

# SERVICE EXCELLENCE



*Working on excellent service and  
outstanding customer experiences with  
the Service Excellence model:  
organizational transition, assessment  
framework and getting started*

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**D**uring workshops, we regularly ask participants about which organizations they are really enthusiastic about as a customer; organizations that give them a warm feeling leading to active recommendations and other forms of loyalty. The answers can be divided into two categories. Small & medium sized enterprises (SME's) are often mentioned, such as clothing stores, hairdressers, restaurants and deli-stores. The second category consists of larger companies that have elevated their customer focus to an art. Dutch examples often given are Coolblue, Jumbo, Carglass and Triodos Bank. So, clients mention profit-driven organizations, both large and small. But we also hear of governmental and healthcare organizations with an excellent customer focus.

These are organizations that have centred all aspects of their business practice towards the needs, expectations and desires of their customers. These organizations have understood that working towards a very high level of customer satisfaction and enthusiasm is not only a matter of occasional training courses, executing customer satisfaction surveys, or simply working on customer journeys. The recipe is the structural and consistent alignment of all aspects of their business operations with their customers. This not only concerns the service design, but also strategy, culture, innovation and operations. Working on Service Excellence goes further than doing things slightly better. It often means thinking and working in a radically different way. Everything in the organization is aligned in order to deliver outstanding customer experiences, now, tomorrow and in the future.

The structural achievement of an outstanding customer experience and an extremely high customer satisfaction and enthusiasm is not just a dream. Just like SME's, a number of large companies, governmental

organizations and healthcare institutions, your organization can also make this transition. This publication gives you an overview of the most important fundamental changes that are necessary to achieve this. We also provide insights into what Service Excellence specifically demands from your organization on the basis of the European Service Excellence model. To this end, we have included the complete Service Excellence assessment framework. Finally, this publication provides an overview of the different applications that can help you on your journey to an excellent customer focus. We hope that the content will inspire you to get started on embedding Service Excellence in your organization, or to boldly continue on your current journey.

Eric de Haan | Ruud Stassen | Jean-Pierre Thomassen  
February 2020

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Service Excellence	7
2	Organizational transition   ten paradigm shifts of Service Excellence	13
3	Assessment framework   : the European Service Excellence model	25
4	Getting started with Service Excellence	49
5	The Service Excellence Foundation	59

A photograph of two hands, one from the left and one from the right, reaching towards each other and forming a heart shape with their fingers. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape, possibly a beach or a field, with a light sky. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. The text '1 Service Excellence' is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the image.

# **1** **Service Excellence**

Whether the company knows it or not, a company is a service organization that happens to sell products, not a product-making organization that happens to provide service

Tom Farmer

There are (almost) no bad products anymore. Good products are therefore decreasingly becoming a distinguishing feature for an organization to attract and engage customers; they have simply become a given. In many sectors, customer experience has become the decisive factor for making a difference. This does not only apply to service organizations; customer experience is also becoming increasingly important for manufacturers as well as non-profit & governmental organizations, and healthcare institutions. After all, citizens and patients are becoming more critical and expect a service from these organizations that is comparable to that of the business community. In this publication, we also focus on these organizations.

Now that the economy is picking up and the crisis seems to be behind us, customer experience, customer satisfaction and enthusiasm have become increasingly important topics on the management agenda. In coming years, many organizations will move their survival strategy from a focus on productivity, costs, and short term sales to a customer-driven strategy focused on sustainable customer and employee relationships.

Some organizations have always focused on customer experience. For example, Jumbo, the supermarket chain that has as a mission to 'surprise its customers every day'. Or Coolblue where 'just wonder' and 'everything for a smile' form the basis of the company culture and daily customer contacts. But for years, also less well-known organizations have placed the customer at the centre of everything they do in daily practice. For example the Alexander Monro Hospital in Bilthoven gets an average rating of 9.5 (out of 10) from its patients. And those looking for a hotel in Amsterdam on Booking.com will find several hotels with average satisfaction scores far above a 9.

### Customer value as a business case

That high customer satisfaction & enthusiasm is not a luxury or a hobby but a successful business case, can be clearly seen in the hotel sector. A study<sup>1</sup> has shown that if the number of a hotel's 5-bubble reviews on TripAdvisor increase by 10%, the number of bookings increase by 10.2%. Research<sup>2</sup> by Cornell University has shown that hotels that receive 10% better reviews see their occupancy rate increase by 5.4%. These hotels

can request an 8.9% higher room rate, and gain a 14.2% higher revenue per room. Also organizations in many other sectors have now discovered that high customer satisfaction and enthusiasm leads to increased income and reduced costs. These are not only consumer-focused organizations, but also business-to-business, governmental and public organizations. They are all discovering that excellent service pays off in terms of the customers' willingness to co-create, simplifying working processes, lower cost levels, more turnover and improved reputations.

## The Service Excellence pyramid

An important concept in working on a high level of customer experience and enthusiasm is the Service Excellence pyramid, as formulated in the European guideline for Service Excellence: CEN/TS 16880 - 2015: 'Delivering outstanding customer experiences through service excellence'. This pyramid consists of four different experience levels (see figure 1).

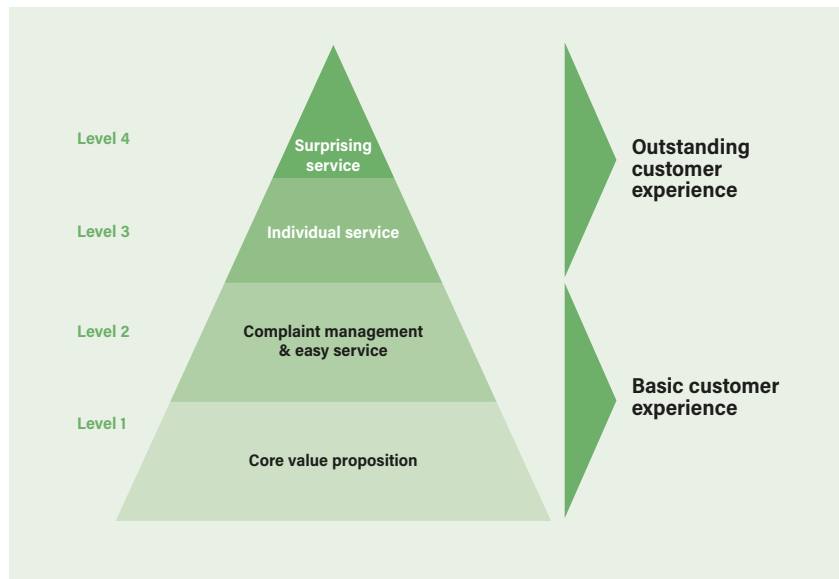


Figure 1 The Service Excellence pyramid

Level 1 of the pyramid (*core value proposition*) stands for the service that, in the customers' experience, meets their (un)expressed expectations. This is all about having the fundamental processes in place. This generally only assures a customer rating of no more than a 7. The organization does what it's supposed to do; e.g. it keeps appointments, is accessible, and offers good products. This is really fundamental, but it has to be in place.

If something goes wrong, it is important that customers experience that the organization deals with their problems and complaints properly. *Complaint management* forms level 2 of the pyramid, together with a complaint handling service that is perceived as being customer friendly and easy. Also *easy service* is part of this second experience level. For customers it is important to have an effortless experience.

To reach the highest levels of customer satisfaction and enthusiasm (8 or higher on a scale of 1-10), it is important to additionally offer customers an experience of *individual service* (level 3). Customers experience to be important and personally recognized. They feel that the service responds to their individual preferences. The principle of 'n=1' applies: each customer is unique and wants the feeling of being treated in that way.

The experience level of *surprising service* (level 4), is all about achieving the emotions of joy and surprise. These are the result of for example problems that have been solved better than expected, employees responding to unspoken needs and things that go differently than what was expected, off course in a positive sense.

