

“The 9 ½ Principles of Innovative Service”



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Introduction – Bob Littell

I've been doing a lot of reading later on 'retention' – both as it relates to 'listening' as well as 'reading' retention and some tips on ways to improve both. One proven 'retention' tool whether it's in the written or spoken word, is by telling 'stories' which are more easily remembered than facts. Another proven method is by 'applying' the information you read or hear to something with which you can already identify.

Since Chip's book is a book of stories, that will make the principles easier to remember but as you'll see below, we'll be applying the principles from several of the chapters in ways that should allow you to put some of the principles to work in your business, or for your company.

Chip's book is loaded with 'pearls of wisdom' both for providing 'imaginative' service to customers and clients which not only wins them over, but makes them 'walking-talking word-of-mouth advertisers' for you, your business, or your company.

Chip's book is what I like to call a '*book made for Kings and Queen who sit on the throne*', if you get which 'throne' I'm talking about – you know the one with warning beside it – **“Don't squeeze the Charmin!”**

In other words, you can pick it up in any place and read one or two of the entertaining and educational stories and be better for it. Keep a pen and paper there as well to write down any ideas that come to you for your business as you read.

The book is only a little over 100 pages and so I'm going to take a totally different approach to summarizing this book and it's intended to make this **“Don't Need to Read the Book”** book club meeting even more fun than they usually are.

I'm going to pick out four (4) of the 9 ½ Principles (actually 10 plus the appetizer opening) and in addition to summarizing the chapter, describing some different ways Chip illustrates how various companies and industries have applied that principle to their particular situation, at the meeting we'll discuss and brainstorm ways you might do something similar or even something totally different but still applying that particular principle to your business or to your work.

First, here's a list of the 9 ½ Principles (10 chapters) and at the end, a little 'teaser' about what you can learn from each of ones I don't cover here. The combination of the two will hopefully make you want to have this book in your library – keeping it handy for frequent reference.

Remember from my previous email Chip's offer. If you go to his website and purchase the book, and email him that you've purchased the book, he'll send you another one autographed.

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The Welcome Appetizer

"It is the service we are not obliged to give that people value most." - **J.C. Penney**

"If you work just for money, you'll never make it, but if you love what you're doing and you always put the customer first, success will be yours." – **Ray Kroc** – Founder, McDonald's

In this Principle, Chip explains a fascinating difference between "**value-added**" and "**value-unique**":

"It is not about addition – 'they gave me more than I anticipated.' It is about a unique and unexpected creation. When service people are asked to give more, they often think, 'I'm already doing the best I can.' But if asked to pleasantly surprise more customers, they feel less like worker bees and more like fireflies. And when employees get to create, not just perform, they feel prized. This refreshingly novel brand of service leaves customers more than cheaply entertained – it leaves them richly stirred."

And as Chip says at the completion of the "**Appetizer**" chapter, "This book is all about the unexpected".

1. Write down 5 specific things you or your company current do/does to generate business.
2. Which one or two have worked best in the past?
3. Brainstorm among your group how those might be tweaked in some ways which your prospective customer/clients would categorize as “**value-unique**”?

Principle 3 - Elevate The Class – The Purpling Principle

“Always give the customer more than they expect.” - **Nelson Boswell**

“It’s the little things that make the big things possible. Only close attention to the fine details of any operation makes the operation first class.” – **J. Willard Marriott**

“Boldly summon customers on a journey to collective joy much like a child welcoming a close friend to a tree house filled with secrets.” – **Chip Bell**

Every one of us has stories of being **UN-PURPLED**. Let me explain.

Until I read this Principle, I wasn’t truly aware of the difference with little girls between the colors ‘pink’ and ‘purple’. Chip explains:

*“If you spend time with young granddaughters, you quickly learn the importance of the color purple. Pink is a girl color, but purple is a princess (or prince) color – a hue of nobility. [think of the English crown and purple robes]. The word is typically used as a noun or adjective. For granddaughters with an undying desire to be a princess, it is also a verb: ‘I will **purple** you with my wand.’ Think of it as the six-year-old version of knighting someone. After you are ‘purpled’, you are to be always treated as a prince or princess.”*

I don’t know about you but even with so much emphasis these days on maximizing the ‘customer experience’ and ‘customer service’, I have had and continue to have more ‘UN-purpling experiences than “Purpling” ones, meaning that I’ve felt more like I’m being treated as a ‘peasant’ than a ‘prince ‘ or ‘princess’.

Chip starts the chapter with a great story about an airport transportation experience as he was picked up at the Charlotte Douglas Airport to carry him to his hotel. As he describes what awaited him as he got in, first his roller bag was loaded into a mink-lined (faux mink) trunk of the car. As he was escorted into the back seat, the ‘chauffeur’ courteously held open the passenger door. Inside he was greeted to a small bottle of ice cold water; reading options - *Robb Report*, *Wine Spectator*, and *Town and Country* magazines, and classical music playing on the radio.

