

# HotelExecutive Insider

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## You Call it Sales... I Call it Service...

By Rob Rush, CEO, LRA Worldwide



As anyone who has nurtured and grown a small company can attest, job titles alone don't always tell the full story. In the twenty-plus years that have passed since my partner and I founded LRA Worldwide, I have served in many capacities within the company that don't exactly conjure up the typical images of "CEO." As chief cook and bottle washer – a job description which has included the glamorous task of inspecting hotel bathrooms - no role has been more vital to the success of my company...or more fraught with negative aspersions than that of "salesman."

Thankfully, for those of us who have been saddled with the "S" label – and all of the baggage that comes with it – the tide appears to be turning. As I discuss in my article in this week's *Hotel Business Review* titled "You Call it Sales, I Call it Service...Let's Call the Whole Thing Off" many high-performing organizations are merging the sales-service continuum in order to provide a customer experience truly oriented towards customer needs.

In short, good salesman and service personnel are morphing from previous incarnations as "order takers" or "problem solvers" to become..."needs anticipators." As clumsy as that label may appear on paper, it is a truly accurate description of the sales-service model guaranteed to grow revenues and customer satisfaction. When you anticipate needs, you serve the customer in a manner that they appreciate...and potentially add incremental sales to the bottom line.

Win. Win.

More and more of our client projects are focusing on how to raze the organizational silos - not only between sales and service, but between all departments - in favor of a more holistic approach to recognizing and delivering on customer needs, all in the name of "customer experience."

In many instances, these companies need to redefine what business they are in. Ken Blanchard, the author of One Minute Manager, often recounts the work that he did with the San Diego Padres prior to their move to a brand new ballpark, Petco Park. When challenged to define the "business" that they were in, Padres executives balked (pun intended!) at limiting the definition to "baseball" or "entertainment;" instead, they opined that they were in the business of "making memories." Likewise, Harley Davidson famously defines itself as a player in the "rebel lifestyle" business, insisting that the company doesn't really manufacture and sell motorcycles, rather than "the ability for a 43-year-old accountant to dress in black leather, ride through small towns and have people be afraid of him." We are leading many of our clients – Stowe Mountain Resort, the NBA, Shea Homes, etc. – through this cathartic internal discussion....and they are emerging from the process more focused on the true value that they are providing their customer (or fan, or guest, or member), as well as the customer experience (sales, service or otherwise) that delivers that value.

In any case, enjoy the read and I'll be back in touch soon! I always welcome the opportunity to chat about topics within the hospitality industry or receive feedback on my articles, so feel free to call or e-mail via the contact information below.

Cheers,

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