

# Sales and Service Excellence

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## SERVICE/ELEMENTS

### Service Culture *Consider four basic elements.*



by Rob Rush

**C**ULTURE DICTATES WHO WE are, what we do, how we do it, and how we pass it along. Culture is the integrated pattern of knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to future generations.

In today's media, *culture* is used as a catch-all proxy for various pitfalls and challenges. For instance: Poor hiring decisions: "Bob just wasn't a good fit for the culture." Personal leadership styles: "The new CEO is looking to put a personal stamp on the culture." Training: "This course will effectively 'teach' the culture." Identification of goals/priorities: "Our culture emphasizes financial metrics over customer care."

Culture is not a band-aid, quick-fix or turnaround solution. It is not available in off-the-shelf training, and you can't "change" it just because the boss says so. Of course, the passing of generations without the related transfer of relevant information as a foundation is just as flawed. In reality, culture is a perfect marriage of information and inspiration, purpose and execution, standards and storytelling.

**Knowledge.** This is the basic blocking and tackling: what is it we do,

how, where and when do we do it.

**Belief.** Why is this the way things are? Why is it important, for me and for the group.

**Behavior.** How does the knowledge and belief manifest itself in the type of person that you are both on the job and off, and how you interact with other people. How intuitive the desired behaviors are to those within your culture is indicative of its relative strength—is this something we have to work at, or does it come naturally?

**Learning and knowledge transfer to succeeding generations.** A strong culture will have formal and informal ways of perpetuating itself. Culture, by definition, needs to be slow-cooked in a crockpot, not seared over a hot flame. In the multitude of "how-to" articles on developing a "customer service culture," invariably the most important word in the article is "repeat." Only in repetition—over time, personnel, geography, situation—does the continuum effectively flow from knowledge to belief to behavior to ingrained culture.

For a truly aligned culture (and cultural shift), all four elements need to be marching in lockstep. So before you look to develop a guest service culture from scratch or "overhaul" your culture, understand the elements that affect your current state and the time and effort that it will take to shift. **SSE**

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**ACTION: Make sure all elements are present.**