You’re probably assuming his mode of transport was a chauffeur-driven limo. No, the Crown Cab was a 10-year old immaculately-kept Chevrolet, and his cab driver was as courteous as a chauffeur but was just an ordinary cabby who had discovered the secret for getting bigger tips by ‘purpling’ his customers.

As Chip said, “**He was purpled**”!

1. Write down 2 experiences you or someone you know has had in which you or they were ‘**purpled**’.
2. What are a couple ways you could think of which would allow you to ‘roll out the red carpet’ for a current or prospective client or customer, or a potential referral source’ and you be the ‘**purpler**’.
3. Vote on the best one within your group for when we re-assemble in the larger group. I have a surprise for each winner.

But of all the Principles Chip covers in his great book, this one may just be my favorite because to a large degree, it is the one to which I give most credit for whatever success I have had in my career, as well as for the success of these “**Don’t Need To Read the Book**” book club events. It’s all about **YOU** being the one to be seen as the one ‘willing to share wisdom’, especially the wisdom which you have been fortunate enough to have been passed on to you by others. . .and YOUR willingness to “Pay It Forward” by passing it on.

Principle 6 - Hardwire Wisdom Into Service – The Campfire Story Principle

“Customers love to learn if the journey is more like a story than like a chore.” - Chip Bell

Chip begins that story with a confession. Although I’m a converted ‘yankee’, Chip is a native Southerner. His description of Junior Spivey, a North Georgia ‘good ole boy’ and his use of terms and phrases like, *“I live in a holler by a crick close to my kin”* just *“animate his language making it sound more like a story than a conversation”*, is one of admiration, not ridicule.

But Junior represents a great example of how ‘**graduate**’ degrees from the most prestigious institute in the world, are the ones most appreciated. They come from earning a PhD from “**USOHK**” - the “**Universal School of Hard Knocks**” and their “**Department of Real Life Experience**”.

When a landscaper told Chip that adding lime in his yard was foolish, Junior took exception. **Professor Dr. Junior** (degrees Chip conferred upon him) took some soil samples and sent them off to the state agricultural extension service. According to Chip, *“He brought us the predicted results – complete with complicated graphs – which he expertly explained. We never doubted Junior’s know-how after that.”*

As Chip accentuates:

*“Customers love service providers that help them learn. While their confidence is amplified by **smart**, their receptivity is lowered by **smart-aleck**. Wisdom by a customer mentor is best conveyed in the spirit of a campfire story – nonjudgmentally, centered on the receiver, and warmed by compassion for the customer. It is sharing, much like a friend might offer a tip on where to catch the most fish. It is laced with as much attention to the learner-customer as to the expertise.”*

1. What wisdom – either of yours, or that of others, are you currently passing on?
2. If you are already passing on your own wisdom to others, or that of others? If so, share with your group how you are doing it and how it has helped you and your business?
3. If you have not yet figured a way to do that, both on an individual basis, or even more so in a way that it would ‘position’ you as a ‘source of expertise’, brainstorm how you might do that or who might help you do that?

Principle 7 - Monogram The Moment – The Fly-Fishing Principle

“We wildly underestimate the power of the tiniest personal touch” - Tom Peters

“Biggest question: Isn’t it really ‘customer helping’ rather than customer service? And wouldn’t you deliver better service if you thought it that way?” – Jeffrey Gitomer

“No one ever attains very eminent success by simply doing what is required; it is the amount and excellence of what is over and above the required that determines the greatness of ultimate distinction.” – Charles Francis Adams

“Our greatest asset is the customer! Treat each customer as if they are the only one!” – Laurice Leitao

“One customer, well taken care of, could be more valuable than \$10,000 worth of advertising.” – Jim Rohn

Chip begins this chapter with a cute story which centered around their cat. As they were on a road trip with their cat, and as they planned an overnight stay in Austin, Texas as their halfway point, they discovered “*there was no room at the Inn*”. It was Friday night and whenever there’s a University of Texas football weekend, you had better have reservations, which they didn’t have.

After finding no vacancies in many of the standard motel/hotels, and with others saying “no pets”, Chip’s wife suggested the **Four Seasons Hotel**. Chip could see \$300 dollar signs but being the good husband, he called and the welcoming response was, “***We’d love to have your cat***”, the front desk clerk sang into the phone. “***What’s your kitty’s name? We want to register your little kitty.***” And it didn’t stop there. As they arrived and were checking in, there was a veritable welcoming party – as Chip says – “***to greet THE cat***”. Then there was the Four Seasons logoed bowl for the cat food, another for water, and a small cat toy.

