



“**SPRINKLES**”

Creating Awesome Experiences Through Innovative Service

Chip R. Bell

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Testimonial

“Chip Bell understands the importance of gaining trust while running a customer-centric business, and shares the secrets of success.”

—Herve Humler, president and COO, The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company

This summary will be a little different from my other summaries since this one will be more of an **‘idea sampler and tickler’** for you to apply some of Chip’s examples and stories into your own business.

Chip has invited you to come along on his **“delicious journey”** to experience a **“floating banquet”** where at each stop —*“an appetizer at one friend’s house, the salad at another home, and end the evening with dessert at the last house”*, you’ll learn some innovative approaches and ways to deliver, **“an unexpected, tantalizing experience to all you serve.”**

But I’ll also try and add a few tweaks to further stimulate ways you can apply the ideas and stories to your own practice or company.

I’ve already written a review of Chip’s previous book — **“The 9 ½ Principles of Innovative Service”** — and those who attend the book club meeting will also receive that summary as well. So, between the two, you will be provided with a plethora of ways to **“AWE”** and **“WOW”** your customers, prospects, vendors, suppliers, or just other friends, and as Chip says, “. . . **deliver an experience as enchanting and memorable as a special cookie.**” - topped with **‘sprinkles’** of course.

As Chip concludes the introduction, he states something that too many people and companies forget: *“Customers today crave special and unique. They are not only tired of ho-hum, they are bored with the ‘pretty-good-but-nothing-to-write-home-about’ kind of service.”* . . . “[Customers] gravitate toward people with spirit, organizations with imagination, and leaders with spunk. They want their service experiences delivered with sprinkles.”

“Hospitality is making your guest feel at home, even though you wish they were.”

- Author Unknown

THE APPETIZER

SERVE WITH INNOVATION

“Breakthroughs come from an instinctive judgment of what customers might want if they knew to think about it.”

- Andrew Grove, former chairman and CEO, Intel

In an opening story, Chip relates a meeting with the cartoonist – **John Bush** (now deceased) – who Chip was considering using for the illustrations of a new book. As they were having breakfast at a restaurant, Chip dug deeper about where John’s creativity comes from. Chip said, “*I was struck by how he spoke of ideas as if they were good friends with a mind of their own. ‘How about a cartoon about a dog?’*” Chip suggested. As John looked outside and saw a man walking a beagle and then spied a woman nearby who ordered a cappuccino, the end result was a dog drinking a cappuccino. . .”*with lots of steamed-milk foam on his mouth.*” Then he added the caption: “*My last owner wouldn’t let me order this. . .said it made me look crazy*” Chip had to chime in and added “. . .said it made me look mad?”

What could you come up with? Here’s mine: “I’m a rabid fan of cappuccino”!

John, the cartoonist states: “*The creative part of humor is to let the viewer fill in the pattern. There would be little to ‘get’ if you made it totally obvious. It needs to pop in the viewer’s mind like the punch line of a joke.*”

And then Chip repeats the response he hears all too often: “***I’m just not all that creative.***” Chip suggests: “*What if you chose a different set of eyes to examine what you are seeking to solve? What would a group of first graders suggest? Or, a wonderful wizard? What would Walt Disney do? What if you turned your problem into a play, a food, an old movie, a celebration – the combinations are endless.*”

Chip then adds several new twists to some of the standard ways to personally ideate and brainstorm: “*What if you made your service experience smaller, done alone, done in reverse, done with a guide, greener, more romantic, slower, with elegance, easier, more inclusive, faster, done remotely – keep going?*”. . .Some of mine: *more vivid, more visual, noisier, fatter, thinner. . .etc.* Now add some of yours:_____.

