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It's All About Trust

Trust men, and they will be true to you; treat them greatly
and they will show themselves great.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

To have great performance and, as a result, championship customer service, there are two overriding realities: You have to be able to trust your leader and you have to be able to trust your teammates. That means complete, utter trust. And it has to be built and maintained as systematically as you possibly can.

You see it over and over, in everything from business to the military to sports. It's an absolutely essential ingredient! Without a foundation of trust, everything is lost. If you don't trust those with whom you work or the people for whom you work, that implicit spark—people coming together to serve or help each other—sputters and dies.

Why Trust Matters—Particularly Today

Before moving on to the issue of trust and how to build it into your organization and a championship customer service program, it's important to look at why trust matters so much today. Corporate America faces an incredible challenge in the element of trust. We don't have many models of trust. We don't have many people whom we can trust. We have seen the breakdown of trust, both within business and elsewhere. We've seen Enron and Martha Stewart. We have seen many others like them. We've also seen a breakdown of trust even within religion. We've seen repeated breakdowns of trust in our politicians and in the political process itself. In seemingly every walk of life, we've seen incredible organizations or people who are perceived as great leaders or great

organizations, of seemingly unquestioned integrity and trust, which suddenly crumble when it's revealed that, in one way or another, they were completely untrustworthy.

The lack of trustworthiness is pervasive. The overriding message so many of us are receiving today is “Don't Trust” or “Nothing or No One is Trustworthy.” This message is everywhere! Look at television, all the shows whose sole purpose is to try to catch people doing things. That's why people watch them! Look at the popularity of tabloids—all the gossip and innuendo and the focus on trying to catch people in a moment of weakness or a mistake.

And, tragically, that can carry over into both your business and the people with whom you do business. Take an employee, at home reading a magazine or newspaper or watching television. Before long, he sees some story about some company caught with its hand in the cookie jar. How natural it would be for that employee to think “Well, that's business for you. I bet my company and management aren't a bit different.”

The same holds true with your clients and customers. Wash them enough in a culture of mistrust and the assumption of mistrust becomes automatic and assumed. Think about the last time you or someone you know had an error in your favor—maybe the bank credited you money that's not yours or a clerk forgot to ring up an item you intended to buy. If you didn't say something right then and there, what was your reasoning for not pointing out the mistake?

“They lie about things all the time. This just evens it out a bit.”

Well, it shouldn't have to be that way, nor does it have to be with your organization. By placing a genuine value on trust and systematically building it into the root of all that you do—both inside and out—you'll be molding a model of championship customer service that, by its very design and function, excels at every turn. And, in so doing, you'll cement solid, fulfilling relationships

with your customers—the vast majority of whom, you may be pleasantly surprised to discover, value the importance of trust every bit as much as you do.

Start with Your Values

One element that many organizations overlook—to their detriment—is a set of core values. By core values, I mean identifying what truly matters to that organization. Is it honesty? Integrity? Accountability? Responsibility? An ongoing readiness to serve customers in any way possible and, whenever possible, wow them with that service?

A statement of values is absolutely central to developing the identity of your organization. It is the heart, the bedrock, and the core from which everything you do naturally flows. You know what you should be doing because it relates back to your essential values. And trust has to be among those essential values.

A CHAMPION'S CHOICE

If you don't already have a set of core organizational values in place, take the time to draw them up. Do it however works best—over time during a series of meetings, at a weekend retreat, whatever. But do get something down on paper. And involve people from across the scope of your organization. Nothing rings more hollow than a set of management produced “values” that comes down as a mandate to be forced to the “little people.” Solicit input from as many people as you can, from sales to marketing to the people at the front counter or down at the loading dock. Your set of values will

be all the stronger the more people you involve in their construction. And, once those values are in place, circulate them. Post them so people can see a visual reminder of the organization's values. That makes those values a living, ongoing player in everything your organization does.

MORE CHOICES

The Boy Scouts boil down their values to just a few words: “A scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.” The U.S. Air Force wants its people to have “integrity first, service above self, and excellence in all that you do.”

