

Books

Contagious Customer Service

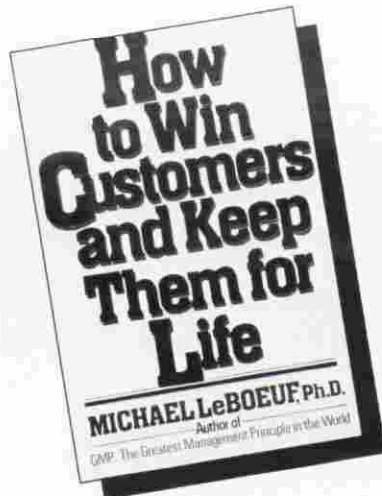
How to Win Customers and Keep Them for Life, by Michael LeBoeuf.

"A typical business hears from only 4 percent of its dissatisfied customers. The other 96 percent just quietly go away, and 91 percent never come back." Furthermore, 68 percent of customers quit a company because of "an attitude of indifference toward the customer by the owner, manager, or some employee."

Hmmm . . . losing so many valuable customers could present a serious financial loss over time. But what to do about it? Author Michael LeBoeuf reveals many of the secrets and a lot of the common sense behind achieving quality customer service in *How to Win Customers and Keep Them for Life*. He calls it a "handbook for transforming the people of any size organization into a customer-driven, turned-on team." This 1988 release has already enjoyed eight hard-cover printings, and is now out in paperback, along with a video along the same lines produced by Cally Curtis Company.

In a "user friendly" style, LeBoeuf invites readers to dog-ear and scribble in the margins of the short, practical chapters and to take notes to share with employees or co-workers.

In Part One, he describes the fundamentals of creating and keeping customers, particularly knowing the difference between selling merely to make a sale and helping people to buy to create a loyal customer. The greatest business secret in the world, he says, is rewarding customers for being customers—"the rewarded customer buys, multiplies, and comes back." In addition, the greatest customer you'll ever win is yourself, LeBoeuf claims. "People are far more persuaded by the depths of your beliefs and emotions than any amount of logic or knowledge you possess." And once customers are sold on you, they're a



lot closer to being sold on your product.

Another secret is realizing that people don't want to buy products, they want to buy good feelings and solutions to problems. As one customer remarked, "Don't sell me clothes. Sell me a sharp appearance, style, and attractiveness. . . . Don't sell me a house. Sell me comfort, contentment, a good investment, and pride of ownership." After all, LeBoeuf says, a large part of good service is show biz—entertaining, amusing, and making the customer feel good. Thus, if you help customers to like themselves better, they'll love you.

Part Two shows how to turn potentially damaging "moments of truth" into positive experiences—such as how to melt a customer's anger or objections through agreement, empathy, and value building. Also, making a special effort to get to know a customer or to customize products and services, according to LeBoeuf, can virtually eliminate the competition. "When you know more about the customer than the competition does, and meet [the customer's] needs better than your competition does, you (in effect) have no competition." In other words, don't homogenize, customize!

LeBoeuf has a writing style that makes the message stick. Each chapter begins with an interesting story, includes specific details and examples, and has plenty of anecdotes and quotes to spice it all up. Take the lady who remarked to a rude clerk, "I believe you have things backward. You are overhead. I am profit." Or the New York restaurant owner who learned to look at his business through his customer's eyes and to use every opportunity to emphasize his great service. After finishing a plate of Italian food, a satisfied customer told the owner, "Your veal parmigiana is better than the one I had in Italy last month." The owner replied, "Of course it is. You see, they use domestic cheese. Ours is imported."

In Part Three, LeBoeuf outlines a step-by-step action plan for creating a measurable, customer-driven reward system at work. "There are three basic ways for a manager to teach employees how to treat customers: tell them what you want, show them what you want, measure and reward what gets done."

"Where service is excellent, the people in charge do a whole lot more than tell employees what they want," he writes. "They act as role models and show a genuine concern for customers by taking the time to listen to and help them. And they back up their commitment to customer service by looking for, measuring, recognizing, and rewarding performance that results in good service at all levels and in all jobs. On the other hand, where service is poor, management talks about how important customers are but is just too busy to deal directly with them." (Customer: "May I have a glass of water, please?" Waiter: "Sorry, that's not my table.")

LeBoeuf writes with wit, brevity, and frankness. He does the reader (his customer) a great service by not blathering on about his own experiences, but by zeroing in on readily useful information and real lessons.

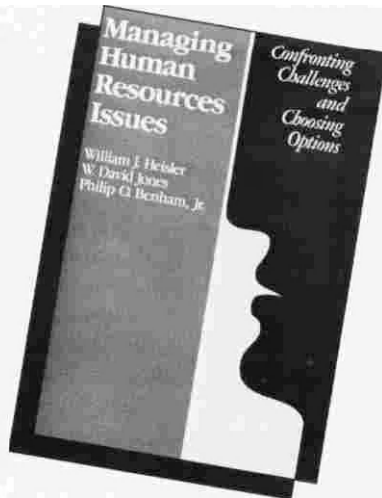
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How to Win Customers joins the ranks of many other books on one of today's hottest management topics, but LeBeouf's concise, unquestioningly helpful style, puts it near the top. If customer-service is (or should be) your business, put this one on your must-read list.

