

upskill

21 KEYS TO PROFESSIONAL GROWTH



CHRIS WATSON

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Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Introduction	1
Key 1: Ability to Influence	11
Key 2: Commercial Thinking	21
Key 3: Commitment to Change and Adaptation	31
Key 4: Constructive Communication	41
Key 5: Creativity and Innovation	51
Key 6: Direction and Purpose	61
Key 7: Effective Planning and Organisation	71
Key 8: Enthusiasm for Customer Service	81
Key 9: Focus on Developing Others	91
Key 10: Interpersonal Awareness and Diplomacy	103
Key 11: Intuitive Thought	113
Key 12: Motivation to Succeed	123
Key 13: Ownership of Self-Development	135
Key 14: People Management and Leadership Potential	145
Key 15: Positive Decisions	155
Key 16: Professional Ethics and Social Responsibility	167
Key 17: Resilience and Emotional Control	177
Key 18: Results through Action	187
Key 19: Specialist Knowledge and Ability	197
Key 20: Teamwork and Collaboration	207
Key 21: Use of Information and Data	217
Summary	229
Notes	231
About the Author	247

... the strongest principle of growth lies in human choice.

George Eliot

KEY 8

Enthusiasm for Customer Service



Enthusiasm for Customer Service

People who have an enthusiasm for customer service seek to maintain positive personal contact with all their end users. They deal with customers in an engaging, professional and courteous way, listening to their requirements without making assumptions. Great at focusing on customer satisfaction levels, these individuals use client feedback as a key decision making consideration. They act as an ambassador for the organisation and will take responsibility for making improvements to services and work practices. They will demonstrate a deep understanding of customer needs and are likely to value loyalty and long-term commitment.

8



Ideas for personal development

[Customers] are only interested in being able to get from you a product or service with the minimum of fuss and the maximum of convenience – their convenience.

Simon Caulkin

Tool

- Express your thanks. Go the extra millimetre by sending handwritten cards – they stand out, are appreciated and are very memorable.

Techniques

- ▲ Ignore everything you have ever been told about customer service. Do not treat customers how *you* would like to be treated – treat them how *they* would like to be treated. Practise active listening skills and admit your mistakes – even if you discover them before your customers do.
- ▲ Be informed and know your stuff. If a query is too complex or out of the scope of your role, know who to turn to and then make them easy for you to connect with.
- ▲ Resist standardising your offering too much, although agreeing a set of protocols for more routine areas (such as telephone greetings) may support a consistency of approach and help to manage expectations.
- ▲ Use clear communication featuring authentic, positive language. Remain composed and never end a conversation without confirming the customer is satisfied.
- ▲ Be empathetic, patient and consistent. Handle each individual differently, yet provide the same levels of service.
- ▲ Throw away the scripts and automated responses and treat customers as individuals. Concentrate on developing a reputation as being ‘the person to ask for’.
- ▲ Get personal and be available. Customers want to feel they have access to real people. Provide physical addresses to build trust. Write timely responses to comments on social media postings and review sites.
- ▲ Know your customers’ expectations and then exceed them to build loyalty and generate opportunities for repeat business. Feedback loops can help to signal where adjustments need to be made and will release you from the pressure of having to predict what is going to happen with every single aspect of your service delivery.

Inspiration

- + Where possible, personalise at least one aspect of your offering or allow your customer to make choices or decisions about how it is provided. Watch the short film *Johnny the Bagger* and see the impact one small action can make.¹¹⁵

Ideas for delivering results

Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning.

Bill Gates

Tool

- Consider service delivery from a different angle using Strategyzer's Value Proposition Canvas. This simple tool for understanding your customers' needs can help you to design the products and services they really want. Search online to download a free copy.

Techniques

- ▲ Ensure your front entrances (physical and virtual) are impressive. These initial aspects are disproportionately important to your customers. They create lasting impressions and drive judgements about how they will be treated.
- ▲ Make everyone responsible for great customer service and, where possible, make one person accountable for it.
- ▲ Create short self-help videos to help your customers resolve common problems more quickly. Find one of the many online guides on how to produce these, then use a screen capture programme to produce your own in-house clips.

- ▲ Identify single customers to wow. Provide an experience so delightful that one lucky customer will have a great story to tell. Offer your own version of a free upgrade.
- ▲ Focus your energies on key touch points/moments of truth. Make sure the right skills are consistently demonstrated at every point where the customer has contact with someone from the organisation. Try to identify customer hot spots – or what Leah van Zelm calls SSBs (Single Selfish Benefits) – which are different for every customer. Identify these and focus on them to create stickiness. Visit merkleinc.com to read her blog on customer centricity.
- ▲ Spotlight random customers. Feature them on your website, in social media or in the team meeting. Let them know how much they mean to you.
- ▲ Visit your competitors regularly. Make trips to see examples of outstanding service and see what they do well. Hone in on behavioural aspects. Use secret users and mystery shoppers to test the user experience.
- ▲ Check the engagement levels of all your customer-facing staff. Use a simple engagement tool to make sure that you and your colleagues are both engaged and energised by your offering. Abolish empty slogans and posters saying things like ‘Getting better together’ and ‘The customer is king’.
- ▲ Prevent interactions from becoming mundane by throwing in an occasional surprise element: an unexpected loyalty discount, tailored reward or service innovation which was not anticipated.
- ▲ Review all the ways your customers currently provide feedback. Make these more visible and more accessible, including use of contact pages, social media postings and comment cards at the point of service. Establish channels and build engagement one customer at a time.
- ▲ When dealing with complaints, where possible make sure that one person owns the customer case throughout the lifetime of the issue. If you want to know how to handle customer feedback on social media, discussion boards and review sites more effectively, pick up a copy of *Hug Your Haters* by Jay Baer and discover the best ways to embrace complaints, deal with online trolls and turn negative press into positive opportunities.¹¹⁶