But Chip explains that the “Monogrammed moment came the next morning”. They had ordered breakfast and as the bellman greeted them, the first words out of his mouth was, “***Good morning Taco!***”

As the bellman left and door closed, his wife ‘swooned’: “*I’ll never stay anywhere but a Four Seasons hotel. If the room service guy knows the name of my cat, why would I stay anywhere else?*”

As Chip explains:

“Customers love monogrammed service. Monogrammed service is a lot like fly-fishing for trout. Most fish are complete suckers for a juicy worm on a hook dangling in front of their face below a cork floating above on the surface of the water. Not trout. Trout, like customers, prefer a monogrammed adventure. You must carefully study what the trout are eating, buy

or fashion a fly to mimic their cuisine, authentically present the fly to the trout, and the moment you get a bite, slowly draw the trout to a net because what separates you from the trout is a line slightly larger than a thread". . . "Fly-fishing is all about **'personalization'**".

Chip gives a more detailed description of what 'personalization' IS. . .and what it's NOT:

"Monogrammed service requires time and care; it cannot be a knee-jerk or fast-track response. It is unique to the customer and it must always be sincere and authentic. Customers know if your brand of service is a trick, an empty gesture, or a selfish ploy. When service is genuinely personalized, it reminds customers they are vitally present in an important service relationship. Having customer's names on an offering or their needs embedded in it, informs customers they are valued recipients, not just typical end-users."

So Chip offers his recommendation for what you can do to apply the "FLY-FISHING Principle":

*"Display the upbeat attitude you want your customers to have. Never let customers leave disappointed. As they do at Starbucks, repeat customers' names often so you will know them when they return. Even if you can't always give customers what they want, you can always give them a great service experience. Use the optimistic attitude of, "**The answer is 'yes' what's the questions?**" Listen to learn, not to make a point. Customers will indirectly tell you ways to personalize their experience. Thank customers like you really mean it. And never forget they have options. Customers feel valued when you show you never forget that fact either."*

1. Think of a couple situations where you or someone you know was given 'personalized' service or had something 'personalized' for you, and how it commanded almost instant loyalty, and probably persuaded you to overlook the extra cost associated with doing it the 'customized' way.
2. What could you or your company do in the way of providing "**Monogrammed Service**" and ways you could personalize things to let your customers or clients know that you genuinely want their business?

So here are a few 'teasers' from the Principles in the chapters which we haven't covered here.

Hopefully these will entice you to want to also own this book, and better yet to buy multiple copies to give to clients. You also have my permission if you do so to pop this summary in there and also to remove my name and have it come from you. How's that for personalized service!

Principle 1 – "**Put a Surprise Inside** – The Cracker Jack Principle" – Chip tells an amusing story of the surprise Inside a large styrofoam cup left by their very creative landscape guy on his back porch, plus other stories of how far just thinking of how far 'adding a little surprise' to your service or product can make a difference.

Principle 2 – "**Connect with Respect** – The 'Big Boy' Event Principle" – learn by several stories what '**respectful service**' is all about and how powerful it can be.

Principle 4 – "**Put Total Sense Into Service** – The Speed Limit 23 MPH Principle" – If you think you have some 'off-the-wall' creative ways to provide over the top service, learn here why Hotel Monaco is Chip's favorite hotel. It's all about 'differentiating' yourself and separating yourself from the bland crowd.

Principle 5 – “Before and Beyond Service – The Circus Principle” – Great of examples of how ‘anticipation’ and ‘what’s coming next?’ can keep your customers attention focused on you.

Principle 8 – “Effort Removal Squared – The Easy Button Principle” – Read some great examples of how making your customers’ lives ‘easier’ is one more key to locking them in for good.

Principle 9 – “Turn an ‘Oops’ Into an Opportunity – “The Panning for Gold Principle” – I love Chip’s line here – *“Customers don’t expect you to be perfect; they do expect you to care when things go wrong. How you demonstrate care is lot like panning for gold.”* Read to learn how the analogy involves careful listening so as to not pass up the opportunity to gingerly separate the ‘gold’ from ‘black sand’.

Principle 9½ - “Synergize Your Service Delivery – The Fruit Salad Principle” - You need to meet Stew Leonard and his farm fresh food stores in New York and Connecticut and how the secret of his success is largely due to how he mixes in several of Chip’s 9 principles. Making a trip into one of Stew’s stores is a sensory experience. It also explains why he’s in the Guinness Book of Records for having the highest retail sales per square foot of any grocery establishment in the world.”

Hope you will enjoy this book as much as I have and it will help you come up with creative ways to provide the kind of ‘innovative service’ which will build clients and customers who are not only ‘joined with you at the hip’, but who become your greatest ‘cheerleaders’ and ‘advocates’.