I love Chip’s next description of innovation and his advice on how to capture it:

*“Innovation comes from choosing the light. . .a sort of table by the window. When someone has a brilliant ‘Aha’ moment, we label it insight. It happens when you are placed in a position to experience energy in action and join with it. It is the result of **focused daydreaming**, letting reality blend with fantasy in a totally nonjudgmental manner. It surfaces when you are willing to take the risk to rearrange order and upset the tried (or tired) and true. . .Innovation happens when you effortlessly ignore mind-limiting barriers and laugh at conventions that are mere form. It is there when you find joy in the simplicity of life and allow yourself to be completely awed. Become friends of the bizarre, partners with the uncommon. It happens when you relax with your issue and let it ‘play us’ instead of seeking to control it. It appears when you engage others in the search – a customer, a colleague, or someone unrelated to your problem. Innovation happens when passion becomes the magical bond that links head and heart. Failure is merely feedback, never rejection.”*

Note that I highlighted “***focused daydreaming***” in the above paragraph. As Chip adds, “***There is a creative person inside each of us waiting to emerge and make service gourmet in an innovative way.***”

That got me to thinking about some of the crazy dreams I’ve had that link ‘reality’ with the ‘bizarre’. I’m sure you have had some of those as well. Why not do some of that kind of crazy daydreaming while you’re awake!

Chip’s Introduction concludes with this quote:

“Innovation doesn’t come just from giving people incentives; it comes from creating environments where their ideas can connect.”

Steven Johnson

CHAPTER ONE

EVERYTHING GOES BETTER WITH SPRINKLES

“I doubt whether the world holds for anyone a more soul-stirring surprise than the first adventure with ice cream.”

- Heywood Broun

Chip begins the chapter with an exemplary Ritz-Carlton story of Nuriya Mohsen who not only pressed his pants and had them back to him within an hour but accompanied it with a package of stays for his dress shirt collars. Chip’s point:

“Unlike elegant icing or fancy cake decoration, sprinkles are not complex or arduous. They are super easy, random performances available to all of us all of the time. As a performance, they should be sprinkled on with deliberate abandon, much like a fairy with a wand. When the person in the vehicle in front of us pays our toll in the tollbooth, we tell people. When a departing customer gives our child their unused tickets as we arrive at the county fairground, we tell people. As customers, we are thankful for random acts of kindness. And, when those acts are totally unexpected, we are also talkative.”

What’s the SMALLEST ‘sprinkle’ you can think of with which you might surprise one of your customers, clients, or prospects? Chip offers several ideas and here are two of my favorites: “*a bank teller would give you an extra thousand in play money just to make you laugh. And there would be fresh flowers in the middle of the boardroom table, not just water pitchers.*”

THE SECRET SAUCE – AMAZEMENT

Chip ends this chapter with a truism that some companies still don't get: He explains how a child growing up begins '*asking*' for a cookie, which later switches to '*I need a cookie*':

“. . .customers have changed. Today, they need a cookie so to speak. They assume they will get a quality outcome or product at a fair price. And, they assume they will get good service. Without these features, they take their business elsewhere, leaving bad tweets, snarky YouTube videos, and poor reviews littered along with exit path.”

***“The moments of happiness we enjoy take us by surprise.
It is not that we seize them, but that they seize us.”***

- Ashley Montagu

CHAPTER TWO

MAKE PASSION THE SPICE OF SERVICE

***“Research tells us fourteen out of any
ten individuals likes chocolate.”***

- Sandra Boynton

Have you ever been into a restaurant for breakfast when the opening line spoken to you from the back of the restaurant was, “*Good morning, how would you like your coffee?*” And when you answered, “black”, the voice – **Sandy** - “warmly responded, ‘*Take any table you like, and I’ll have your coffee there before you can sit down!*’” Chip has - the Park Inn west of Harrisburg, PA.

When Chip left a tip “*almost as big as my breakfast tab*”, he went to the manager on duty to compliment her over-the-top, high-spirited service, Although the manager was pleased, he said, “*I will tell you, we get comments about Sandy almost every day. In fact, we have guests who tell us they drive way out of their way just to get a shot of Sandy in the morning!*”

To accentuate “**service with passion**”, Chip uses words and terms like “*mischievous as April Fools*”. . . “*service with panache and flair*”. . . “*can be subtle and low-key or feisty, assertive and bubbly*”.

But Chip also reminds us that there are plenty of “**spirit leeches**” out there. Like a real bloodsucking river leech, “*Spirit leeches suck the energy and passion from their [targets]*.”