Those are core values summarized in just a few words. They're great examples for all organizations. Not only can they be easily posted and shared, they're above all easy to understand. You know full well what your values are when you can summarize them briefly. And, just as important, you know what you have to do to act on those values. But, they must be real.

Understanding the “Why”

Including as many people as you can in the development of your company's values—which includes trust, by the way—achieves one other highly significant goal. It explains the “why”—why things are the way they are in the organization, why certain things are done the way they are, and the reasons and ideas that underlie those thoughts and actions. Nothing may be more critical to championship customer service than everyone in your organization understanding the “why.”

 **A CHAMPION’S CHOICE**

Think back to a time when you were at work on a task—say, a project or trying to nail down a sale—and a question came up. A perfectly legitimate question. So, naturally enough, you went to your boss or your supervisor and, with the most sincere intent, asked why something was done in a certain manner.

Feel free to pick up a pen and tick off the answer of your choice:

- “Because I told you so!”
- “Because that’s how we do things!”
- “Because that’s the way it is!”

How empowering! How uplifting! Rather than offering a reasoned explanation, all you got was the equivalent of a boot in your backside!

This illustrates the importance of everyone understanding the “why” of things within your organization. Never make the mistake of thinking, “As the leader, I’m entitled not to tell you.” If your set of values is built honestly and with inclusion, everyone is naturally going to understand and embrace the thinking beneath how things are done—the “why.” They may need to be reminded on occasion, but they will nonetheless know of a consistent set of principles that drives you and what they do every day.

And that, in turn, builds trust. Since you came together as a team to build those values, they trust the team. Since they all had a say in building those values, they trust them as well. And they also trust the product or service they offer to your clients and customers. And that sense of trust, that deep feeling of “this is right,” builds customer service champions.

More Deposits, Fewer Withdrawals

Another way to approach the concept of trust is to treat it as a bank account. As with any account, you make both deposits and withdrawals. And, whether you know it or not, every single day in your organization, you're either making a deposit or a withdrawal.

Here's how it happens. If you're building someone up in your organization—imbuing them with confidence or direction—you're making a deposit. If you're telling someone with consistency that you're glad they're there, that you appreciate all the good work they're doing, that's a deposit. If you compensate your people fairly and offer them real incentives to better their performance, that's a deposit.

And that builds real trust. If you're demonstrating, day in and day out, that you're committed to making your people better in every way—coaching them, directing them, training them to move toward both their goals as well as that of your organization—they begin to trust you and build a solid core of belief in the value of what they do. It shows respect for and interest in others, a care for the company and the people who make up that company. That builds genuine trust. And that produces dividends that pay the organization for a lifetime.

By the same token, if you're offering hazy leadership or damaging someone's sense of confidence or teamwork, you're making a withdrawal.

Ignoring a job well done, an employee's consistent performance, or belittling someone for a mistake, you're making a withdrawal. And the ebb and flow of deposits and withdrawals in your organization functions as a bank account does. Have more deposits than withdrawals and things are being built. Withdraw more than you're putting in, and you go bankrupt—a bankruptcy that inevitably circles back to a bankruptcy of trust.

 **A CHAMPION'S CHOICE**

Here's a perfect example of a withdrawal that can absolutely bankrupt an organization's account of trust. We're all familiar with companies and industries that are struggling. Maybe they're in an industry that's hurting as a whole. Maybe the company is simply poorly run. Whatever. But jobs are being lost, outsourced. Benefits cut, raises shelved. People come into work cowering, unsure if they're going to go back home with a paycheck or a cardboard box filled with their personal belongings.

And, in the midst of all this anxiety, what happens? The CEO gives himself and senior level executives a huge raise! As the ship is foundering, they're climbing into golden parachute life boats, hoisting goblets of champagne, and saying: "Thanks for all your hard work—suckers!"