Service Excellence is therefore all about organizing all aspects of business operations and units in such a way that the customer always receives a good and consistent service at levels 1, 2 and 3. In addition, customers experience sometimes (at the right moment) a surprising service level (level 4). The crux of Service Excellence is about organizing service in such a way that it is unrelated to an incident or an initiative by a single employee or department: it has become the daily reality of the complete organization.



# **2**

## **Organizational transition: the ten paradigm shifts of Service Excellence**

Over the next decade  
literally every company  
will compete on the  
basis of customer  
experience

Harley Manning & Kerry Bodine

Many managers believe that they have to choose between one of Treacy and Wiersema's<sup>3</sup> three competitive strategies to be able to distinguish themselves: Product Leadership, Operational Excellence, or Customer Intimacy. Successful organizations discover that it is not a matter of choosing one of these, but that the power lies in their combination. These organizations have realized that Operational Excellence or Product Leadership alone are insufficient to be successful. Take Singapore Airlines, the most efficient but also one of the most customer-oriented airline companies in the world. The back office has Operational Excellence as its guiding principle, but for the 'theatre' – the part which involves the traveller, Customer Intimacy is uncompromisingly dominant.

Service Excellence organizations apply Operational Excellence principles and concepts, such as Lean to keep costs competitive and thereby offer competitive prices. After all, excellent customer focus may cost a little bit more for some customers, but not at any price. The customer is dominant in Service Excellent organizations. And by placing the customer in this central position, customer focus and cost reduction go hand in hand.

Organizations that receive an exceptionally high rating from their customers on a structural basis do certain things differently than an 'average' organization. In many cases it is not about doing things better, but about doing them differently. When looking at organizations that have made the move from a 'pretty good' to 'excellent' customer rating, we see truly fundamental changes made to a number of aspects. We have described the most important of these in the ten paradigm shifts of Service Excellence (see Figure 2).





Figure 2 The ten paradigm shifts of Service Excellence

## 1. From product to emotions and experience as a distinguishing feature



The first change is very fundamental: the change from a focus on product to a focus on experience. Many organizations are convinced of the power of the quality of their products and services. They believe that offering good products is simply enough to be successful. But nowadays there are almost no poor products available. Of course, good quality products are important, however these no longer make the difference. They are often dissatisfiers whereby the organization can only score negatively if something about the product is not right. Service Excellence organizations have made the fundamental change by understanding that it is customer experience that makes the difference. This requires working with an 'ideal customer experience design' on an organizational level that is the basis for everything that directly and indirectly influences the customers' experience. This organization's designed ideal customer experience should be in line with the four levels of the Service Excellence pyramid.

## 2. From managing transactions to nurturing long-term relationships



A second change that we see organizations make is that from the digitalization of customer contacts to the development of warm emotional long-term relationships with customers. In many organizations, the emphasis is on digitalizing transactions with customers. As a result, customer relationships are marginalized to moments of digital customer contact and hardly any attention is paid to the emotional relationship with customers. Many customers are therefore only transactionally and functionally connected to organizations without any form of emotional bond. To work on emotional relationships with customers, Service Excellence organizations recognize that there are different relationship levels with customers in addition to customer contact. First, there is the level of the *customer journey* that consists of a number of steps that the customer takes consisting of one or more customer contacts. Second, there is the level of the entire *customer relationship* that transcends an individual customer journey and relates

to longer periods of time and multiple customer journeys. Third, there is the *higher purpose level* at which there is a connection with what the organization really wants to mean to its customers and to society (te purpose). By being of value to customers at these different levels, organizations are focused on developing emotional and thus lasting relationships. Instead of painfully (and usually incorrectly) discovering that customers are becoming increasingly less loyal and price focussed, Service Excellence organizations offer their customers more and more reasons to actually enter into a relationship by loading it with experiences and emotions.

### 3. From alleged cost item to an economic and moral business case



A third change is a shift in strategic thinking: the insight that excellence in service contributes positively to business results. By aligning the organization with the customers' needs, expectations and desires and by aligning the emotional input of employees with the vision and mission of the organization, it becomes both more efficient and more profitable. Customers who experience an emotional relationship with an organization are simply more profitable. Enthusiastic employees are much more productive and creative than their colleagues who do their work dutifully but nothing more. And that makes every organization sustainably more profitable. Service Excellence organizations are aware of this, they know that their investments in excellent service lead to more customers, more sales, more enthusiastic employees, lower costs due to less waste, and therefore more profit. In addition, money is not their only perspective. They also fully take their moral responsibility and obligation to ensure the wellbeing of their customers, employees and other stakeholders in order to contribute to a valuable and sustainable society.

### 4. From profit as a goal to a higher inspiring purpose



We see the next change being at the level of vision and mission. These are increasingly geared to what the organization really wants to mean

for its customers, employees and for society. An uninspiring focus on turnover and profit has to make way for a vision that emotionally appeals to employees, customers and other stakeholders. Working on Service Excellence is thus all about working on personal and emotional connections with customers and employees. The vision is therefore the source for a higher purpose that inspires. A higher purpose pursues a certain ideal that goes beyond the customer as a target group. In this way Tesla is striving to accelerate the global transition to sustainable transport. And the higher purpose of Buurtzorg Nederland (a Dutch care organization) is to keep clients independent of care for as long as possible, based on a firm belief in clients' self-reliance. This is a vision that mobilizes many thousands of professionals working in self-managing teams, which leads to thousands of enthusiastic clients.

### 5. From rule-driven control to space and trust



Another change relates to being in control as an organization. There are those managers who only feel in control if they can make decisions, there are many rules, all risks are managed, and if they can monitor and adjust results on a daily basis. Service Excellence organizations have radically changed this management style. They have made the transition from managing, limiting, and controlling employees to giving them the trust and space to offer customers outstanding experiences and help them on a customized basis. In these situations, managers are in control when their employees and teams are in control. They give employees the trust and space to offer customers an outstanding experience. By space we mean, for example, space in terms of time; time to listen to the customer and time to make an emotional connection. For example: steering on average handling time and other productivity driven indicators is abandoned. But there is also space in terms of rules and procedures by giving employees, within broad frameworks, the decision and control space to do what is right for the customer. Unnecessary rules are abolished and employees are encouraged, where possible, to bend the rules. In addition, employees have a budget that enables them to go the extra mile for customers.

## 6. From a 9-to-5 mentality to an inspired customer focus



Many organizations have embedded 'customer focus' as a competence in their competence management. This competence is often part of the annual assessment. It is also one of the many criteria when selecting new employees. But is this enough to create a culture where an outstanding customer experience and customer enthusiasm are the core of everything? Service Excellence organizations have elevated 'customer focus' from just a competence to a basic principle and embedded culture. They have translated the organization's 'ideal customer experience design' into selection criteria. No longer are professional knowledge and work experience decisive when hiring, but it are the intrinsic motivation, customer focus and match of the applicant's attitude with the cultural values of the organization. These organizations spend perhaps two to three times more energy and resources on selecting the right people than the average organization. The onboarding of new employees and their continuous development are also mainly focused on customer experience. This is not a voluntary activity, but the norm to be professional when delivering an outstanding customer experience. In these organizations, experience training and other personal customer focus development activities are standard.

## 7. From absurd surveys to in-depth listening



Previously, many organizations conducted an annual customer satisfaction survey. Often this was also an anonymous survey of a sample of the customer base. Service Excellence organizations have made the fundamental switch to continuous listening. In many cases they have even stopped the annual ritual of the anonymous customer satisfaction survey. They use a wide range of different listening methods with which they receive year-round customer information. Examples are ongoing transaction-related satisfaction surveys based on short questionnaires (Closed Loop Feedback). But they also structurally use customer signals. Customers give signals every day in the form of, questions, requests, comments, complaints and compliments. By capturing, re-

ording and using these signals per customer and for the whole customer base, organizations improve both their customer know how and basis for structural improvements. But it goes further; it is important to listen in depth to customers' (un)expressed needs, expectations and desires. This is based on the aim to really want to know what is going on and what customers feel. These companies really get to know customers by visiting them and talking to them in-depth with the idea of getting to know their customers better than they know themselves.

