place so that you don't have to reinvent the wheel each day.

## Be sure to listen to the Audio CDS



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