- ▲ Always follow up with the customer after any problem is solved. This builds relationships and ensures the issue stays fixed.
- ▲ Acknowledge the fact that all staff will treat customers in the same way their boss treats them. Discuss the implications of this statement with your own line manager.

Inspiration

- + Take time to reflect. Put your feet up and read *Delivering Happiness* by Tony Hsieh.¹¹⁷
- + Be more principled. Invest in a copy of the award-winning *The Ten Principles Behind Great Customer Experiences* by Matt Watkinson.¹¹⁸ It is full of practical advice which is easy to put into practice and works for any type of product or service.
- + Get together with your colleagues and create a compelling customer position statement. Keep it very simple. Consider the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, who define themselves and their approach in just nine words: 'We are ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen.'
- + Act like you run a grocer's shop. Read Gary Vaynerchuk's *The Thank You Economy* and discover a heap of relevant ways to provide greater attention to your evolving customer experience by ensuring every single employee is comfortable engaging in authentic service.¹¹⁹
- + Emulate retailers like B&Q and hire demographically diverse staff groups to whom customers can relate. Then empower them to be able to make decisions around resolving issues and providing discretionary discounts. Set limits on any reductions they can offer in order to manage your costs effectively.
- + Purchase a recent edition of *The Richer Way* by Julian Richer.¹²⁰ Discover how to deliver great customer service by providing your team with the right training, support, appreciation and respect.



Ideas for long-term gain

A satisfied customer is the best business strategy of all.

Michael LeBoeuf

Tools

- Consider introducing NPS as a measure of customer relationships. Fred Reichheld's Net Promoter Score measures levels of loyalty between customer and provider, with higher scores linked to increased profitability.¹²¹
- Investigate the relevance of the old Tesco 'magic formula' of $L2 (c + e) + r = s + p$, and try to apply it to your team or organisation. According to David Fairhurst, former group resourcing director at Tesco, it means, 'listening a lot to our customers and employees plus responding accordingly equals sales and profitability'.¹²²

Techniques

- ▲ Strive for internal and external alignment. Check that what is said through marketing and promotional vehicles matches what actually happens.
- ▲ Build human stories and campaigns by focusing on the experience, not the product or service. Let the customer know how it will look and feel to use your product/service. Consider virtual trials.
- ▲ Review all your existing customer relationship management systems. Use data mining techniques to pull customer information together. Apply a holistic view of the customer experience by aggregating data from social media, web analytics, customer buying history and in-store visits.

- ▲ Identify ways to turn any dissatisfied customers into loyal advocates through the use of an effective complaints management system. Introduce measures to improve response to core concerns such as time to resolution.
- ▲ Bring clusters of customers together to create customer communities. Build face-to-face user groups, webinars, trade shows and conventions. Establish focus groups, informal interviews and instant surveys to pick up on emerging customer needs. Seek opportunities for the customer to be able to control at least part of their own customer journey.

Inspiration

- + Learn from online footwear giant Zappos and start every meeting with recent comments from a delighted customer or end user. Zappos also prides itself on establishing new records for the longest ever phone calls – because they want every customer to know they care about them and will spend whatever time is required to make them happy.
- + Purchase a copy of *Webs of Influence* by Nathalie Nahai and uncover recent trends in consumer behaviour, plus ideas on how best to influence others using a profitable online strategy.¹²³
- + Be controversial and suggest that your organisation puts their employees first and customers second – but only after you've watched all of Vineet Nayar's TEDx Talk and discovered more about the long-term benefits of this approach.¹²⁴



Related work skills

Ability to Influence (1), Commercial Thinking (2), Constructive Communication (4), Focus on Developing Others (9), Interpersonal Awareness and Diplomacy (10), Professional Ethics and Social Responsibility (16), Resilience and Emotional Control (17), Use of Information and Data (21).

About the Author

Chris Watson is an award-winning specialist in the promotion of adaptive management skills who founded Endor Learn & Develop in 2002 following a successful career in publishing and higher education. He provides fresh, practical ideas to extend performance at work, delivering results through people for every type of organisation – from emerging small- to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through to multinational corporations. Drawing on his background in leadership, psychology, education and the human sciences, he has a proven track record in harnessing potential to help organisations flourish. Incurably curious about all aspects of organisational behaviour, his aim is to strengthen relationships in the workplace by sharing straightforward solutions which people can relate to on a personal level.