## 8. From stubborn navel gazing to customer-conscious innovation



The next shift towards Service Excellence is the focus on continuous improvement and on innovating all essential aspects of an emotional connection with customers and employees. An organization's ability to learn, to innovate and to be agile appears to be the best predictor of success. It's no longer about being better, faster or cheaper than the competition. An organization has to be able to keep its service up to date and be prepared to do things very differently. The focus is not so much on finding or coming up with new disruptive innovations, but rather on innovating the customer experience. Technological innovations only offer a temporary head start. The innovation of how you integrate the emotional relationship with customers and employees in the organization and continually renew it, gives a company's advantage a sustainable and distinctive character. This may concern products and services (the what), but also service concepts, relationship management and customer journeys (the how). Service Excellence organizations stimulate and steer towards innovation, thereby ensuring intensive customer involvement, keeping a permanent feeling with trends and developments and applying a structured innovation process. In this way, the organization is best able to adapt to the changing needs, expectations and desires of both customers and employees.

## 9. From concrete processes to energizing customer journeys



In many organizations the customer experience depends on all kinds of internal decisions. Electronic data processing systems and other software packages, internal procedures and the organizational structure are often leading, they determine what customers ultimately experience. With Service Excellence organizations, processes are important, but the focus is on customer experience by working with customer journeys. Customer journeys are processes as customers experience them from their start (often a need) until the solution and aftercare. These customer journeys consist of contact moments (touch points) with the organization, but also of moments when there is no contact. Everything customers see, hear, smell, feel and taste influences their experiences. The organization's 'ideal customer experience design' (see shift 1) forms the basis for setting up customer journeys that offer employees the preconditions for achieving a consistent good experience. To support these customer journeys, the organization's internal processes must be in order.

## 10. From suppliers as a cost item to partners in customer experience



Many organizations see their suppliers as a cost item with which contracts must be concluded at the lowest possible costs. The consequence is that these suppliers take measures to limit their costs. But these same suppliers are a part of the organization's service. This includes, for example, logistics for on-line stores, maintenance companies for lease companies, and contractors for housing associations. Dealing with suppliers in this cost-based way can lead to poor service. Service Excellence organizations make a fundamental change by no longer thinking and acting in terms of 'suppliers' but in terms of 'partners'. These partners play an essential role in achieving an outstanding customer experience. For example, collaboration, joint training, sharing customer satisfaction results, and making partners part of the customer experience are becoming increasingly important to ensure that partners' employees also are seen as the organization's visiting cards.

### Quick Maturity Scan

To score the development on these 10 paradigm shifts of Service Excellence for your organization, complete the free online Quick Maturity Scan Service Excellence (only Dutch language). Go to [serviceexcellence.nu](https://serviceexcellence.nu)



# **3** **Assessment framework: the European Service Excellence model**

Most corporate  
systems were not  
built with Customer  
Delight in mind

Fred Reichheld

The European Service Excellence model forms the basis of the Service Excellence philosophy. In the period 2013–2015, a European eleven-country working group led by Professor Matthias Gouthier developed this model and published it as the CEN/TS 16880: 2015 guideline ‘*Delivering outstanding customer experiences through service excellence*’. On behalf of the Netherlands, committee members Jean-Pierre Thomassen and Eric de Haan actively contributed many ideas to the model’s development.

Service Excellence assumes that the entire organization works on achieving the paradigm shifts needed to provide a consistent and outstanding customer experience. The Service Excellence Foundation developed the Service Excellence assessment framework in line with the European model to provide organizations with the tools for developing an outstanding customer experience, customer satisfaction and enthusiasm.

The assessment framework includes *guiding principles* and the Service Excellence model (with organizational and result elements). The *guiding principles* articulate the philosophy of Service Excellence that resonates throughout the complete assessment framework. The *Service Excellence model* describes what Service Excellence comprises, what a Service Excellence organization has to comply with, and in what this should result in (Figure 3). The nine *organizational elements* clustered in five dimensions describe the business aspects that influence the provision of an outstanding customer experience. The importance of result focussed management and an organization that achieves proven results is expressed by the four *result elements*.

## Seven guiding principles

The seven guiding principles that form the starting points for the assessment framework are:

### 1. Managing the organization from outside-in

The organization's 'ideal customer experience design' is the starting point for the organization to manage all aspects that directly and indirectly influence this experience.

### 2. Customer intimacy

The service is fully focused on creating a consistent and good service at levels 1, 2 and 3 of the Service Excellence pyramid. Customers experience that the organization actively responds to their individual needs, expectations and desires. Wherever possible and valuable, customer expectations are exceeded (level 4).

### 3. People make the difference

In many cases, it is the attitude and behaviour of employees that makes the difference between a satisfied and an enthusiastic customer. The organization has to demonstrate, in all relevant business aspects, that employees working within or for the organization are crucial for achieving an outstanding customer experience and for maintaining and deepening an emotional connection with customers.

### 4. Balanced attention to customers, employees and partners

The attention and energy spent on working on outstanding customer experiences is balanced between customers, employees and partners. It is based on the conviction that enthusiastic and committed employees and partners are crucial for the structural achievement of enthusiastic customers.

### 5. Integrated approach in order to deliver outstanding customer experiences

Only by addressing all nine organizational elements of the Service Excellence model and their interrelationships an organization is able to consistently offer customers an outstanding customer experience.

### 6. Leveraging of technology

Technological opportunities are adopted so that customers, employees and partners can achieve an outstanding customer experience.

## 7. Create value creation for stakeholders

Achieving Service Excellence and satisfied and enthusiastic customers leads to sustainable value for all stakeholders. Co-creation is the underlying principle. Customers, employees and partners are actively involved and actively deployed in all aspects of business operations to achieve continuous improvement and innovation.

## Nine organizational elements clustered in five dimensions

The Service Excellence model consists of five dimensions (design, strategy, culture, innovation and operations) with a total of nine organizational elements. Each element consists of a number of sub-elements. The order of the elements given here does not represent a weighting nor is it an order of implementation.

The "design" dimension is at the heart of the model and includes the first organizational element: '*designing and renewing outstanding customer experiences*' (1). It forms the centre of the model because it is the blueprint, the design and the point of departures for all the other elements. This design ensures that all relevant aspects of the organization are designed outside-in. This is in line with the reversed thinking principle, in which it is not the processes, systems and organizational structures that form the points of departure, but the organization's 'ideal customer experience design'.

The other eight organizational elements are grouped in four dimensions around this first element. To excel in service, it is a precondition that customer focus is an integral part of the strategy; the second dimension. This consists of the entire organization's '*Service Excellence vision, mission and strategy*' (2). In addition, a fundamental change in the organization requires real '*leadership and management commitment*' (3). The culture dimension consists of two elements. The first is '*committed and customer focussed employees*' (4); this involves the use of Human Resources tools to fundamentally anchor customer-focussed behaviour and commitment. In addition, there is an explicit and cherished '*Service Excellence culture*' (5). One of the foundations for working on Service Excellence is '*understanding customer needs, expectations and desires*' (6). Together with '*service innovation management*' (7) this forms the innovation dimension. The operational dimension of the

model consists of ‘*managing customer experience related processes and organizational structure*’ (8), which involves the translation of the experience design into the organizational structure, processes and cooperation with partners. Finally, ‘*monitoring Service Excellence activities and results*’ (9) revolves around continuous measurement and management of the results as expressed in the four result elements (a, b, c and d).

