

# How to Create a Customer Service Mindset

## Put Your People First

*In this article, George Aveling, international Partner of TMI discusses the TMI formula for creating service cultures in companies around the world*

Customer service is a hot topic in Malaysia. Companies are realizing that it is relatively easy to copy the products that they offer, but it is much harder to copy a culture of service.

Experience around the world shows that customers will do business with the companies that offer the best personal service.

The question that many Malaysian businesses are asking is, “how do we create a service mindset among our staff?” In this article, I will share some thoughts, based on TMI’s experience around the world, on how to achieve a service mindset within your organisation.

In theory, it should not take long to teach our staff how to give excellent service. “All” it takes is to do a few simple things like smile, establish eye contact, give our customers undivided attention, be helpful, keep our promises, solve the customer’s problems and be as prompt as possible.

Of course, it is not that simple! This employee must not only *want* to provide service at a high level, he or she must also have the motivation to do so. The first key point is that both increased desire and motivation come from an understanding of the close link between good service and confidence in ourselves.

Most companies try to change service cultures by focusing on service skills training programs. That is, they focus on the “how to” of service, for example “how to greet customers, how to answer the telephone, how to communicate effectively. These “how to” service skills programs *focus on customers*. Skills programs certainly are important, but they are not the right starting point to create a change in service mindsets.

TMI’s success in service culture change around the world has been achieved by putting employees first. Service can be very simply defined as a feeling that the customer receives from the service



employee. *Only the employee can control this feeling.* Employees will deliver the desired feeling to customers if they feel good about themselves.

There is a link between an employee’s personal confidence and quality of service that he or she delivers. Recognising this, TMI has achieved enormous success in service mindset change programs by combining personal development with customer service themes. The results are that employees feeling good about themselves, and more positive about their relationships with others. They feel inspired to make changes in both their private and work lives. At a work level, this approach results in significant change in service attitudes and service behaviours.

In other words, the starting point for our service mindset change programs has been to focus is on *employees* and the “*want to*” of service. The results have been increased market share, higher morale, lower rates of employee absenteeism and higher employee retention rates. This has proven to be a highly successful formula that we have applied in many countries around the world over the last 20 years.

How do you change a service mindset? The answer to this question is “person by person.” How do you change a service culture? The answer is to involve all employees – from senior managers, through to front line employees in the process. This can be achieved surprisingly quickly and cost effectively using appropriate large group methodologies.

By involving everyone in the process, we create what is known as a “tipping point” in the culture. That is, a critical mass of attitudes and supporting service behaviours are created that become the new norm in the organisation.

Sir Richard Branson, head of Virgin, is one of the world’s great business entrepreneurs. He has been described as a “mindset breaker.” Sir Richard has said that Virgin had reversed the usual mantra of “shareholder first, customer second and employee last” because smiling, motivated workers are more likely to work harder for customer, and, ultimately, shareholders.

As competition gets hotter and hotter in Malaysia, the stakes are getting higher and higher. The challenge being faced by Malaysian business is to create service mindset change as soon as possible, before the winds of competition brush them aside. Service mindset change is not only a desirable goal, but it is a very



achievable goal for every business in the country. All you have to do is start by putting your people first.

*Based on European thinking, TMI is one of the world’s largest and most successful training consultancies.*

*For reference, see the global website at [www.tmiworld.com](http://www.tmiworld.com)*

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