By contrast, think of how it felt—particularly if it was in a place where you worked—where the conditions were every bit as uncertain, the future every bit as dicey. And the CEO announces that she's taking a pay cut or that she's going to forego her salary entirely until things take a turn for the better?

Which of these two leaders would you trust more? Which one would you want to work harder for, contribute more, and, every bit as important, be enthusiastic about sharing that sense of trust with everyone outside your organization?

The message here is that, to build and maintain trust, an organization has to, in effect, run parallel with itself. You need to embody every deposit that you make in an organization. Trust doesn't happen—moreover, cannot happen—when leadership doesn't move in synch with the organization. To go against what's

happening all around you implies a lack of respect for the issues and challenges everyone else is facing. It implies a lack of respect for the other people on your team. And that shatters a sense of trust that, in turn, can shatter any prospect of building a championship customer service team.

I saw it only recently. I was waiting for a flight at an airport and, by chance, happened to be sitting close enough to a couple of airline mechanics so I could hear bits of their conversation. Now, everyone knows these days that many airlines are suffering and, from the gist of their talk, it was obvious that these guys were employed by one of the struggling carriers. Layoffs. Salary freezes. More demanded of them with fewer people and resources to accomplish what they needed to do. Bitter, alienated frustration came across. And, mind you, they added, all the while the head of the airline had just happily accepted a generous pay raise.

Just then one of the mechanic's walkie talkie crackled. They were to get over to Concourse B as quickly as possible to try to free a stuck jetway. The mechanic acknowledged the message, then clipped the walkie talkie back onto his belt. From there, the two just continued on with their conversation as though they'd never been interrupted at all. Meanwhile, the flight departs late. And you can be sure that a planeload of passengers senses that a withdrawal has happened somewhere within that airline.

The message was deafening: If the man at the top is pulling down all this cash, send him over there with a wrench! As for us, we'll get to it when we're ready.

When you make a withdrawal in an organization, someone inevitably makes another one. And that can kill customer service. Moreover, you never know who's ultimately going to be aware of that withdrawal. Those mechanics never would have suspected for a second that this guy who could hear every bit of their conversation was writing a book on customer service!

Knowing the effects, do you still think that airline head would have accepted the pay raise?

Small Deposits, Big Returns

Another misconception about trust is that it can be built with one massive, bold stroke. Maybe it comes from the movies—the army in disarray in the heat of a big battle, only to be suddenly emboldened by the commander climbing to the top of the trench, waving his sword (glistening in the sun, naturally) and rallying the troops to a sweeping, glorious triumph!

Very exciting, even inspiring, but the fact remains that trust in an organization—one that naturally flows into championship customer service—is best built with small deposits. It's the small things that happen consistently, and time after time, that cement a sense of trust. Buying pizzas for a sales team that exceeds a goal. Giving someone dealing with a crisis at home adequate time to resolve the problem. Keeping your word, doing precisely what you say you are going to do time and again, establishes a pattern of consistency and of justifiable expectation. Your people expect that you're going to do the right thing because you've always done it before.

The important thing, too, is that sense of consistency—of knowing that the trustworthy thing is always going to happen—isn't purely internal. An organization that has built trust slowly and systematically over time naturally carries that attitude over to its customer service. Customer expectations are consistently met and exceeded. Problems and slipups are reliably addressed, quickly and efficiently. Over time, customers come to trust—much as the people within your organization have already done—that the right thing is going to happen. Lapses in trust become the aberration,

not the expected. And what more powerful dynamic will cement a customer's loyalty for life than faith in a firm bedrock of trust?

⇒ **A CHAMPION'S CHOICE**

Don't leave your small deposits to chance. Start today, this very minute, by tracking them. Start a list and note every time you make a small deposit that works to build someone's level of trust. It doesn't matter how small or seemingly insignificant, just record every instance that you intend as a small deposit. And, at the same time, be equally aware of your withdrawals. Note each time you make a withdrawal that costs you.