“Some spirit leeches are dark – they remove optimism, hope, and confidence. Mention an opportunity, and they can tell you why it’s a mistake.” . . . “Some are transparent, preying on personal accountability. They play the blame game or bring out the excuse use” . . . “Some are almost invisible, specializing in putting wet blankets on joy.”

So how do you deal with and remove “**spirit leeches**”? Chip discounts using a lighted match although in some cases I’ve experienced, I thought it might not be a bad idea. But realistically, Chip says you should remove them like Sandy would: “*with the warmth and energy of a passionate, feisty spirit.*” . . . “*Those who opt for upbeat decline to let spirit leeches attach to them. And, even introverts can muster up enough obvious passion to produce a customer grin!*”

Have you ever bought a new car and had a service technician program in the radio stations from your trade-in and not even tell you until you discovered it yourself? That’s what happened to Chip’s wife. WOW!

THE SECRET SAUCE – ANIMATION

Chip ends this chapter with another great truism and something that I think would make a great poster inside every restaurant:

“Customers are attracted to spirited people! And today’s customers are frustrated with indifferent service – not bad service, just boring, comatose service. They witness service people sleepwalking through the workday. And as they guard their ever-diminishing dollars, employee spirit is one component of value they carefully watch. When they witness employees who act like there is no light on inside, they are fast to flee with their funds.”

“Nothing is so contagious as enthusiasm.”

- Samuel Taylor Coleridge

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CHAPTER THREE

ALWAYS ADD AN EXTRA HELPING

***“True generosity is an offering, given freely and out of pure love.
No strings attached. No expectations.”***

- Suze Orman

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As with every chapter, Chip begins with a story that exemplifies the theme of that particular chapter. This story is close to home – meaning Georgia - and although it’s a ‘**gem mining**’ story in the North Georgia mountains, I have a feeling this place is in or outside Dahlonega and when he comes to give his overview at our book club meeting, we’ll have to get the name of the place so you can take YOUR children, grandchildren, etc. there.

Chip took his three granddaughters to this Disneyland of ‘gem mining’ for children where there’s a little ‘pixie dust’ thrown in with the sand in each bucket you purchase for \$10 each. Here’s how Chip describes it:

“Granted the buckets of sand are previously salted with semi-precious stones collectively worth less than the ten dollars you pay for each bucket. But, that is not a ‘truth-in-mining’ fact a six-year old cares to hear about.”

But the **'secret sauce'** in this story comes as they are about to leave, and after each of the girls has had a little **'rock lecture'** on the particular newly-discovered stones in her bucket, as well as after purchasing a piece of colored glass art in each of their particular birthstone color", here's what this generous and creative owner did:

*"After every girl was completely satisfied with her choice, the owner asked, 'And what is grandmother's birth month?' " When Chip's wife replied "**June**, the owner momentarily disappeared only to return with a gorgeous piece of deep purple art glass (for the birthstone, Alexandrite). 'This is yours,' she said, 'for being so nice to me and bringing your grandchildren to my gem store."*

Other examples Chip gives demonstrating an **'abundance of generosity'** include Disney World's housekeepers being trained – when cleaning your room – and **"turning a hand towel into a charming figure."**

THE SECRET SAUCE – ABUNDANCE

So now ask yourself, what could you **ADD** to the product or service you provide that would ADD the element of surprise. . .of enchantment. . .of unexpected delight – at little or no cost?

Actually, almost four years ago, when I began calling authors of some of the greatest business books of our time, and gaining permission to summarize them, I had no idea that I was figuratively **'mining grandmas' birthstone piece of glass art'**. This 'library' I have now created summaries of some of the best business books ever written – including three by Chip – one that he co-authored with John Patterson –[I use as 'value-added' gifts to someone.

Whether it's this 'book summary of Chip's book which you are welcome to share as a 'value add' yourself, or something more aligned with your business, what is something you could add? We'll brainstorm some of these ways in smaller breakout groups at our book club meeting. Be thinking between now and then.

"There are no traffic jams along the extra mile."

