

“Customers simply aren’t sure what is going to happen,” Hyken says. “Service in this cult runs the gamut from unacceptable to average or satisfactory, but it is not consistent.” The customer experience is merely average at best, and there is no real loyalty to your business.

**The Cult of Alignment** — At this stage, Hyken says, “customers are aware of your brand promise and value proposition, but have yet to experience it.

**The Cult of Experience** — This is where the customer has had a good experience, but is still not necessarily loyal.

**The Cult of Ownership** — With a pattern of consistent above-average experiences with your company, the customer shows signs of confidence and loyalty.

**The Cult of Amazement** — At this stage the customer becomes an evangelist for your company. As a result of having expectations consistently met or exceeded, customers not only show great loyalty but offer unsolicited recommendations and referrals.

Hyken also argues that the path to customer amazement involves employee engagement. It’s only when employees are fully engaged in putting the customer experience first and become evangelists for their own company that a Cult of Amazement is possible. And how do you do that? Hyken offers this advice, among much more in his book:

- Remember that the way you treat your employees is your instruction to them on how to treat customers.

- Address employee issues

first, before taking on issues with customers.

- Consider asking team members to contribute one idea a week for improvement on any company-related subject of their choosing.

- Have weekly team meetings to celebrate what’s working, and single out specific reps for public praise when they deliver an outstanding customer experience.

For companies that make their way through to the cult of amazement, Hyken promises a community of employees and customers that is “marked by a sense of loyalty and belonging, as well as a strong desire to recruit others into that community.”

### **The Napkin, the Melon, and the Monkey, by Barbara Burke**

Customer service managers are always looking for that short book that they can pass along to their customer service reps to help them in their day-to-day efforts to keep up with the pressures and demands of working with customers. This may be it. Despite its somewhat

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
silly title and contrived plotline, Burke’s book offers a number of very useful tools for frontline service reps and presents a bushel of traditional customer service wisdom in a pleasant and easy-to-read story and context that many reps will be able to relate to.

Labeled “a customer service fable” and subtitled “How to Be Happy and Successful at Work and in Life by Simply Changing Your Mind,” Burke starts by offering a simple “centering” technique that reps can use to relieve stress. She calls it “unplugging” — as a

metaphor for unplugging the headset that a rep uses on the job — and involves sitting up straight in a relaxed manner, remaining motionless, and focusing on your breath. “When you focus on your breath,” she says, “that brings you back to your center. And you are really disciplining your mind to be less reactive and more in control.”

Burke goes on — through her fictional heroine Olivia and her mentor Isabel — to offer a number of pearls of customer service wisdom (which reps should know already if they have been listening during their training sessions). These range from the realization that “It’s not about me” when confronted with an angry or difficult customer, to “A simple apology works wonders” as a way to diffuse customers’ anger over a company’s miscues.

The book and its narrative fable format may be simplistic, but when distributed to reps it can help to create a valuable shared experience and language. “Supervisors can use a book like this to have conversations and to connect more easily with their reps,” Burke says. “When they talk about it, it becomes part of their common experience, and it gives supervisors a shared reference from which to initiate coaching conversations.”

*Note: If we have missed a book that you found valuable or helpful to your work in customer service, please let us know. Send a note to CSN’s editor at [bkeenan@CustomerServiceGroup.com](mailto:bkeenan@CustomerServiceGroup.com). *



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