

Are You Hiring People with the **Right Service Mindset?**

A Guide to Interviewing for Service Excellence

Hiring a new person into your organization, or choosing someone to promote in your organization, is one of the most influential jobs of managers and leaders. Who you hire or promote has significant impact on your culture. Here's why:

- Each new hire strengthens or weakens your culture. The people you hire and promote are reflections of what you value. Either you are committed to your service culture and hire people with the service mindset to prove it, or your commitment to building a service culture is only lip service, and your new hires are evidence to confirm it.
- Hiring people with an excellent service mindset attracts better talent. When you hire and promote people with the right attitudes, more great people want to join you. Highly effective individuals work better and stay longer in organizations with excellent internal and external service.
- Hiring and promotions affect your bottom line. Good new hires add value quickly. Bad hires cost more than the wages or salary invested. Precious time is lost in finding and training new replacements. Sales may be lost and customer loyalty damaged. Meanwhile, staff morale suffers to see new people come and go, diminishing overall team performance and affecting your bottom line.

Many leaders talk about service excellence and the importance of building a service culture, but it's up to your people in the daily execution of their jobs to make service excellence real. We define service as taking action to create value for someone else, and with this definition, every position is a service position.

Three Performance Areas for Service Excellence

Three key areas of performance distinguish an excellent service mindset:

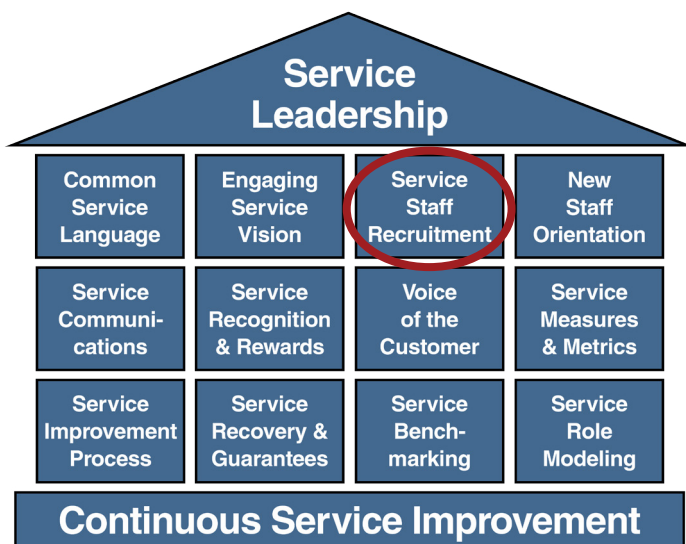
1. Being Customer Focused

2. Building Service Partnerships

3. Increasing Customer Loyalty

These questions will help you identify the right competencies and characteristics during your interview process.

How would your current employees answer these questions? Discover how Uplifting Service workshops can enable them to succeed.



Service Recruitment is one of the 12 Building Blocks of service culture. Uplifting Service can help you assess and improve your performance in each of these key areas.

1. Being Customer Focused

- Seeks to understand others' concerns and needs
- Recognizes different levels of internal and external service
- Identifies opportunities to improve service
- Adjusts personal communication style to suit others
- Takes personal responsibility for action to deliver excellent service

Interview Questions:

- Describe a specific time when a customer or colleague complained. How did you find out more about their complaint? How did you respond? What was the result?
- Tell me a time when you exceeded the expectations of a customer or colleague. How did you know the customer or colleague valued the service you provided?
- What methods have you used to better understand another person's point of view? What is one thing you learned or changed by using these methods?
- Tell me about a time you recommended an improvement to a product or a process where you work? What was the result of that recommendation?
- With which customers or colleagues have you built a long-term relationship? What have you done to make this relationship stronger or more successful?
- Tell me about a time you adjusted your personal style to meet a customer's or a colleague's need? What specifically did you do? How did the person respond?
- Describe a situation you resolved for an unhappy customer or colleague. What did you say and do? How was your solution received by the customer or colleague?
- Describe a time when you passed a customer's problem or situation to another colleague or manager to resolve? What was your approach?

