

Griffith University Librarians

Friday February 16th 2007

Final draft

[SLIDE name] Firstly I want to thank y'all for having me at your conference here in Australia. This is the first time I have been down under and I am really excited to be here so I am going to act like a local and say g'day.

[SLIDE map] Yes, I am finally down under. I just love that term, down under. But I have to say that when I am back home in California I don't feel like I am up over. So since I am down under I am going to make the most of it by meeting the Nicole Kidman **[SLIDE Nicole overlay wrong photo?]**, throwing a shrimp on the barbie **[SLIDE]** and drinking one of your wonderful **[SLIDE]** fosters beers.

OK, you are probably wondering who is this guy and what is he doing at our conference? Not an unreasonable question and fortunately for me I have been to the reference section and have some believable answers for you.

[SLIDE name] As _____ said in the introduction my name is David Stephenson and I am founder president and CEO of the **[SLIDE nidecus logo]** Nidecus Corporation. Nidecus is the leading US..actually I would go so far as to say we are the leading global consultant in customer service for tertiary institutions. **[SLIDE customer service]** I founded Nidecus in 1990 after I graduated from Colombia University having completed an MBA course. The irony is that the customer service I experienced there was so appalling that it became the subject of my final year project.

[SLIDE document] My paper was instrumental in the University implementing a campus-wide review of customer service experiences and the creation and introduction of a set of protocols, standards and a fancy smancy **[SLIDE STATEMENT]** "level of commitment" statement.

My project was so successful that I spotted a niche market and have turned it into a business that has grown to **[SLIDE \$\$\$]** a \$30million a year company. You know the irony in all this? I actually failed my MBA.

I am in Australia – g'day as the keynote speaker at the **[SLIDE CSIA logo]** Customer Service Institute of Australia conference. My long time and good friend _____ heard I was coming and in return for some great Aussie hospitality you are lucky enough to have the benefit of my vast knowledge.

[SLIDE what is] Customer service is more than just being nice to people or having a motivational poster on the door. You know the ones I mean...it says something like **[SLIDE poster]** "The secret to success is to treat all customers as if your inner being is as one." Yes, that is an actual customer service poster. After you have read it once or twice and either not understood it or completely ignored it you don't even notice the thing any more.

Customer service is more than that and if you will allow me to be a little Zen, a lot less at the same time. Today you are going to get the best tools available to help you lift your levels of customer service. You know the great part about this? You don't actually have to do anything. You'll see what I mean later.

[SLIDE what is] So, let's start at the beginning by defining customer service...actually, lets go back a step further and define a customer. **[SLIDE what is customer]** It isn't difficult, but **j[SLIDE]**just in case you didn't know it, **[SLIDE definition]** a customer is anyone who uses our goods or services. Notice I used "uses" instead of purchases.

It wasn't so long ago that librarians didn't think they had customers. Since there is no money changing hands how on earth could that person be a customer? I am pretty sure that that attitude has long gone by the wayside here in Australia, just as it has back home as we all move forward into the future towards which we are heading.

[SLIDE what is] So, now we know what a customer is, what exactly is this thing called Customer Service. We all know it when we are on the receiving end...whether it be good service or bad service...and we'll come to some examples of both in a minute.

[SLIDE customer right] Let's start with a survey. How many of you believe that the customer is always right? Hogwash. That notion was a politically correct concept dreamed up by some left wing consumer advocate group and swallowed by a gullible corporate world **[SLIDE corporate monster]** that was looking for any competitive advantage they could get,

Sure, the customer is often right, **[SLIDE cartoon]** but just as often they are wrong and trying to exploit the corporations that fell for the rhetoric that the customer is always right. It created a decade of bully customers who demanded more than they deserved.

[SLIDE scales?] Customer service has returned to a comfortable balance. A comfortable balance where if the customer is wrong they are generally willing to accept that and just the same, if a company is wrong, they will do their best to deny it.**[SLIDE monkeys]**

Of course while that is customer service, it is not great customer service and that is what we are here to explore.

There are many definitions of customer service that all mean more or less the same thing, but I particularly like this one...mainly because I wrote it myself.

