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Podcast Transcription

Implementing Lean Marketing Systems

Legendary Service is about ICARE

Guest was Kathy Cuff

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Transcription of the Podcast

Joe Dager: *Welcome everyone! This is Joe Dager the host of the Business901 podcast. With me today is Kathy Cuff. She is a senior consulting partner with The Ken Blanchard Companies and co-author of Blanchard's Legendary Service customer service training program. Kathy joined the Blanchard companies and seemed to have done just about every job in the place and most interesting to me created or helped create many of the custom products for their clients. Kathy thanks for joining me in the wee hours of a California morning here.*

Kathy Cuff: I'm so glad to be here Joe. Thanks for having me.

Joe: *You're new book, Legendary Service, you focus on telling a story about the Blanchard ICARE principle. If people aren't familiar with that, could you just start by just briefly describing it and framing ICARE?*

Kathy: Sure that'd be great. Well when we were, my coauthors and myself, thinking about writing this program years ago we just kept coming back to the question, "Why is customer service so important?" Obviously we all need customers to stay in business. So when you think about keeping those customers that you have and creating that loyalty, what do you want your customers to know? Well, you want them to know you care about them. Just everything kept coming back to that word care and caring and feeling cared for. We thought why not take that 'ICARE' philosophy and teach the concepts about how to deliver

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legendary service so that you can have that customer loyalty; not only attract or keep the customers you have but also attract other ones by showing that you care. We took that and that's the framework, the model that we used.

The I in ICARE stands for ideal service. That's thinking about those customers' needs on a day-to-day basis by acting on the belief that service is important. In everything that you do and every single person in their job, what do they do to show others they care about them and focus on that customer in the moment so that we're delivering the best service possible. Then the C stands for culture of service. So it's about organizations having a culture of serving others. We even teach organizations how to have a service vision as well as in our training we take people through a process to come up with their own personal service vision. It's all about having that culture. The A is attentiveness. The R is responsiveness. It's about being attentive and responsive. So with all sorts of things you look at your customers and profile them in a good way, thinking about what are their different nuances, their preferences, their likes, their dislikes. Getting to know the different customers that we serve so that we can meet those individual needs and be responsive to those and act quickly and focus on some of those skills that we know around being a good listener and just showing that you care for your customers.

The last one empowerment which even though comes at the end of the model, we're teaching people all throughout our workshop and in conversations when we're talking with organizations, "How do you empower your employees in their jobs?" They are the face to your customers. They're it. The more that we can empower people in their jobs to make decisions, to be able to answer those questions, to take the action, that's when we're also going to create more of that loyalty with our customers. The big thing with this is for everybody in the organization to understand customer service is everybody's job. Does that kind of give you a flavor for what ICARE stands for?

Joe: *Oh you seem to come across very intense about it. It's something you truly believe in. You can tell that. You just grab a hold of it.*

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Kathy: I have such a passion for this. One of the reasons I love teaching this and I wanted to write the book was that we are all customers as we live our lives. So we've experienced either, if we've ever had great service, probably mediocre and poor service. So when we can take those learnings and then apply it where we work and say "Boy, what do we want to look like? Who do we want to be? Or what do we want to be known for?" That's about being legendary.

Joe: *One of the things you mention there and culture is a big word and everybody loves to grab on to that. You're saying is that the service should have, not necessarily a culture of its own, but a culture of itself, and then even its own vision that of course follows the main company's vision I would hope that they're aligned. Is that important to create that identity down let's say the chain for the lack of a better word?*

Kathy: Oh. Let me give you a perfect example. We worked a few years back with Taylor Made, the golf company, and we helped them come up with, or they probably did some work right as we were coming on, during which we rolled out Legendary Service training throughout their organization. But they came up with this kind of a tagline if you will. You can call it whatever you want. Some people call it vision, mission, whatever. Honestly I just go with what resonates with people. And so they have something called a tagline and they say 'it's everyone always.' It's everyone always. Simple, but let me tell you, the whole idea there – and Mark King who is the CEO wanted everyone to understand whether you work internally in the organization and you never see the external customer who is buying your products, or you're a sales rep out there visiting those golf pro shops and your different resorts across the country, it's everyone always.

In that mindset when you think about that in their organization, whether you're sitting in a meeting and even in their meeting rooms, they put red chairs. They have a red chair in every meeting room to represent visually the customer. So that culture, part of the culture is you never lose sight of why we're in business. Ultimately it's to exceed those expectations and deliver legendary service to the external customer. However we need to focus internally just as much because if we don't get it right internally,

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take away from them is what can they do to highlight C a little bit more and also the empowerment with that. How do they want to empower their franchisees even more and then their employees?