2. Building Service Partnerships

- Explores partner's priorities and values
- Identifies valuable partnership opportunities
- Agrees on action plans and promises that benefit both partners
- Delivers on promises to meet or exceed satisfaction
- Assures partner satisfaction, monitors partnership and explores new opportunities
- Proactively creates value for current and potential partners

Interview Questions:

- a. Describe a time when you noticed an opportunity to create a better working relationship with a customer or a colleague. What did you do? What was the result?
- b. When have you done more for a customer or a colleague than they expected you to do? Why did you take that action? How did they react?
- c. What have you done to gain deeper understanding about a specific customer or colleague? What did you learn?
- d. Describe a time when you worked with a customer or internal partner to agree on an action plan. How did you ensure you both got what you needed?
- e. Tell me about a time you made a promise that proved difficult to keep. What did you do? What was the result?
- f. Tell me about a time you followed up with a customer or colleague to ensure they were satisfied with the work you completed for them. What did you learn? What did you do?
- g. When has a customer or partner not been satisfied with a service you provided? How did you respond and resolve this?
- h. When has a colleague done more for you than you requested? Was their action valuable to you? How did you respond?

3. Increasing Customer Loyalty

- Understands and champions the high value of loyal customers
- Distinguishes loyal customers from neutral or defecting customers
- Effectively manages and communicates customer expectations
- Acknowledges service issues and fixes problems promptly
- Proactively seeks to do "something extra" to recover a customer
- Stays calm and connected in difficult situations

Interview Questions:

- a. How do you measure the value of a customer?
- b. When has a customer come to you instead of choosing another service provider? Why did they come to you first?
- c. When have you known that a customer was no longer planning to buy your product or service? How did you know?
- d. Tell me about a specific time when you provided service to a very challenging customer. How did you communicate your promises and manage expectations?
- e. Tell me about a time you could not meet a deadline or keep a promise for a colleague. What did you do? What was the result?
- f. What was the worst issue you have faced with a customer or with a colleague? How did you resolve this situations?
- g. Tell me about a time when a customer or colleague was too demanding. How did you respond to their request?
- h. Describe a time when you surprised a customer or colleague by doing something extra. What did you do? What did they gain? How did they respond?
- i. Tell me about a stressful situation you have encountered with a customer or a colleague. What made this situation stressful for you? How did you handle the stress?

Things to Consider When You Interview

1. Define the job clearly. Understand the candidate's potential for growth. Select a person who meets the needs and has the potential.
2. Don't just hire the best person from a group of candidates. A perfect fit is worth the wait.
3. Be open to candidates who have the core skills and potential, even if they have not been in a similar role. A motivated person with strong service competencies will excel more than a person from a similar job but who has a poor service mind-set.
4. Prepare in advance for the interview, including where to meet, how to dress, what questions you will ask, and possible next steps. Remember, job candidates are "customers" and your interview reflects your company's vision, brand, and culture.
5. Make job candidates feel at ease. Ask one or two easy questions first. For example: Describe what you do in your current job?
6. Interview questions should ask for specific examples, not hypothetical ones. What did a person do is more valuable than what might they do. Job candidates often come prepared to answer standard "what would you do" interview questions. Ask for real examples.
7. Follow-up questions may be your most important questions. Listen carefully to answers, and then ask for more details. How did you resolve this? What were the results? Please tell me more.

Uplifting Service enables leaders and organizations to upgrade service performance, and secure a sustainable advantage by building an Uplifting Service Culture.

With offices in Singapore and North America, Uplifting Service works with businesses, associations and agencies throughout the world.

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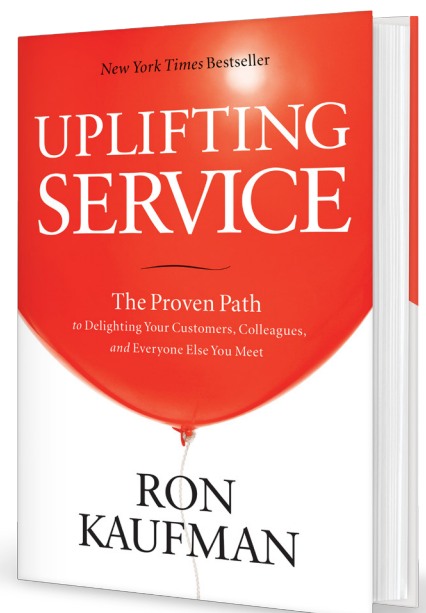
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