Each of these nine organizational elements describes a part of the organizational aspects that an organization should have in place in order to offer customers an outstanding experience on a consistent basis. We explicitly refer to this as ‘should’ because it is not a normative assessment framework that can be checked on the basis of checklists. After all, each organization is different, with different customers and employees. A small organization will interpret these elements differently to a large one. Furthermore, the concrete interpretation of these elements differs for a public organization, a healthcare institution or a company. As a result, the arrangement of the sub-elements can also differ. Thus, the description of the nine elements and the associated sub-elements below is more a ‘guide/guideline’ than a ‘standard’.

### 1. Designing and renewing outstanding customer experiences

Based on the principle of working outside-in, this element includes developing and periodically renewing the organization’s ‘ideal customer experience design’. The four sub-elements are:

#### a. Designing and documenting the ideal customer experience

The organization – in line with the vision, mission and strategy, and aligned with the culture – has determined and set out what the ‘ideal customer experience design’ is. This has been developed together with customers based on their needs, expectations and desires. Employees and partners are also involved. The organization has established how it will monitor the extent to which it achieves this ideal customer experience; this is evaluated periodically and adjusted where necessary.

#### b. Setting organizational service standards and delivering on the service promise

The organization has translated the ‘ideal customer experience design’ into service guidelines for the most important customer journeys and its relationship management. It explicitly communicates what service levels customers can expect using service guarantees. Customer journeys,

relationship management, service guidelines and service guarantees are periodically evaluated and adjusted where necessary.

#### c. Deployment of the customer experience throughout the organization

The organization has translated the ‘ideal customer experience design’ and derived service guidelines into all its organizational units involved in customer contact so that they can work from this ‘ideal customer experience design’ and with the service guidelines. Customers and partners are actively involved. Organizational units without customer contact (back office) have goals derived from the experience and guidelines. The ‘ideal customer experience design’ can be adapted to local customers (*couleur locale*) for decentralized organizational units.

#### d. Service recovery excellence

The organization is convinced that offering an outstanding customer experience for customers with problems and complaints is essential to achieving enthusiastic customers. The organization, customer journeys, and service guidelines for service recovery are all directed at achieving the ideal customer experience. Employees involved in service recovery have the necessary decision-making space to do what is necessary to offer an outstanding customer experience. *Links with sub-elements 1a, 1b, 2c, 3c, 4d and 8a.*

### 2. Service Excellence vision, mission and strategy

This element integrates the voice of the customer into the vision, mission and strategy of the organization. The strategy elaborates on what the organization will do to achieve the mission and vision. The three sub-elements are:

#### a. Service Excellence vision

The organization has a vision that clearly depicts the aspirations to meet (and where possible exceed) customer expectations by delivering an outstanding customer experience. In the vision, outstanding customer experiences and working on Service Excellence have a prominent place. The vision affects the entire organization. All stakeholders (customers, employees, management, and partners) are involved in developing the vision. This vision is embraced by all stakeholders and evaluated periodically and adjusted where necessary. *Links with sub-elements 1a, 1b, 6.*



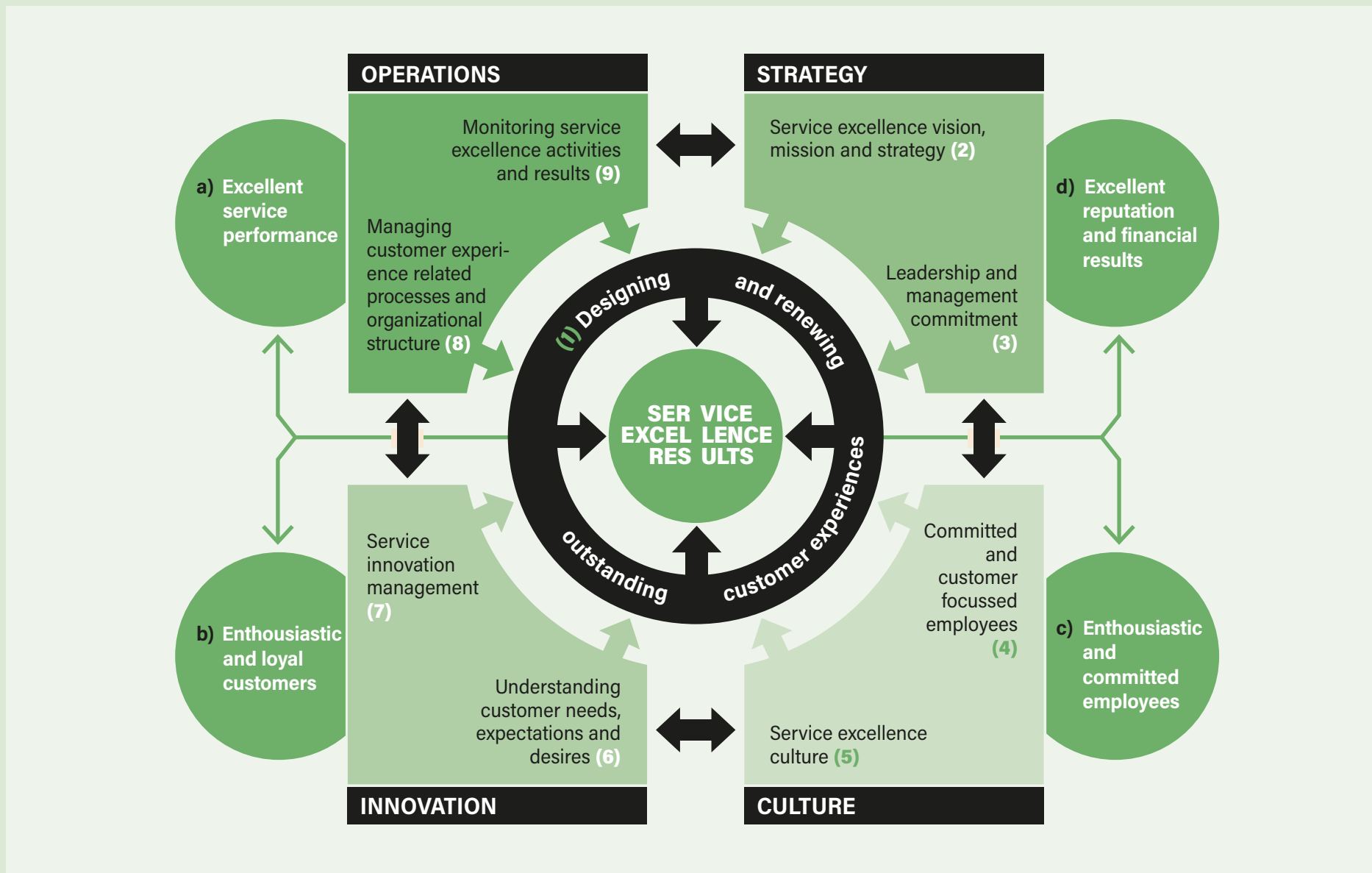


Figure 3 The Service Excellence model

### b. Service Excellence mission

The organization has a mission that mobilizes managers and employees to work towards Service Excellence. In the organization's mission, clear goals have been formulated to ensure that the intended vision is achievable. All stakeholders (customers, employees, management and partners) are involved in formulating the mission; all stakeholders understand and embrace the mission. This is periodically evaluated from a customer perspective and for feasibility, and adjusted where necessary. *Links with sub-elements 1a, 1b, 2a, 9.*

### c. Service Excellence strategy

The achievement of the service excellence vision and mission is formulated in goals, points of departure, objectives and measures. Service Excellence, an outstanding customer experience, and enthusiastic customers form an important part of the medium-term and annual plans. It is clear who takes responsibility for this. All parts of the organization, departments and teams have derived objectives and plans aimed at achieving the strategy. Customers are actively involved in developing, propagating and implementing the strategy. *Links with the sub-elements 2a and 2b.*

## 3. Leadership and management commitment

This element is about the management style and the way in which board members and all managers (management) optimally facilitate the organization and optimally support employees in achieving an outstanding customer experience. The four sub-elements are:

### a. Leadership

Managers have the intrinsic motivation to focus the organization in all its facets on structurally achieving an outstanding customer experience. To this end, they create the climate and necessary preconditions for employees in the form of e.g. personal development, responsibilities, autonomy, and feedback from customers and colleagues. Individual management team members act as role models and set a good example with regard to offering an outstanding customer experience. They are easily accessible and have intensive contact with customers, employees and partners and thus always know what is going on among them. The board maintains a long-term and steady course to achieve the strategy. Its focus is on facilitating processes for the further development of the above-stated management qualities. *Links with elements such as 2, 4 and 5.*

### b. Shared efforts, defined responsibilities and objectives

Management encourages all employees to be personally and actively involved in achieving the ideal customer experience and working on this. Management use a top-down and bottom-up approach including many different forms of employee participation. Objectives and actions are cascaded top-down and bottom-up in this way. Every team and every employee knows what their objectives and contribution are (direct and/or indirect). These objectives and actions are evaluated periodically and are part of the regular planning & control cycle. *Links with sub-elements 2c, 3a and 4.*

### c. Employee empowerment

Management give employees the space and autonomy to do what is necessary to provide an outstanding customer experience. There is a culture of trust in employees. Employees have extensive authority to do what is necessary to offer an outstanding customer experience within broadly defined boundaries. Employees receive the necessary resources, training, coaching and feedback for this. Managers encourage and support employees in taking this space and interpret rules flexibly where necessary and with responsibility. The organization has a culture where mistakes can be made, as long as people learn from them. *Links with sub-elements 2a, 2b, 4d, 5b and 5c.*

### d. Enthusiastic employees

Managers focus on employees who are enthusiastic about and positively involved with the organization. They measure employee enthusiasm and actively direct this. The organization offers employees a healthy work / life balance, a stimulating working environment, and challenging and innovative work. *Links with sub-elements 4, 5 and 7.*

## 4. Committed and customer-focussed employees

This element expresses how the organization uses all HR instruments, from recruitment and selection to outflow, to develop and support employees' customer focus and commitment. The seven sub-elements are:

### a. Recruitment and induction of new employees

The organization has organized its recruitment and selection in such a way that only the most customer-focussed employees who fit the desired culture are hired. The selection is mainly aimed at determining the intrinsic motivation, attitude and behaviour that match the ideal

customer experience and the organizational culture. These are just as important in the hiring criteria as are diplomas and work experience. The organization uses a range of methods to determine the suitability of potential employees and managers. During the recruitment process, candidates are immersed in the organization to determine whether there is a match on both sides. The introduction process ("onboarding") also focuses on the interests of customers, their needs, expectations and desires and on the organization's culture and values. Management is actively involved in this. *Links with sub-elements 1a, 1b, 3d, 5 and 6a.*

#### **b. Continuous learning and development of all employees**

The organization has a continuous learning and development programme that, in addition to technical know how, focuses on all aspects of customer-oriented behaviour, the ideal customer experience, and the culture. All employees and managers participate on a mandatory basis, regardless of their position and the number of years of work experience. The organization actively guides this; it offers a continuous learning and development programme in this field. The provision of an outstanding customer experience is an essential part of all training courses, including technical ones. Learning and development opportunities are also aimed at experiencing what it is like to be a customer. *Links with other sub-elements of 6 and 7b.*

#### **c. Feedback of customers at an employee/team level**

The organization has set up continuous feedback mechanisms from customers at team and/or employee level; amongst others in the form of continuous transactional research among recently contacted customers. Employees and/or teams receive the feedback from the customers they have helped on a frequent basis (daily, weekly). The organization has set up mechanisms that help employees/teams to learn structurally from this feedback. Both enthusiastic and dissatisfied customers are approached based on the research results. Employees are encouraged to request feedback from (internal/external) customers themselves and to use this. *Links with sub-elements 7b and 9.*

#### **d. Using empowerment**

The organization encourages employees to use their decision space to offer customers an outstanding customer experience. The organization provides sufficient time and capacity so that employees can optimally serve customers. The organization does not primarily focus on produc-

tivity objectives such as an average handling time. Management create an environment in which employees are encouraged and rewarded to take their responsibility to ensure an outstanding customer experience. The organization does not use strict procedures and rules for customer contact, but works with guidelines that leave room for employees' own initiatives. Rules are flexible as long as employees can explain their reasoning for bending them afterwards. Employees who take their space to offer clients an outstanding experience are used as role models. Management encourage employees to discuss the barriers they experience in order to be able to offer an outstanding customer experience. *Links with sub-element 3c.*

#### **e. Evaluating and assessment of employees**

Achieving an outstanding customer experience is included in the job profiles and forms the most important objective of all jobs. The organization uses evaluation and assessment systems that promote an outstanding customer experience and stimulate enthusiastic customers. These systems are aimed at developing a good picture of strengths and opportunities for improvement per employee/manager. Results are used for continuous development. Employees with a good performance are used as a role model, poorly performing employees are called to account and face possible drastic consequences as a result. *Links with sub-element 4b.*

#### **f. Recognition/acknowledgement system**

The organization uses recognition/reward systems aimed at promoting customer-oriented behaviour, offering an outstanding customer experience, and ensuring enthusiastic customers. The organization has formal and informal recognition systems that contribute to this. This also includes evaluating good performances in the form of a daily compliment; management actively use this. Offering an outstanding customer experience and enthusiastic customers are important criteria for any system of variable remuneration. *Links with element 3 and other sub-elements of 4.*

#### **g. Employee feedback mechanisms**

The organization uses feedback mechanisms to actively listen to and learn from employees. Structured and organized listening methods as well as unstructured feedback mechanisms are part of daily work procedures. The results are used for both improving service levels and for increasing employee enthusiasm and commitment. *Links with sub-elements 3d and 7.*

## 5. Service Excellence culture

This element includes determining, communicating and implementing measures to achieve the desired culture. The three sub-elements are:

### a. Defining the Service Excellence culture

Management establish and describe a Service Excellence culture together with employees. This is translated into the organization's cultural values, behaviour and attitude. The core values, these cultural values, and the 'ideal customer experience design' all support each other. In the desired Service Excellence culture, attention is paid to the following elements: management style, internal culture (internal cooperation), what people think about customers, and the learning/innovation culture. Employees and management are actively involved in analysing, defining and implementing the Service Excellence culture. There is a positive culture focused on encouraging positive feedback and learning what goes well, giving compliments, and celebrating success. *Links with the sub-elements 5b and 5c and all other elements.*

### b. Communicating the Service Excellence culture

Management constantly communicate and support the desired culture. It constantly (formally and informally) shares the ideal culture with employees. This discussion on the cultures includes values, roles, responsibilities, codes of conduct, and the importance of Service Excellence. There is an open atmosphere in which questions, ideas and comments are welcome and where everybody can communicate freely. The organizational culture is in line with the organization's 'ideal customer experience design' and actively supports it. *Links with the sub-elements 5a and 5c and all other elements.*

### c. Implementation of the Service Excellence culture

The Service Excellence culture is rooted throughout the organization. It is part of the organization's strategy and is translated into measures in all other elements of the Service Excellence model; for example in the roles and responsibilities for management, job descriptions, and the evaluation system. The implementation of the culture is continuously monitored among customers, employees and other stakeholders and benchmarked with other organizations. Measures for improvement are taken where necessary. *Links with 5a, 5b and all other elements.*

## 6. Understanding customer needs, expectations and desires

This element is all about deeply getting to know customers: e.g. their needs, expectations, desires, emotions, experiences, satisfaction, enthusiasm and behaviour. The three sub-elements are:

### a. Scope and depth of listening to customers

The organization listens to and structurally investigates customers' spoken and unspoken needs, expectations, desires, emotions, experiences, satisfaction, enthusiasm and behaviour. It has a permanent listening system in place that understands the origins and effects of customer experience. Analysing the results gives the organization a good picture of the rational and emotional dimensions of customer experience. *Links with element 1.*