As you learn these concepts that will resonate with people either in an individual level-. I think a lot of times when people go through the training, the one day workshop, what we want them to think about is again at the company level there are things that the company should be and will be doing to keep service front of mind. Individually service is everybody's job. So take that ICARE model and we in the training have what we call a passport and it's at the end of each section. Like you just said you love to rate yourself. We have a little of that survey in the class as well. It's a little bit more robust than what is in the book. Then we have them pull out their passport that serves as their action plan. In there we have them think about what they want to start doing that they're not currently doing to serve their customers. What do they want to stop doing that's getting in the way and anything in particular that's serving them well?

Then at the end of the day we say "Where do you want to start?" You can't tackle everything at once. So look I-C-A-R-E; where's your weak spot? Or where could you get the biggest bang for your buck if you focus in on here? It goes back to organizations that focus on Lean. What do we need to be doing to tighten things up? The process improvement. How is that going to impact our customers? So it's the same idea.

Joe: *It sounds like a never-ending story.*

Kathy: Well you know what customer service shouldn't be ending. That's the thing that I always chuckle if I walk into a store or whatever and I'll see a banner 'Customer Appreciation Month.' I know the intention was good but it's like okay, are you going to focus on finances next month?

Joe: *I better do it this month because next month I have to bring it back next month or I'm in trouble.*

Kathy: Yeah. Or thank God we don't have to focus on those customers next month. Customer service is

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something that you can never stop focusing on because just when you do that's when the competition is going to do something differently to attract customers. We look at three things that attract customers to you. And the first two will flip flop depending on the importance of the consumer. Some people look at the product quality and what it is they're buying or purchasing, whether it's a software program or whether it's a refrigerator or car. So the difference is the quality that you want for that product. Other people will look at price. So they're price points and some people will never pay a certain amount for something or just their budget allows or whatever. But what we know is that if those first two things are pretty competitive then what's going to be the differentiator is service. We can even charge more for your products if you have the quality product and you have the service that goes along with it. That's that kind of Nordstrom philosophy for years. They had quality products buy you can get a lot of those same things at other high-end, nice stores. But what was that differentiator is you had the service to go along with it.

Joe: *I think it was great. I thought it was a great book. I already read it twice. And that says a lot for the short stories and the messages that are in it.*

Kathy: I'm so glad.

Joe: *Is there a website for the book? Where would someone learn more on the web about it?*

Kathy: Well Amazon is a great place to look for it there. Then you can also go on the website for my organization which is The Ken Blanchard Companies. If you go on to our website we also have that book and all the other books and products and services if you wanted to learn more even about the training program Legendary Service, you certainly could do that. We have an 800 number 800-728-6000 in the US. Then we also have offices worldwide. We have an office in the UK, in Singapore, in Toronto; lots of different ways to get it. But certainly Amazon or looking on our website at The Ken Blanchard Companies.

Joe: *I had the One Minute Manager of course from the original publication I have and a few others of his books like Putting the One Minute Manager to Work is still on my back bookshelf.*

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Kathy: That's so great.

Joe: A*ll of them I do re-read. It's one of those books, because it's a nice short, easy story, and there's so much messages in them that can be reinforced. They do seem to be books that have a lot of longevity to them. I mean customer service doesn't go away.*

Kathy: That's right. That's what we're hoping. I love that you enjoyed and you re-read it and we're hoping that people, like the One Minute Manager, it will be one those books that you'll pass along for others because it is a short read. But you know what everybody has customers in what we're doing. And it's even bigger than that. I mean I hope that people will get out of this that it's the whole pay it forward. So even in our personal lives, when you show people that you care about them, that it comes back at you. And that's the symbol we use in there is a boomerang because when you throw it's supposed to come back at you. The whole idea is that you'll keep your customers coming back and it pays it forward. So Joe I just thank you so much for this time that you've given me this morning.

Joe: *I would like to thank you very Kathy. It's well appreciated. The podcast will be available on the Business901 iTunes store and the Business901 blog site. So thanks again Kathy.*

Kathy: Great. Thanks Joe, have a great day.

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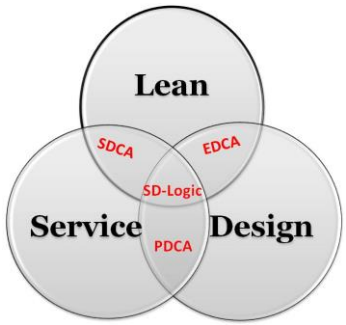

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Joe Dager is president of Business901, a firm specializing in bringing the continuous improvement process to the sales and marketing arena. He takes his process thinking of over thirty years in marketing within a wide variety of industries and applies it through Lean Marketing and Lean Service Design.

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