LeBoeuf is an internationally published author, lecturer, and professor of management at the University of New Orleans.

How to Win Customers and Keep Them for Life. 190 pp. New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 800/631-9100, hardcover \$17.95; softcover \$7.95.

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Alternatives for Action

Managing Human Resources Issues: Confronting Challenges and Choosing Options, by William J. Heisler, W. David Jones, and Philip O. Benham Jr.

Managing Human Resources Issues is a broadly based book with a practical, public-policy orientation. It is designed to help human-resources students and practitioners confront a wide and increasingly complex range of issues and develop policies and practices that are consistent with organizational cultures and business conditions of today and tomorrow.

Managing Human Resources Issues focuses on five major issues as they relate to the workplace, and on how to balance related legal, ethical, and financial concerns. Each chapter discusses the origins of one issue and its current and potential importance to human resources management (HRM). The authors cite data on specific practices that companies have used for integrating, reinforcing, and "shaping" practices and policies with existing functions (management style, performance-

appraisal systems, job design, and compensation policies).

"Shaping considers the long-term planning implications of a policy response as well as the short-term directing and controlling implications. Shaping is the strategic posture that best serves the HRM, financial, and operational needs of today's organization."

In Part One, the authors take an empathetic but tough approach to handling two critical issues—substance abuse and AIDS—and their effect on today's workforce.

"Concern for the dignity of individual employees coincides with concern for maintaining productivity and morale. The dilemma confronting employers, it seems, is avoiding the parochial appeals of the self-righteous, on the one hand, and the self-indulgent, on the other hand. . . . Some managers will be tempted to join the fray, to choose sides. Succumbing to the temptation, however, can only be self-defeating. The issue is the ability to perform assigned work once reasonable accommodations have been made for an acknowledged handicap. Performance to standards, not conformance to rules, should be the philosophy."

Part Two addresses compensation and benefits, including strategies for

containing and making employees aware of health-care costs, for improving personal health (through employer-supported programs on such topics as smoking, alcoholism, exercise, weight control, and stress management), and for determining comparable worth and job value. The authors summarize the various opinions on and legal status of each issue and offer practical suggestions and alternatives for action. That information, though somewhat generalized, could serve as a springboard for internal policy analysis in specific situations.

The next section discusses the changing employment environment and the balancing of employer and employee rights. "There is a growing expectation by employees that they have a fundamental interest in and a right to a job . . . increasing the pressures on judges and legislators to place restrictions on employers. To help stem the erosion of their rights, employers must be more proactive in safeguarding their rights." The authors suggest employers notify employees of the actual terms and conditions of employment, clarify the employer's rights in job applications and employee handbooks, and make performance-appraisal systems fairer and termination procedures clearer so employees know where they stand.

Part Four discusses performance-management methods and retraining practices that can realign skills to meet changing job demands. "Retraining will become an increasingly important component of an organization's productivity plan. Extending an employee's career will require one of two options—renewal or repositioning. Renewal is the adaptation of existing skills to new conditions. . . . Repositioning, on the other hand, applies to employees who must qualify for positions in other fields; often the repositioned employee is employed by a different company in a different industry."

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The authors also outline how to establish an effective grievance procedure and five elements of an effective performance-appraisal system. "It is important that supervisors be trained to set realistic expectations of good performance, not just adequate performance. Performance expectations should reflect the firm's policies and practices with respect to all aspects of employee performance, including attendance, conflict of interest, and ethics, not just day-to-day work activities."

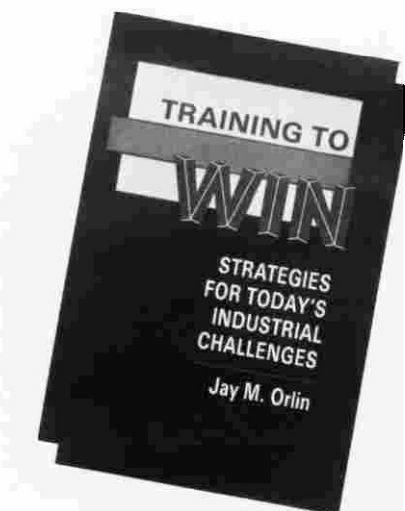
Figures, charts, and a general summary of conditions, consequences, and pros and cons complement the book, as well as a list of names, addresses, and phone numbers of contact organizations. This is a well-researched, clearly written, academic piece that lends itself to academic and political discussion. Incorporating this book into specific workplace situations will require clear thinking and logical processing.