### b. Organization of data acquisition and use

The organization structurally collects all kinds of feedback from customers: comments, expectations, complaints, suggestions and compliments. Moreover, it uses structured listening methods to gather data at a customer base, segment and individual customer level. In this way, the organization develops a picture of the needs, expectations and desires of customers on a relationship level as well as per customer journey. Employees use this stored information in their daily work to offer customers an experience at level 3-4 of the Service Excellence pyramid. Examples of this information are preferences, expectations, hobbies, contact history, and feedback received. This information is easily available to those employees with customer contact. *Links with sub-elements 1, 3c and 4d.*

### c. Adapting to customer needs, expectations and desires

The organization conducts different forms of research in order to be able to timely respond to customers' future expectations and desires. It follows developments in, for example, the judiciary, society, technology, Corporate Social Responsibility, fashion, competition and innovation that may influence customers in the future. The organization has the competence to quickly adapt to a changing environment in order to align products and the experience with external changes. *Links with sub-elements 7c and 7d.*

## 7. Service innovation management

This element focuses on the structured improvement, learning and innovation of both the customer experience and the internal organization. The four sub-elements are:

### a. Continuous improvement

The organization improves the customer experience and business aspects as laid down in the nine organizational elements on a continuous basis. There is a positive attitude at all levels of the organization with regard to the continuous improvement of current working methods. In addition, improvement techniques are used in all parts of the organization in order to improve continuously. Continuous improvement takes place both in customer contact with customers, the organizational units with customer contact and in back office operations. *Links with sub-elements 7 b-d and all other elements.*

### b. Learning

There is a learning culture. The organization encourages and fosters learning and a culture in which mistakes can be made as long as one learns from it. There is a culture where everyone is open to and wants to learn from best practices within the organization, from partners, competitors and from other sectors. The organization facilitates this learning attitude with the necessary resources and methods. The organization welcomes and appreciates critical customers, employees and partners to learn from them. *Links with sub-elements 1d and 4b.*

### c. Innovation culture

The organization stimulates and promotes a culture where innovation takes place. It stimulates creativity, innovations and experiments in order to discover and implement new customer experience practices. Innovations can also relate to business aspects. Time and resources are available within the organization to realize these innovations. Failure is allowed within the organization. *Links with sub-element 5a..*

### d. Structured innovation process

The organization has set up a structured innovation process – consisting of idea generation, conceptualization, development and launch – to implement innovations on a regular basis. The management organizes sufficient time, resources and attention for the continuous innovation process. The organization also has a large network of parties that sup-

port innovation (customers, value chain organizations, universities and other knowledge institutions). *Links with sub-element 3b.*

## 8. Managing customer experience related processes and organizational structure

Central to this element is how resources, technologies, processes, organizational structures and partnerships with other organizations enhance an outstanding customer experience. The three sub-elements are:

### a. Managing customer experience related processes

The organization implements and manages all the processes that directly and indirectly influence the ideal customer experience. These can be the customer journeys, but they can also be internal production and supporting processes. The organization develops, implements, monitors, reports on and, where necessary, improves these journeys/processes to achieve the ideal customer experience. Employees and customers are actively involved in this. *Links with the sub-elements 1a, 1b and 1c.*

### b. Deploying customer experience related technologies and techniques

The organization uses modern techniques and technologies to serve customers in order to offer an outstanding customer experience. It guarantees safe use of customer information to prevent misuse. The organization also uses these techniques and technologies to support employees in their daily work. *Links with the sub-elements 1a, 1b and 1c.*

### c. Management of organizational structures and partnerships

The organization has a structure that maximally supports the structural provision of an outstanding customer experience. The organizational structure is in line with the processes that directly influence the customer experience (customer journeys) and prevents silos within the organization. Departments work closely together and work towards providing a consistent customer experience. The organization works closely with and invests in external partners that are part of the customer journeys. They are expected to actively contribute to achieving the ideal customer experience. *Links with the sub-elements 1a, 1b and 1c.*

## 9. Monitoring Service Excellence activities and results

This last organizational element concerns the use of indicators and measurements to manage the four result elements. The four sub-elements are::

### a. Causal relationships

The organization has a clear view of the causal relationships between the four result elements: ‘excellent service performance’, ‘enthusiastic and loyal customers’, ‘enthusiastic and committed employees’, and ‘excellent reputation and financial results’. These causal relationships are used to identify the correct indicators and to consciously steer the customer experience based on these causal relationships. *Links with the sub-elements 2, 3d and 6.*

### b. Use of performance indicators

Based on the causal relationships (see 9a), the organization uses input, throughput, output and outcome indicators to optimally and proactively manage the customer experience, satisfaction and enthusiasm. The indicators form an integral part of the organization’s planning & control processes and dashboards. *Links with the sub-elements 2, 3d and 6.*

### c. Use of measurement tools

The organization continuously uses methods to measure, analyse and monitor performance indicators (see 9b). These provide a picture of the organization’s true performance at organization, team and employee level. Any deviations from the set objectives are highlighted. Measurements are used to benchmark against other well-performing organizations. *Links with the sub-elements 4c, 9a, 9b and 9d.*

### d. Use of metrics on operational, tactical and strategic levels

The organization uses performance indicators (9b) and tools (9c) at a strategic, tactical and operational level. Measurements are used to promote a positive culture and to ensure excellent service practices. Results are periodically and transparently shared with all stakeholders. The performance indicators/tools are used in all parts and at all levels of the organization to set goals, determine actual performance, and, where necessary, implement improvements. The customer's voice and customer-related indicators are used just as intensively as all other internal and financial indicators. In addition to quantitative data, the organization uses qualitative data such as customer and employee stories.

In summary, the nine organization elements and sub-elements are shown in the table below.

Organizational element	Sub-element
1 Designing and renewing outstanding customer experiences	a Designing and documenting the ideal customer experience
	b Setting organizational service standards and delivering on the service promise
	c Deployment of the customer experience concept throughout the organization
	d Service recovery excellence
2 Service Excellence vision, mission and strategy	a Service Excellence vision
	b Service Excellence mission
	c Service Excellence strategy
3 Leadership and management commitment	a Leadership
	b Shared efforts, defined responsibilities and objectives
	c Employee empowerment
	d Enthusiastic employee
4 Committed and customer-focussed employees	a Recruitment and induction of new employees
	b Continuous learning and development of all employees
	c Feedback of customers at an employee/team level
	d Using empowerment
	e Evaluating and assessment of employees
	f Recognition/acknowledgement system
	g Employee feedback mechanisms
5 Service Excellence culture	a Defining the Service Excellence culture
	b Communicating the Service Excellence culture
6 Understanding customer needs, expectations and desires	a Scope and depth of listening to customers
	b Organization of data acquisition and use
	c Adapting to customer needs, expectations and desires

Organizational element	Sub-element
7 Service innovation management	a Continuous improvement
	b Learning
	c Innovation culture
	d Structured innovation process
8 Managing customer experience related processes and organizational structure	a Managing customer experience related processes
	b Deploying customer experience related technologies and techniques
	c Management of organizational structures and partnerships
9 Monitoring Service Excellence activities and results	a Causal relationships
	b Use of performance indicators
	c Use of monitoring tools
	d Use of metrics on operational, tactical and strategic levels

## Four result elements

Service Excellence results are at the core of the Service Excellence assessment framework. These have been translated into four result elements (a–d) in line with those of the EFQM Business Excellence model/INK model, namely: excellent service performance, enthusiastic and loyal customers, enthusiastic and committed employees, and excellent reputation and financial results. Performance on these elements has to be preferably better than the industry average, or even, that of the industry leaders, and comparable with those of other Service Excellence organizations.