***[SLIDE]** Customer Service is the commitment to providing value added services to external and internal customers, including attitude, knowledge, technical support and quality of service in a timely manner*

Let's analyse this statement because although it is a great summation of customer service, it is the individual sections that set it apart.

Customer service is the**[SLIDE highlight]** commitment to providing. That is the fundamental part of the whole thing that makes it work for both you and the customer. Great service does not happen accidentally. It takes intention, dedication and a conscious decision to **[SLIDE highlight]** provide value added services.

[SLIDE WTF?] WTF does that mean, "value added"? The classic example is McDonalds. **[SLIDE arches]** People go in there for a hamburger, they order it and what is the next thing they hear? Something that has become a cliché. **[SLIDE mcd seller]** "Would you like fries with that?". In fact, it has become so robotic at McDonalds that it is an example of what is not great customer service, and has become symbolic of cynical corporate attempts to get people to spend more. **[SLIDE heart tick]** Just like the new "heart foundation tick" I heard about. But no matter what you think of the practice, it is a great example of value adding.

The misconception a lot of people have is that to value add implies that there is some sort of physical component involved...like **[SLIDE fries]** fries. But that is way off the truth, the value you can add is in the level of service you offer. In your case it can be as simple as a

friendly and sincere “is there anything else I can help you with?” **[SLIDE cheesy smile?]** but it is the core of what great customer service is all about...the customer having the feeling they have been taken care of an that you are contributing to their experience in a way they hadn't anticipated. **[SLIDE satisfied customer]** Instead of this **[SLIDE aunt bobbie]**

You are doing this to both **[SLIDE highlight]** external and internal customers. What does that mean? Obviously, everybody who you see during your day's work. Nothing infuriates me more than when I am doing business somewhere and a co-worker approaches or the phone rings and the person serving me deems that to be more important than finishing the transaction with me. If you want to make a customer feel worthless, simply make a distraction more important than taking care of them.

I want to make the point that you are all going to know exactly what I am talking about because I can guarantee that each and every one of us has had these things happen to us. But I ask the question, if we don't like how it feels when we are on the receiving end of indifferent service, why do many of us tend not to give the service we would like to receive? We'll explore that in depth later.

[SLIDE highlight] Now it comes down top what **you** as an individual can contribute “attitude and knowledge”. Your attitude combined with your knowledge is your unique asset that no one else can reproduce. It is why we return to our favourite hairdresser or the person at the hardware or mechanic, because we have an experience that they have a good attitude and know what they are talking about. How good does it feel to enter a business and feel known? **[SLIDE shake hands?]**

Successful service staff are great at remembering **[SLIDE collage faces names – cross linked]** names and faces or if they aren't they make sure they do their homework on who they might expect in their business that day. Every time someone does a transaction with you, you sight some sort of ID card.**[SLIDE card]** On that card is one of the most important pieces of information about the person...**[SLIDE highlight name]** their name. Use it.

[SLIDE highlight] The technical support side of it can sometimes be limited by the facilities and tools your employer provides to you and this is often a major source of frustration to both staff and customers. The customer has an expectation, you as staff want to be able to help, but are limited by **[SLIDE rules]** internal rules or have hit the technical limit of what you can do for someone.

This is especially irritating when you both know that there are solutions but that your employer has for whatever reason chosen not to implement the ability to provide them. What do you do in this situation? When there is an obvious solution, but you are unable to provide it? Great customer service would sound like “I am really sorry I can't do that for you, **[SLIDE report]** I am going to put in a report and see if we can have this situation rectified”. How would the customer feel? Like they have been heard and that you care about their experience enough to want to try to improve it next time. Great customer service in action.

[SLIDE highlight] The final part of the statement is “in a timely manner”. What is the most frustrating thing we hear nowadays “All our operators are busy, please hold, your call is important to us”. I am fond of screaming into the phone “If my call is so damned important, put more god-damned staff on”. But it doesn't seem to help.

So, there we have it...

***[SLIDE highlight all]** Customer Service is the commitment to providing value added services to external and internal customers, including attitude knowledge, technical support and quality of service in a timely manner*

There it is, plain and simple, the definition of customer service. Now we know what it is, how can it be put into action, especially in the unique environment that is a library and especially **[SLIDE university (library?)]** the unique environment that is a University library?