As an active member of the national learning and development community, Chris writes for the *Business Matters* publication and is a regular blogger at the Knowledge Bank. A chartered member of the Institute of Personnel and Development, he has an honours degree in psychology and a master's in human resource management. As a keynote speaker, facilitator and coach, Chris regularly presents at regional Chartered Management Institute events, business conferences and HR forums. More recently, he has collaborated with a number of institutions to support employability initiatives and has launched an innovative toolkit for young people on the language of work.

Chris lives in sleepy Lincolnshire in the UK with his wife and four children. In his spare time he enjoys watching stand-up comedy, eating spicy tacos and listening to Nick Cave albums (although rarely at the same time). He is always interested in exploring new ideas to extend the performance of people. If you have any great suggestions for developing any of the adaptive skills listed in this book, drop him a line at: hello@endorlearning.com.

What people are saying about *Upskill*

If you want to develop yourself, your people and your teams, read Chris Watson's *Upskill*. Reflecting the growing trend towards self-directed learning, this do-it-yourself guide is filled with practical and innovative ideas that will help both you and your teams flourish!

Marshall Goldsmith, *New York Times* number one bestselling author of *Triggers* and *What Got You Here Won't Get You There* and two-time winner of the Thinkers50 Leadership Award

We live in an age of positive disruption which is only set to increase in the years ahead. The winners will be those individuals who are open to new ideas and actively focus on developing their learning agility. *Upskill* offers a huge range of tactical tools and intelligent ideas and approaches for long-term gain, which makes it so useful for anyone committed to developing themselves or others.

Dominic Monkman, Global Strategy and Business Operations Director, GlaxoSmithKline plc

Upskill recognises that people sit at the centre of their own learning. It's refreshing to read a book that provides individuals with such a range of tools and techniques in one place, which can be accessed whenever they are needed. Chris Watson has clearly drawn on his extensive practical experience in the field. Great job.

Kate O'Sullivan, Deputy Chair, British Rowing, Chair, British Rowing National Coaching Committee

Compelling in its clarity, *Upskill* reflects the latest thinking on how to improve performance by building on strengths – helping individuals to learn at their own pace, in their own time. Anyone working in not-for-profit organisations, in the education sector or in other institutions outside of the corporate world will also find great value in this material.

Eleanor Cannon, Chair, Scottish Golf

With *Upskill* Chris Watson has curated an accessible, practical and memorable toolkit which any established or aspiring leader should delve into as part of their ongoing development journey. Taking an evidence-based approach, each of the twenty-one keys unlocks a door leading to a rich menu of resources, tactics and strategies. A book destined to spend very little time on the shelf.

**Mark Gilroy, Managing Director,
TMS Development International Ltd**

Upskill offers a highly relevant and very accessible toolkit that enables the reader to engage with a variety of tools and techniques to enhance their personal and professional development at the point of need. The 'Inspiration' sections provide insights and additional resources that directly navigate the reader to a plethora of supporting narratives, and the book's smorgasbord approach is both flexible and focused – ensuring that individuals can easily identify the areas which will have the most positive impact for themselves and their organisations.

**Susan Kane, Head of Leadership and Learning and
Development, University of York**

Well-structured and easy to navigate, *Upskill* is a veritable toolkit of tried and tested solutions for anyone wanting to develop themselves, their teams and their organisations – whether they need help attacking a specific challenge or just want to browse for practical inspiration.

Richard Mellor, Global Chief Human Resources Officer, R/GA

Business is facing a new wave of complexity. Wrong response: create more processes and systems and add structures, control and committees – this complicatedness chokes productivity and satisfaction at work. Right response: better utilise people's intelligence, leverage their adaptiveness, strengthen their problem solving skills and grow the individual rather than the bureaucracy. *Upskill* provides tools and guidance to help achieve this, and enables readers to better face complexity without getting complicated – the essence of vitality.

Yves Morieux, Managing Director, Boston Consulting Group

The definitive guide to developing the adaptive skills essential for success at work

Brimming with punchy, practical ideas to improve your day-to-day effectiveness, *Upskill* is ideal for anyone who is committed to developing themselves and their colleagues, but may not have the time, the resources, the budget or the inspiration to know where to start.

Just-in-time learning solutions – wherever and whenever you need them

In *Upskill* Chris Watson delivers a dynamic snapshot of easy-to-access development possibilities, providing you with:

- 840 user-friendly tools and techniques reflecting the latest thinking on how to extend capability and boost professional growth.
- A rich resource of reliable solutions, grouped around the twenty-one adaptive skills most valued by today's employers – including creativity, collaboration and communication.
- An abundance of proven approaches, topical insights, time-saving apps and inspirational videos, as well as helpful signposts to relevant quotes, books and other resources.

Upskill will help you adjust to the ever-changing world of work and take charge of your career

If you want to develop yourself, your people and your teams, read Chris Watson's *Upskill*.

Marshall Goldsmith, *New York Times* number one bestselling author of *Triggers* and *What Got You Here Won't Get You There* and two-time winner of the Thinkers50 Leadership Award

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