### a. Excellent service performance

Internal measurements show that the organization's service level is excellent. For example, operational measurements are aimed at demonstrably important aspects of the customer service like delivery times, delivery reliability, accessibility, contact frequency, and error-free products. These internal measures are derived from the 'ideal customer experience design'.

### b. Enthusiastic and loyal customers

This concerns the results of measurements and research among customers regarding their experience, for example investigating emotions and achieving the desired/ideal experience. Indicators such as the Customer Effort Score are also included in these. Furthermore, these include results and measurements of customer satisfaction with, in particular, customer delight and behavioural intentions such as recommendations, including the Net Promoter Score. Finally, this element includes the results of internal measurements with regard to the degree of loyalty (churn/retention, share of wallet, cross selling ratios, etc.).

### c. Enthusiastic and committed employees

This concerns the degree of enthusiasm of employees, both the company's own and partners, about the organization and the extent to which they feel positively involved with the organization. Results and measurements can relate to motivation, employee experience, employee satisfaction, commitment and enthusiasm. They can also be determined by actual behaviour, for example in terms of absenteeism, involvement and turnover.

### d. Excellent reputation and financial results

This concerns the organization's reputation and the degree of recognition it has received for its outstanding customer experience. In addition, it concerns the financial results of working on Service Excellence and achieving enthusiastic employees and customers

## Service Excellence Scan

To thoroughly analyse your organization for all the organizational and result elements of the Service Excellence model, we have developed the Service Excellence scan. The results of this digital scan provide fixed points on which to work. See [serviceexcellence.nu](https://serviceexcellence.nu) for more information (only in Dutch).

Now that all elements of the Service Excellence assessment framework have been described, we can link it to the ten paradigm shifts of Service Excellence as described in Chapter 2. How these shifts are related to the dimensions of Service Excellence is shown in Figure 4.

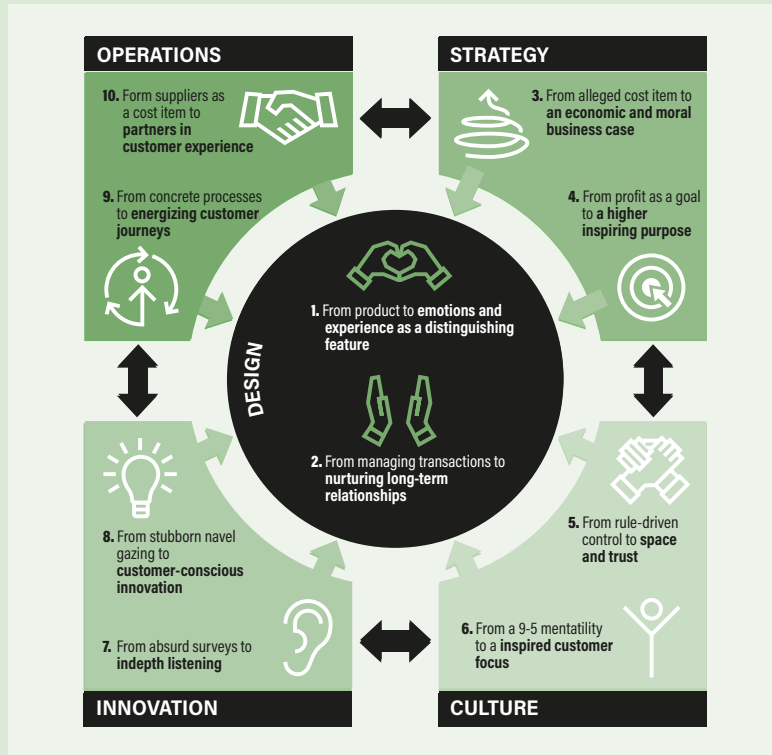


Figure 4 The paradigm shifts of Service Excellence linked to the assessment framework





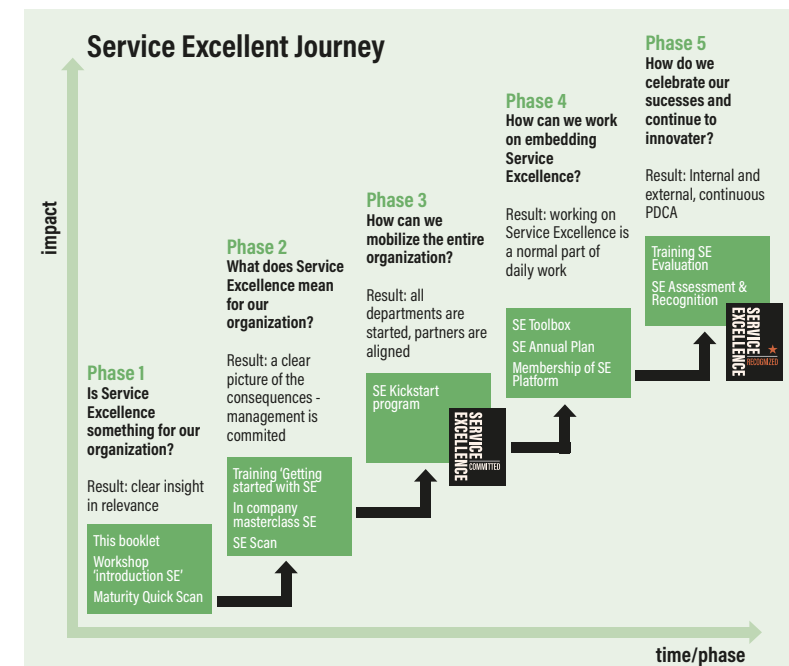
# **4** **Getting started with Service Excellence**

For organizations  
in today's economy,  
service excellence is  
no longer a choice  
but a necessity

Jeffrey K. Liker

More and more organizations in the Netherlands and Belgium are discovering the power and integrality of the Service Excellence model and its underlying concepts. They are looking for a structure and framework for their customer focus initiatives. A number of organizations have embraced the model as a business philosophy, others use it as an assessment framework for their business operations. Figure 5 presents an overview of the tools provided by the Service Excellence Foundation that support an organization when working on Service Excellence. We have structured these tools around the Service Excellence Journey; five phases that organizations go through in getting acquainted with, adopting, and continuously working on Service Excellence.

### The five phases of working on Service Excellence



### Phase 1: Is Service Excellence something for our organization?

The first phase consists of an introduction to the Service Excellence philosophy. The key question is: will this work in our organization? A number of tools can help answer that question. This booklet gives a concise picture of the underlying concepts. In addition, the simple *Maturity Quick Scan* helps you determine how far your organization has developed on the ten paradigm shifts. This free online scan is available on [serviceexcellence.nu](http://serviceexcellence.nu). We also organize the workshop *Introduction to Service Excellence* which provides insights into the principles of Service Excellence and paints a picture of how your organization can get started. The most important topics are:

- The importance of an outstanding customer experience and its effects (*Service Excellence effect chain*)
- The four levels of customer experience (*the Service Excellence pyramid*) and its consequences for practice.
- Working integrally on customer experience; the *Service Excellence model* and the underlying philosophy.
- The most important paradigm shifts that organizations make when they put customer experience first.
- The consequences of working with Service Excellence for managers and employees in particular and for the organization in general.
- An initial Service Excellence analysis of your organization based on the *Maturity Quick Scan*.

### Phase 2: What does Service Excellence mean for our organization?

In this second phase, you translate the Service Excellence concept to your own organization and determine what this means for you. Which aspects need to be measured, and how do you approach this? You have to ensure that the management team and middle management are truly committed. A number of tools help you in this phase, for example by organizing an *in-company Service Excellence master class*. Together with senior and middle management and/or a broad representation of your organization, this master class helps you determine the consequences for your organization. Another tool you can use to get a thorough picture of the current situation is the *Service Excellence Scan*. This digital scan helps you 'score' your organization on all elements of the Service Excellence model. The results provide specific points of departure to work on. In addition, you can take part in the *Getting started with Service Excellence* training programme. This programme is the follow-up to the *Introduction to Service Excellence* workshop. Programme participants

are expected to be familiar with the contents of this workshop. This programme gives you the practical tools you need to get started with Service Excellence in your organization. The most important topics are:

- What does Service Excellence require from your organization?
- Methods for starting and working on Service Excellence; a step-by-step plan.
- Examples of implementation processes.
- The most important concepts and tools to implement Service Excellence.
- A quantitative Service Excellence measurement of your own organization using a digital questionnaire (*Service Excellence Scan*).
- Tips for sustainably changing your organization.
- Developing an action plan for Service Excellence.