That is what we are going to explore today. By the end of this session you are going to be customer service **[SLIDE super logo]** super heroes, ready to take on the world. In fact, we might use all of you for our new reality show **[SLIDE TV screen]** "check me out".

Let's take a look at where customer service is heading in US libraries because you can be certain that as soon as you Aussies catch up these radical and sometimes controversial innovations, will impact you here.

[SLIDE war brain] As you know, we are in the middle of a war against common sense. This is happening world wide, but particularly **[SLIDE map]** in the USA and especially **[SLIDE highlight]** in the South. In some areas, books on evolution are being replaced by books on so called **[SLIDE ID]** intelligent design. I say that the proponents of intelligent design are the most obvious proof that there isn't any.

[SLIDE librarian cop?] In the US librarians are becoming front line homeland security officers. We have been required to undergo training to detect and report suspicious activity. There is currently legislation being proposed where libraries will be required to install what is euphemistically called **[SLIDE computer]** "search analysis software" but is in fact a method by which we will be automatically monitoring people's catalogue searches and are required to report any searches deemed suspicious **[SLIDE FBI]** to the FBI.

Some libraries are required to undertake the trials against their wishes...all in the name of what is euphemistically called **[SLIDE borders]** "national security". Me personally? I think that the **[SLIDE pendulum safe - stupid]** pendulum has swung too far. Sure there is a threat that needs to be addressed, but I say that when we live constantly in fear the terrorist have won...**[SLIDE fear]** they have us terrified.

So here we are facing what is known as the **[SLIDE crap]** "Central Research Acquisition Programme" in the USA. The more astute among you would have noticed the humorous acronym. Obviously someone who was part of the naming of it didn't think much of the idea because it spells CRAP.

By all measures of common sense the whole homeland security situation has gotten out of hand, but never more so than in situations like this. But here's the good bit. We all know that librarians are an intelligent lot who will come up with an idea to subvert the system. You will be pleased to know that American librarians are revolting. The best for of defence to such stupidity as the CRAP legislation is passive non-violent resistance.

[SLIDE 45 mill] In the 45 million analysed searches so far, **[SLIDE 0]** not a single one has been what anyone would call truly suspicious. Every reported search has been something completely innocent like **[SLIDE islam]** theology students searching for information on Islam, **[SLIDE rocket]** engineers looking up rocket science, **[SLIDE atom]** physicists studying nuclear physics.

You can imagine the effect this has all had on the perceived level of customer service. Librarians were starting to be **[SLIDE barbed wire]** seen as the enemy.

So, what were we to do? There has been an orchestrated and subversive campaign organised designed to **[SLIDE accumulating paper]** overwhelm the system with apparently genuine but obviously frivolous reports. Needless to say that if we came across something that we thought was a serious issue we would **[SLIDE highlight one]** prioritise it, but there hasn't been a single case of genuine suspicious search activity in those 45 million analysed searches. Our overwhelm them strategy has produced some interesting results.

One student was having an airline themed party and searched the internet for balloons shaped like a jumbo jet. **[SLIDE inflatable plane]** He was reported as wanting to blow up an airplane. This infuriated the FBI, but the librarians just **[SLIDE halo]** shrugged their shoulders and acted all innocent.

Eventually the programme was scaled back but as you can imagine, the damage that was done in 3 months is still having an effect 4 years later.

Even though in attempt to recover the trust of customers librarians lifted the level of service by several magnitudes it wasn't enough. Trust that has been lost is a difficult thing to regain.

[SLIDE logo] So that was where Nidecus came in. We were contacted by the **[SLIDE FAKE]** Federation of American K-12 Educators initially. They were looking for ways to lift the profile and trust level of their members.

[SLIDE logo] Knowing that this was not going to be an easy task Nidecus billed accordingly, but we succeeded in such a positive way that the program was taken up almost immediately by first public libraries, then corporate libraries, next was virtual libraries, and ultimately tertiary libraries.