At the end of each day, your tally of deposits should exceed the number of withdrawals—ideally, by a wide margin! And, if that's the case, day after day, you'll be building the environment of trust that, in turn, helps build an environment of trust with your customers.

Deposits and Servant-Leadership

The idea of Servant-Leadership that I discussed in the introduction goes hand in hand with building trust. An old-line boss didn't necessarily have to have too much trust around him. He barked orders and people jumped. If they didn't, they could jump right out the door.

But trust is central to being an effective Servant-Leader. A Servant-Leader is, indeed, a leader, but she's also a team member. She's there to help people perform at their best. She's there to coach, to critique in a positive manner. In every way possible, she's there to build people up. That's the role of the Servant-

Leader. And she needs trust from those around her to make all those responsibilities and objectives possible. Without trust, she may just as well go back to barking orders.

★ *My Trust All-Star* ★

I've known many people who built a consistent record of trust. One who stands out is General Gregory Martin, commander of U.S. Air Force Materiel Command. He is perhaps the very best leader I have ever seen in my entire life. Over the course of his career, he has built a track record, much of that derived from the trust he consistently established. Not only did that let him excel in whatever responsibility he had at the moment, it was of supreme value when he moved on to a new command. Even if people with whom he was working had no personal experience with him, they knew of his reputation of trust. And, as a result, they automatically gave him their trust, a trust that was warranted.

That carries a valuable lesson for any organization. If you have a tradition of trust in customer service, two things automatically happen. First, when working with a new client or customer, the precedence of championship customer service naturally ensures that level of excellence continues. Moreover, new clients and customers come to expect it and are attracted to your organization as a result of that tradition. What better marketing program could you ever possibly hope to have?

General Martin also understood the importance of building trust between generations. He recognized that it's often difficult for people in one generation to easily trust those in another. In fact, I worked with General Martin on a project where he brought my team into his command of more than 85,000 people to conduct a generational survey. He wanted to study the generational

issues and differences within his command. He also wanted to gain a sense of how the junior force thought and felt.

It was very insightful. General Martin sensed the junior force would be more responsive and comfortable talking with an emissary from outside the command—an “honest broker” who would offer ideas and suggestions in an unfiltered manner. His responsiveness in addressing their concerns and recommendations further cemented the trust he built between senior leadership and members of the junior force within his command.

The Power of the Audible in Building Trust

Anyone who follows football knows the importance of the audible. For those who don't, it's simple in its essence. As an offensive team approaches the line of scrimmage to begin a play, a quarterback scans the defense to see what their alignment happens to be. In a matter of literally seconds, that quarterback has to come to a decision—is the play called in the huddle going to work or not? If he determines there's a good chance for success, the play proceeds as planned. If not, he calls an audible. This is a different play that he signals to his teammates. Based on the situation, his read of the defensive structure, and other factors, this is a new play that he believes has the best chance of success.

Seems perfectly sensible, doesn't it? Since he believed that the original play called in the huddle was bound to fail, wouldn't it make every shred of sense in the universe to go to a Plan B, something that, at the very least, had a better shot at working effectively?

Of course it does! But, audibles don't happen very often in the world of business today. Far too many companies overlook the vital importance of letting their people call audibles when the situation warrants them. That can be the result of a number of

things—poor training, inadequate direction and support, among a host of other snafus.

But, at its essence, it also embodies a lack of trust. For whatever the underlying reason might be, even if the message is inadvertent, an employee is likely hearing only one thing:

“We don’t trust you to do the right thing. Even if it’s the wrong thing to do, we want you to do it any way.”

Take a moment and try to absorb the kind of damage that message can have, particularly on a level of customer service. How demoralizing, how discouraging and belittling. What sort of customer service might you reasonably expect from someone who’s told, in essence: “Don’t think. We don’t think you’re very good at it.”

That’s why empowering your people with the freedom to, in effect, call audibles is so central to building an environment of trust. Granted, that’s very much a matter of providing solid training and ongoing coaching—something that we’ll tackle in greater depth later on in this book—but it’s imperative to, at the very least, recognize and make it a goal to build a system that, over time, lets your employees exercise their best judgment in a given situation.