### Phase 3: How can we mobilize the entire organization?

Your Management team and (senior) management are now fully committed to Service Excellence, but how can you inspire your entire organization? How do you ensure that everyone understands and is committed to contributing to this process? The challenge in this third phase is to get all organizational units and your most important partners off to an enthusiastic start. A tool that we offer is the *Service Excellence Kickstart* programme. After a management workshop in which initial choices are determined, all organizational units participate in a follow-up programme; two or three Service Excellence ambassadors are then appointed per unit. These then participate in three workshops in which three elements of the model are discussed at each meeting. During the workshops they use a workbook to develop a two-year action plan. This is then presented in plenary sessions, before becoming part of the organizational unit's standard plan.

### Phase 4: How can we work on embedding Service Excellence?

Now that the entire organization is committed and involved in developing Service Excellence plans, achieving quick wins, and introducing structural measures, the challenge is to keep up the momentum. An underestimated challenge is to get and keep teams, departments and the organization to continually manage this change. We offer a range of tools including the *Service Excellence Toolbox*. This includes practical guidelines for implementing a number of tools and concepts that help

you implement and safeguard Service Excellent improvement measures. We have also developed the *Service Excellence Annual Plan*. This is a simple format in which organizational units set out their measures for the coming year. They then ensure that these are achieved throughout the year. Finally, we organize clinics on related topics. To help organizations stay up to date with the concepts of Service Excellence and to meet other professionals, we organize regular *Service Excellence Platform* clinics. Specific themes or organization cases are central to these clinics. The Service Excellence Platform is the knowledge network for Service Excellence Professionals, providing knowledge, inspiration and a network in the field of excellent customer focus. The Platform helps professionals to develop a customer focus within their organizations. See our website for the agenda.



#### Phase 5: How do we celebrate our successes and continue to innovate?

The organization has taken considerable steps, much has improved. It is now time to celebrate successes, acknowledging and appreciating them. But it is also time to safeguard what has been achieved and organize new input for the next phase of improvements; after all Service Excellence is not a project but an unending journey. A tool to help companies in this phase is *Service Excellence Assessment & Recognition*. To recognize and guarantee the achieved level of Service Excellence, companies could perform a *Service Excellence Assessment*. A team of accredited assessors visit your organization and review the relevant documents. Based on interviews, they develop and present a detailed and in-depth picture of the strengths and points of improvement on the basis of the Service Excellence assessment framework. Upon reaching a certain level, your organization receives a Service Excellence Recognition. Furthermore, we offer the *Service Excellence Evaluation* training programme which builds on the Getting started with Service Excellence training. We offer participants who have taken this course and who have a thorough understanding of Service Excellence in practice, the opportunity to become proficient in achieving an in-depth Service Excellence assessment of an organization. In this course we work on:



- Assessing an extensive and integrated case – based on intensive pre-study.
- Performing a qualitative Service Excellence SWOT- analysis of the organization.
- Analysing the organization at micro and macro levels.
- Determining the most important Service Excellence issues.
- Discovering how to assess the organization with a team; using each other's strengths.
- Reporting the findings and recommendations based on appreciative inquiry.

### Learn more about Service Excellence

In addition to the tools linked to the five phases of your Service Excellence Journey, there are a range of additional options to learn and read more about Service Excellence.

#### Service Excellence Course

Beeckestijn Business School organizes a twice-yearly post-HBO Service Excellence course. In 9 lectures and a case day, you gain insight into all the ins and outs of Service Excellence. The programme's lecturers provide participants with a high-level understanding of topics including customer experience, customer delight, service design, organizational development, HRM, processes/customer journeys and customer research. The course can easily be combined with a busy job and, on successful completion of the group case and an individual assignment (developing a Service Excellence Plan), participants are awarded the Post-HBO Service Excellence Diploma with the professional title of *Registered Service Excellence Professional*.

#### Publications

Two books on Service Excellence have been published. The book *Service Excellence* provides an in-depth picture of the background of the Service Excellence model. The elements of the model are described and illustrated with practical examples and cases. It was awarded 'Best Dutch-language marketing book of 2016' and by the Belgian STIMA 'Marketing Book of the Year'. The second book '*Excelleren in Service*' describes the ten most important changes that organizations make to be sustainably successful by providing excellent service. This book on organizational



change details service design, strategy, corporate culture, innovation and the operation. It was awarded the best Dutch marketing book in 2019. Furthermore, many *articles, white papers and practical cases* have been written about the application of the model. These are available on [serviceexcellence.nu](http://serviceexcellence.nu). All publications are in the Dutch language.

## Staying up-to-date

Do you want to keep your knowledge of current developments in Service Excellence up-to-date? Our website [serviceexcellence.nu](http://serviceexcellence.nu) is continually updated with news of events, news facts and other developments in this field. Via this site you can sign up for our periodic newsletter. You can also join the *LinkedIn Group* 'Service Excellence (NL/B)'.

A photograph of three people—two men and one woman—collaborating at a table. They are looking at documents and smiling, suggesting a positive and productive work environment. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. The text '5 The Service Excellence Foundation' is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the image.

# **5** **The Service Excellence Foundation**

Never doubt that  
a handful of dedicated  
people can change  
the world. It's the only  
way that anything  
has ever changed

Margaret Mead



The purpose of the *Service Excellence Foundation* is to inspire organizations to work on an outstanding customer experience by applying the Service Excellence model and its accompanying ideas. The Foundation aims to help and inspire organizations to become a Service Excellence organization, whereby their customers feel even more valued, in turn adding value to the organization itself. The more organizations that succeed in this aim, the more they contribute to a valuable and service-oriented society. That is the higher goal the foundation aims to stimulate. The Service Excellence Foundation was initiated by Jean-Pierre Thomassen, Eric de Haan and Ruud Stassen.

*Jean-Pierre Thomassen* was a member of the European and Chairman of the Dutch standards committee *Creating outstanding customer experiences through Service Excellence*. He guides ambitious organizations that are looking for more than 'merely satisfied customers'. Amongst others, he has written the book '*De Customer Delight strategie*', and is co-author of the books '*Service Excellence*' and '*Excelleren in Service*'. He also teaches at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Erasmus University Rotterdam and Hotelschool The Hague.

*Eric de Haan* was a member of the European and Dutch standards committees *Creating outstanding customer experiences through Service Excellence*. He is Chairman of the Gouden Oor (Golden Ear) Foundation and initiator of the Gouden Oor Awards. He has written, amongst other, '*De Tao van Service*', developed the game '*ServiceGuru*', and is co-author of the books '*Service Excellence*' and '*Excelleren in Service*'.

*Ruud Stassen* worked as director of the INK in 2000 and is currently the Institute's Counsel. He was trained as a business administrator and change manager, worked at Tata Steel as secretary of the Executive Board and the Supervisory Board, and was subsequently HR manager and Distribution manager. The common theme in his career has always been the integral development of organizations from a human perspective.

## Learn more / contact

[serviceexcellence.nu](http://serviceexcellence.nu)

## Notes

- 1 Ady, M. Research for Accor Hotels. TrustYou and LMU University Munich (Statistical Consulting Unit)
- 2 Anderson, C (2012). The Impact of Social Media on Lodging Performance. Cornell Hospitality Report, 12(5), 6-11.
- 3 See the book of Michael Treacy and Fred Wiersema: The Discipline of Market Leaders



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