- Roger Staubach

CHAPTER FOUR

PUT A CHERRY ON TOP OF GREAT SERVICE

"Happiness is life served up with a scoop of acceptance, a topping of tolerance, and sprinkles of hope, although chocolate sprinkles also work.

- Robert Brault

Chip begins this chapter by encouraging us to transform a ho-hum a 'seafood' chain restaurant with most of the 'seafood theme' – missing – except for *"a few nautical photos on the walls"* and a seafood menu. As you read his description of each of the pieces, try to imagine what **'sprinkles'** could be added that would make a trip to such a **'family-oriented, reasonably-priced, restaurant'** a sensory experience.

In Chip's words, "**So, how would you make this restaurant colorful to all the senses?**" Here are Chip's descriptions:

- *Landscaping out front similar to the nearby Chili's rocks and cacti.*
- Hostess greeting: "**Welcome to Fish Feast**" (not their real name).
- *Music playing was Vince Gill.*
- *The smell was like any family restaurant, not one with a particular theme.*
- *Waitress dressed in a white logoed shirt, but no uniform or costume.*
- *When asked about the tilapia, the waitress only knew how it was prepared, not any characteristics about the fish (e.g. its texture, very mild, non-fishy taste, or where it was caught).*
- *Silent bathroom that could have been exported from any medium-priced restaurant in the country.*
- *Colorful placemat – blues and greens, but without pictures or puzzles or 'little-known facts'.*
- *The takeaway souvenir after paying the bill – a toothpick that tasted like wood; not even salty.*

Maybe what we'll do at our book club meeting is brainstorm each one of these and give them to Chip to send them to the restaurant chain headquarters.

So what's missing? According to Chip, "*Colorful service involves integrating all the sensory elements of a service experience so they are congruent around a compelling story, theme, or vision. The secret is attention to minute details because the customer's brain can pick up any dissonant signal or symbol.*"

Towards the end of the chapter, Chip reminds us of one other important consequence of innovative service that touches the senses and enriches the experience. After a wonderful experience at an upscale boutique hotel in downtown Dallas, the "happy energy" generated during the stay, carried over:

"After a wonderful stay, I checked out of the hotel with a big smile that I passed on to the doorman, and to the taxi driver, and to the airport TSA agent, and to the airline gate attendant, and to the. . . !"

THE SECRET SAUCE – AMBIANCE

How about the example Chip gives of Billy Rivera of Karaoke Cab in Charlotte, who gives his customers a choice of over 39,000 songs with which they can sing along: "*Some passengers so enjoy the wild sing-a-long, they ask Billy to keep driving around the block until the song ends, not minding that the meter continues to run.*"

“A great chef is a mixture of artistry and craft.”

- Wolfgang Puck

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It's at this point that I always reduce the detail of my summaries with the conscious intent to entice you to want to own the book to go along with my summary. As you've seen by now, it's the '**stories**' Chip provides that make it so much easier for the reader to transfer the experience over to how that flavor of '**secret sauce**' could be applied to their own company or business.

So here are the flavors of Secret Sauce contained in Chapters Five to Nine with just a little tease as to what's inside each remaining pieces of chocolate – topped or course with Sprinkles..

CHAPTER 5

GIVE THE GREATEST THING SINCE SLICED BREAD

“The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve.”

- Albert Schweitzer

THE SECRET SAUCE – ADORATION

What does Chip mean by '**adoration**' and why is it just as important to look at it from the customer's side as it is from the customer service's passion to serve and to be of help?

“I would rather have thirty minutes of wonderful than a lifetime of nothing special.”

- Shelby Lacherie in *Steel Magnolias*

CHAPTER 6

CUSTOMERS ENJOY BORROWING A CUP OF SUGAR

“Nothing makes you more tolerant of a neighbor's noisy party than being there.”

- Franklin P. Jones

THE SECRET SAUCE – ALLEGIANCE

Ever been inside a restaurant that had a large container of umbrellas by the door with the owner's business card on each one and a sign on the container that read: ***“If you bring it back, we'll give you a free cup of coffee.”*** Chip has, and he answers the question, *“Can you buy allegiance?”* You bet you can. Chip says, *“Look for ways to make service feel sincerely homemade, not conveniently store-bought.”*

“Faith is not belief without proof, but trust without reservations.”