Think how that might actually play out. When a customer complains that his steak was overcooked, the server pleasantly replaces the steak or perhaps gives him dessert on the house. When a customer comes back to the hardware store saying that the box of bolts he bought don’t fit, the clerk behind the counter gladly offers a refund, even though store policy suggests that boxes, once opened, are nonreturnable.

Not much money involved, really—a \$2 piece of pie or a few bucks worth of hardware. But think of the twofold message those situations carry. On the one hand, there’s a message of respect for the customer, a vivid willingness to do anything that’s need to

correct something that went wrong or, at the very least, show that you're genuinely sorry for the mistake.

But, feel, too, what it's like for the employee to be in a position to make that sort of call. It's empowering, it builds confidence and self-respect, and it fuels a natural desire to do your job even better the next time around.

In a word: trust. And I can't stress enough: trust is a natural foundation for championship customer service, because it builds both from within and without. Work to build that trust at every opportunity possible.

A CHAMPION'S CHOICE

One effective way to build your skills in calling audibles—indeed, in any number of aspects of customer service—is role playing. If you let your people call the shots on occasion, don't leave them twisting in the wind to fail by not preparing them. Sports teams practice situational scenarios over and over so that an audible becomes a reliable, foreseeable option rather than a clutch at a chance straw.

Do the same with your organization. Practice various types of situations where employees may be selected to call an audible. Have someone act out a fuming executive whose shipment hasn't arrived, the customer whose tailpipe is dragging after it was supposedly installed properly, the stressed-out college kid facing a final exam in the morning calling to scream that she got anchovies instead of pepperoni! Watch what sort of audible people call and critique it positively. Was it too much or too little? Was the audible called with a sincere attitude to make the situation right or merely as a fast way to get rid of a headache? Don't forget it's seven times more expensive to get a new customer than to keep the one you have. If need be, practice situations over and over to

build both skills and confidence. In so doing, you'll also be building a sense of trust between yourself and your team. With every bit of practice, with every bit of coaching and encouragement you're telling them in so many words that you do, indeed, trust them. Powerful stuff.

⇒ **MORE CHOICES**

I know of a family—parents with two young kids—who has experienced the importance of both sides of the audible coin. They recently returned from a trip to Mexico. Coming into their initial destination in the United States, their plane was running a little late. On top of that, they had to face the chore of getting through customs before they could make their connecting flight home.

Coming out of customs, they realized they only had a few minutes to make their next flight. Even worse, the gate was a concourse away. As they glanced nervously at the clock, they noticed one of those electric carts that ferry travelers around the airport. The driver was just sitting there with his feet up on the dashboard.

They ran up to him. "Can you please give us a lift to the next concourse?" the father asked breathlessly.

"Nope," came the reply.

"Why not?"

"This cart is for handicapped and elderly only."

My friend looked around and didn't necessarily see a conga line of wheelchairs and senior citizens stretching around the corner. "But you're not doing anything now! We only have a couple of minutes!"

"Sorry. Policy."

Happily, my friends made their flight—thanks only to a frenzied dash through the airport, dragging both kids and

carry-on luggage, imploring people to clear a path. The kids were gasping and nearly in tears from panic as they finally boarded the jet.

Sorry. Policy.

Now, the happy flip side. This same family recently spent a week at a very nice seaside resort. The daughter in this family loves to bring this huge stuffed dog with her on every vacation that she can. I mean, this thing is huge—bigger than her—and it's floppy so that it can be played with and posed in any number of ways.

The first day the family returned to their room at day's end. The maid had been by earlier to clean the room. But, as they came into the room, they discovered the stuffed dog. It was lying on one of the beds, its head fluffed up comfortably with pillows, its legs crossed and the television remote in its hand! Every day, the maid took the time to leave the dog in a different position, reclining on its side or seated in a chair with a magazine, seemingly enjoying the vacation as much as the family was. At the end of the week, the family left the maid a thank-you note and a very generous tip, not to mention praising the maid in a personal discussion with the hotel's general manager.