[SLIDE DC] Let's jump straight to the programs that were most trialled in the Smithsonian library in Washington DC and cover why some worked and why some didn't. Actually, I don't think I even need to spend much time on that as it will be plainly obvious to the average thinking person which worked and which didn't and why:

- **[SLIDE author reading]** Book readings – This is a popular concept at literary festivals and given that libraries are all about literature it seemed like a good idea...and it was. We had a comprehensively wide and diverse programme of authors spending time reading read portions of their works and have students discuss it with the author. This worked well most of the time but the attendance was quite disappointing for the reading of Swarkovski's "Qualitative measurement of tectonic structure in the quaternary igneous rock structure".

- **[SLIDE wine]** Wine tastings – This was a novel and quite radical idea but it was seen as a way to attract a new demographic to libraries. It was contentious in the fact that we know that books do not always take kindly to coming into contact with wine, but as I said, it was a bold experiment. We already had part of the wine loving society who visited libraries regularly...the homeless, but we wanted to broaden that to see if we could include an intellectual component. Needless to say this was our most successful event. By the end of the event there were hundreds of people wandering the shelves, unfortunately they had removed all the books first
- **[SLIDE super model]** Fashion parades were suggested but staff put a stop to that idea when they realised they were going to be the models.

While the concept of value adding from the organisational level seemed like a good idea at the time, we had to face facts that it wasn't what people expected from a library. **[VIDEO] [SLIDE customer perceptions]** This leads to the convoluted topic of customer perceptions of the service offered in a predetermined context.

It is generally understood that a matrix where qualified underpinning of potential literary interpretations in predisposed situations leads to contemporary instigation towards mediocrity creating unsubstantiated disconnections about interdigitation of derivative sources.

I can demonstrate that graphically for you.

[SLIDE graph] On the vertical axis we have the percentage satisfaction ratio, on the horizontal axis is the subjective interface factor. Starting from a common point you can see quite clearly how the various methods of achieving the ultimate in customer satisfaction merely causes a divergence of results and a scattering of what is meant to be a coherent strategy.

While a trained statistician might be able to infer such conclusions from the data in a linear graph, for the lay person it isn't until the same data is expressed in topological format that the meaning of it really starts to become clear. **[SLIDE graph]**

If anyone can make sense of that I would like to hire you to create my slides instead of the idiot who is doing them now.

But I think you get my point, whatever it is. Oh I remember. That the level of customer service is directly related to your manner of being and that is something that can be manipulated by various methods.

[SLIDE development] What I am talking to the Griffith Library management about is helping to implement a personal development programme that is tailored for each one of you individually and 100% funded by the university **[SLIDE funding]** . For some of you it will be one on one coaching, others will have the opportunity to learn meditation or tai chi. For some, the only hope is medication.

When you have completed the course you will be customer service commandos, out there on the front line ready to take on the toughest challenges and handle them pleasantly and efficiently. Your customers will see you surrounded by hummingbirds, rainbows and

unicorns. **[SLIDE rainbow]** You are going to be legends on the university campus, leading the customer service revolution.

How will it start? Well, if you recall we talked about value adding and I said we would come back to that. Here we are, back to that. What is a simple way to value add in a university library?

Listen up folke, because this is the key to what I am going to tell you today. If you get this and implement it, you will go beyond legend status and you will become a Customer Service God. **[SLIDE God]**

It is so simple you are going to wonder why you hadn't thought of it before. **[SLIDE customer graphic]** A customer comes up to you at the counter, checks out a book and normally they would be on their way. But you stop them in their tracks and give them a new option when you ask **[SLIDE magazine]** "would you like a magazine with that?".

What a brilliant concept! I thought of it myself. So now, I want you to practice. Turn to the person beside you and say those seven simple words **[SLIDE magazine]** "Would you like a magazine with that?".

Easy wasn't it? So, how many of you are ready to go back to the front counter and give it a go?

No one? I come up with a brilliant idea and it is universally rejected. I am shocked at you Aussies. You have really spoilt my day...I have tried hard to convince yo with something that would turn your lives and working experience around.

But that's OK because it leads perfectly into my final point.

[SLIDE logo] I'd like to share with you something about how we turned around the Nidecus corporation. We started with the name and then with a touch of **[SLIDE]** powerpoint magic, reversed it and by adding a single letter instantly went from me being from Nidecus to you all being Sucked In.

Because I'm not from America at all

I've even put on this fake American accent to suck you in.