The authors are employees of Newport News Shipbuilding, a subsidiary of Tenneco. Heisler is manager of management development and employee training, Jones is manager of employment, and Benham is program administrator for management training. *Managing Human Resources Issues: Confronting Challenges and Choosing Options*. 250 pp. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 415/433-1767, \$22.95.
Circle No. 181 on Reader Service Card.

Global Pursuits

Training to Win: Strategies for Today's Industrial Challenges, by Jay M. Orlin.

Competition. There's that word again. Definitions abound, but one thing is certain: competitive com-



panies have a certain edge that allows them to achieve their goals in positive ways, to be winners in the game of business.

According to Jay Orlin, effective technical training is that certain edge that makes the critical difference between winning and just playing the game. "A company's ultimate competitive advantage is its ability to train and retrain people effectively."

Training to Win was written to demystify the world of technical training. Orlin takes a macro-level look at today's business environment, factories of the future, and various training strategies. Drawing on his own experience, he tells training managers the steps involved in a training strategy, what they need to know for effective implementation, and what many would like to know about technology in general. A number of high-tech photographs (such as weightless-environment and space-shuttle simulators) provide a glimpse of the level of technology already available and of what's around the corner.

In one analogy, he likens the automated factory of the future to Disney World. "On the surface everything is clean, life seems simple and idyllic, events occur right on time. Below the surface, however, is a beehive bustling with

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activity. Everything is carefully timed and maintained so that the hive hums. Disney World thrives because, among other things, its managers are meticulous about training."

Orlin says American companies could learn a thing or two about training methods and managerial commitment to training from other cultures. "In terms of manpower planning, Japanese firms have some straightforward ideas. They want to have the right people in the right places at the right times. This is not something they leave to chance. The companies have 10-year plans, and they develop products and people to match those plans. It is not unusual for an employee to have a 10-year training plan in place shortly after joining a company."

Japanese companies "always schedule indoctrination for new employees. The basic orientation lasts three days to three weeks for nonmanagement positions. This introduction is devoted to building loyalty to the company, extensive education about the company's history, and reinforcing work ethics. Skills training may begin during this time as well. For management, the basic training period runs two months to two years and includes extensive exposure to all aspects of the company's business. This exposure is usually accomplished through job rotations."

Orlin discusses the future of manufacturing and how changing technology and shortages in the technical labor pool will change the way we do business. "In the future many jobs will have changed from semiskilled to skilled. The increase in the need for technicians will be dramatic," particularly in critical-industries training, when practice must produce perfection, as in the training of airline pilots, nuclear-power-plant operators, and astronauts.

In case after case, Orlin shows the growing need for state-of-the-art

training and more technically oriented workers who can think for themselves.

"Almost all jobs in the high-tech factory of the future will have an extensive technical component. Increased sophistication of equipment will require more specialization by technicians and more time devoted to each piece of equipment. Engineering professionals will be asked to spend more and more of their time on improving processes. They will be less available to make repairs, troubleshoot, or inspect for quality. Therefore, it will become more important for people on the line to think for themselves and troubleshoot on a daily basis."

Orlin discusses the best ways to implement training and the process of course development. He highlights models for improving technical-training delivery through instructional design, instructor-guided training, and interactive media—live, two-way video; slides and audiotapes with workbook options; computer games and exercises; and teleconferencing.

He emphasizes the importance of a well-planned technical-training strategy based on a thorough analysis of the business and effective implementation and follow-through. "The string that ties strategy to successful implementation is human interaction," which requires "team building, networking, creating timelines and milestones, disseminating information, 'buying in,' and developing accountability mechanisms. If the 'people' element is not cultivated, the rest of the effort is wasted."

Above all, Orlin says a "winning training strategy goes one step beyond successful implementation of a good program. It makes a positive, cost-effective contribution to the company. It follows up on implementation. Measuring and reporting the results of training complete the picture. If everything has been researched and planned properly,

the results should fall easily, like fruit from a tree. Company sponsors should be kept supplied with this fruit. They need it to verify not only what the training manager has accomplished, but also what they have accomplished."

Orlin is a senior member of the productivity methods and systems staff for Northern Telecom Electronics.

Training to Win: Strategies for Today's Industrial Challenges. 149 pp. New York, NY: Nichols Publishing, 212/580-8079, \$32.50. **Circle No. 182 on Reader Service Card.**

Additional Reading

Great Ideas in Management: Lessons from the Founders and Foundations of Managerial Practice, by W. Jack Duncan. 286 pp. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 415/433-1767, \$22.95. **Circle No. 183 on Reader Service Card.**

Strategic Human Resource Development, by William J. Rothwell and H.C. Kazanas. 563 pp. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 201/592-2000, \$42.67. **Circle No. 184 on Reader Service Card.**

The Succession Planning Handbook for the Human Resource Executive, by Walter R. Mahler. 292 pp. Midland Park, NJ: Mahler Publishing, 201/447-1130, \$55.00. **Circle No. 185 on Reader Service Card.**

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