It was clear that nowhere in that hotel was a room cleaning policy that discouraged the audible. None of this "You have only so many minutes to clean the room and move" nonsensical mandate.

And it came down to a few seconds that made a little girl feel very special indeed.

These vignettes show that audibles don't necessarily have to involve big-time decisions or even problems. They illustrate the importance of trusting your people to handle situations as they see

best to build championship customer service. And that starts with you letting them do just that.

Access Builds Trust

Another powerful building block to trust is accessibility. Stop and think about it: Recall the annoyance you felt trying to find a salesperson in a store, pulling up to a place of business only to find it mysteriously closed, or the hair-yanking frustration of trying to find help on an Internet site.

I currently have a client whose sales are down. They want to invest big bucks to do more Internet and direct marketing. Yet, just as they're willing to commit huge sums of money, they're consistently leaving people on hold and not serving those customers they already have. It's access. It's not about more calls and more sales. It's about championship service. Happily, we are helping them get the point.

Those are all issues of accessibility. That relates directly to the trust you want to build within your customers. You want them to know: "I'm here when you need me. No excuses." It also works internally. By being accessible to your customers, you build confidence within your organization. If you're accessible, you're ready. You're prepared. What you have to offer is of real value and you're ready to stand behind it. That's a champion's attitude.

How do you build accessibility? In a number of ways. Be generous with your time. If a customer wants to meet after hours, make the time. If someone enters the store minutes before closing, don't give them the bum's rush because you're supposed to be closing. Make sure your customers know just how they can reach you. I know of a hot tub store whose owner puts his home phone number and cell phone on every bit of material that comes from

that store, along with the promise to get back to you in no more than a half an hour. By no small coincidence, that store happens to be one of the biggest hot tub dealers in the country.

Trust the One You're With

Another important thing we have learned about trust in working with various organizations is that trust that comes from the very top isn't necessarily the most important form of trust. Sure, it's great to say you trust the man or woman up in the executive suite, but there are other bonds of trust that are even more critical.

Those are the bonds of trust that you have in the people closest to you—your supervisor, colleagues, and others with whom you work closely and on a daily basis. That means, no matter where you happen to be in an organization, it's imperative to build trust. To show those around you that you do what you'll say on a consistent basis. In fact, it's a lot more important than any kind of trust that can come down from the top floor! So, work to build it at every opportunity.

A CHAMPION'S CHOICE

L.L.Bean, the famous clothes and outdoor gear outfitter in Freeport, Maine, is a true champion of accessibility. As most everyone knows, they're open 24 hours, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. On a practical level, that means amazing things. How many places can you go and buy a quality Christmas gift on Christmas morning? How many places can you go and buy a top-notch fishing pole at 2 A.M. for a 10-year-old's birthday when the one you ordered from someone else never shows up? That's accessibility.

But there's an equally powerful underlying message. In its essence: We're never closed. We are always here to serve

you, when it's convenient for you, not the other way around. No matter what you need, no matter when you might need it, we're ready. That builds trust that lasts a lifetime and moves seamlessly from one generation to the next.

The Power of the Promise

When you really boil it down, not a lot of organizations these days are making promises—real promises, that is. Oh, we hear all sorts of ad slogans and slick buzzwords that try to fly under the radar as promises, but they're not, really. Ads entice you to buy something; A promise lets you know in no uncertain terms what you can expect to receive. Big difference.

That circles back to trust. If you don't make any promises, there's no breach of trust when you don't deliver. The mind-set seems to be: make promises, and all you're doing is setting yourself up to fall flat on your face when, as will inevitably happen, the promise goes unfulfilled. No promises made, no trust to be broken.

That's a mistake. We all need to make promises. Businesses need to make promises. First, it sets up with absolute certainty what your customer can expect. It sets up with absolute certainty what you need to do to meet and exceed that expectation. And, along the way, it cements a foundation of trust.