- Elton Trueblood

CHAPTER 7

LET YOUR CUSTOMERS 'LICK THE BEATERS'

"People will care then they share."

On pages 65 and 66, Chip offers up "***The Seven Principles of Customer Inclusion***". ***Customer Inclusion*** involves *including the customer in the creation of an experience – helping the customer feel like a member of the family*, while remembering that *not all customers want to be 'pampered', but not 'partnered.'* (i.e. included in the act).

My two favorites: *"Provide customer with a brief background when making a request for assistance." . . . "Make certain the customer sees participation as a collective effort."*

Maybe another way of phrasing the title chapter is, *"Let your customers lick the beaters, but only if they feel comfortable doing so."*

THE SECRET SAUCE – ALLIANCE

Great piece of advice from Chip: *"Smart organizations view customers as partners. Having a board of customers can be as important as a board of directors.."*

"If you can run the company a bit more collaboratively, you get a better result, because you have more bandwidth, and checking and balancing going on."

- Larry Page, cofounder of Google

CHAPTER 8

BE AS EASY AS A TV DINNER

"Focus on making it so easy for customers to do business with you that they will have little reason to look for greener pastures."

- Jill Applegate

Great little story by Chip with an analogy between customers and why nervous deer on his lakeside property left without foraging in spite of little or no visible danger. They had no easy escape route to the forest. According to Chip, *"Customers are a lot like deer with no woods at their back. It explains the reason they get angrier than the situation dictates, or why they get very defensive when confronted with policies that make little sense to them. A self-service option can be great until it fails to work, leaving customers trapped."*

THE SECRET SAUCE – ACCESSIBLE

Chip's advice again: *"Make access to stressless service a vital and obvious part of your service recipe. After all, 'stressed' spelled backwards is 'desserts'."*

"A nickel will get you on the subway, but garlic will get you a seat."
"Old New York Proverb

CHAPTER 9

BE THE ICING ON YOUR CUSTOMER'S CAKE

“Remarkable takes originality, passion, guts and daring. . . today, the sure way to fail is to be boring.”

- Seth Godin from *Purple Cow*

In this chapter you learn how to make your service more like **lighting a candle**, than merely *providing light*.

At the request of his physician for help making his reception more adventuresome and innovative, Chip suggested making ONE chair totally different from the others and watching if that chair became favored above the others. Sure enough it did. The cowhide chair proved that, *“People picked that cowhide chair over ones that were clearly more comfortable. And, it proves your point: patients want a unique, off-the-beaten-path experience.”*

THE SECRET SAUCE – ADVENTURE

As you can tell by now, if you go to breakfast with Chip and there's a choice between the standard eggs, bacon, sausage, pancakes, fruit, and cereal, or an ordinary buffet, OR a breakfast experience like on South Miami Beach offering Eggs Benedict Cubano, Caribbean French Toast, and Grilled Churrasco with hearth-fried eggs. Why don't you walk on the wild side with Chip. As Chip recommends doing so with some caution since adventure doesn't fit all customers, but occasionally: *“Walk a bit on the wild side with your customers.”*

“This is my advice to people: Learn how to cook, try new recipes, learn from your mistakes, be fearless, and above all have fun.”

- Julia Child

THE DESSERT

FROM YOUR SERVICE KITCHEN TO YOUR CUSTOMER'S PLATE

“We dare not trust our wit for making our house pleasant to our friend, so we buy ice cream.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

As Chip says, “We have come to the end of our banquet of ideas for creating an unexpected, enchanting experience for those you serve.” Thanking everyone for joining him on the journey, closes ‘encouraging line by the imaginary chef Auguste Gusteau in the movie Ratatouille. . .

“You must be imaginative, strong-hearted.

You must try things that may not work, and you must not let anyone define your limits because of where you come from.

Your only limit is your soul. What I say is true – anyone can cook. . . But only the fearless can be great.”

- Auguste Custeau