Once again, that happens both inside and out. On the outside, your customer comes to trust you as you deliver on that promise time and time again. And it builds trust on the inside as your organization comes to trust your core values, you and your every decision that works toward fulfilling the promises that you made—both to them as well as the people you serve on the outside.

They really do go hand in hand! What customer is genuinely going to build a sense of trust with a company when it's clear that the company isn't keeping its promise to its own people—much

like the airline mechanics intentionally dawdling as their CEO lugs a fat check home? By the same token, what employee will trust his own company if he knows that the organization isn't fulfilling its promise to its customers—much like a stock broker told to push one particular stock even though she realizes it isn't in many of her clients best interests.

A CHAMPION'S CHOICE

Not every company lacks a solid promise. But, once again, Bean's stands out. Have a look at their guarantee: "Our products are guaranteed to give 100 percent satisfaction in every way. Return anything purchased from us at any time if it proves otherwise. We do not want you to have anything from L.L.Bean that is not completely satisfactory."

Not exactly open to interpretation, is it? Nor is that any sort of after-the-fact policy. It's been that way ever since the store opened some 100 years ago! In fact, L.L.Bean, the founder, placed this notice on the wall of the Freeport store way back in 1916: "I do not consider a sale complete until goods are worn out and the customer still satisfied."

I've known people who've brought back jackets after 10 years and returned them just because they were old! And L.L.Bean took them back with a smile! But it doesn't take much imagination to guess where those people went to buy a new jacket. That's the trust and power that comes with a bona fide promise that's kept every time it's made.

MORE CHOICES

I know first hand the power of trust that a promise can generate. A few years back I worked with the University of Notre Dame football team as they prepared to face Colorado in the

Orange Bowl. The Fighting Irish had to overcome a terrible mind-set of past failures. And, in working with them in various ways, I effectively made them a promise: that they were going to toss the past aside and win the game.

Nothing, of course, ever comes easily. In the third quarter, the game was still very much in question. In the heat of the action, this gigantic offensive lineman suddenly ran over to me on the sidelines and yelled: "Coach! Coach! You sure we're still gonna win?"

"Man," I replied, "I promise you you're gonna win!" With that, he hefted me up and planted a big kiss on my cheek! And, Notre Dame did go on to win that particular Orange Bowl, 21 to 6.

Coach Lou Holtz and the team gave me the game ball that day. But, perhaps even more important, it reinforced in me the power and trust that a promise kept can carry. It sets a standard, a goal, and trust is the fuel that drives you toward those measurements of success.

If nothing else, I shudder to think what might have happened had I said: "Hey! I never promised you anything!"

I doubt it would have been a kiss that was planted on my cheek by a dirty, sweaty football player.

GAME PLAN

What You Can Do to Build Championship Customer Service through Trust

1. Consider what a lack of trust can do. Have you really considered the ramifications of all the breakdowns of trust we see all around us every day?
2. Build a set of values that includes the importance of trust. Have you worked with others in your organization to identify

those core values that you deem important? List your organization's core values.

3. Make sure that everyone knows the “why.” Have you included your people in the values process enough so that they understand why the values are important and how they relate to what your organization does?
4. Make more deposits and fewer withdrawals. Are you tracking every time you build someone up—and, conversely, when you bring someone down—so you know for certain that you're building trust in your organization? Make a list that goes along with the ideas and objectives of Servant-Leadership.
5. Build your trust slowly and systematically. Are you building trust both inside and out so that trust comes to be the expected status quo rather than the unexpected?
6. Let your people feel free to call audibles when they think they'll work. Are you building trust by working with your people to train and empower them to make championship customer service decisions? Are you practicing those skills so they become confident in calling those audibles when they think they're necessary?
7. Be sure to make and keep promises. Are you making clear, easy to understand promises—both to your organization and your customers—so that trust in championship customer service thrives both on the outside as well as within your organization? Build a list of your organization's customer service promises.