

A hand holding a globe with a leafy branch. The background is a solid red color. The hand is on the left, holding a globe on the right. A leafy branch is on the right side of the globe. The text is in white and red.

GURU GUIDE

with
Vidusha and Anton

in conversation with
Patrick Pereira

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HAVING A 'SERVICE' MINDSET

A QUICK INTRODUCTION TO THE GURU GUIDE

The 'Guru Guide' is an attempt to refine decades of hard-earned expertise into succinct, simple and practical advice.

It is NOT meant to be an exhaustive exploration of a topic: rather, pointed areas of focus which can only be discerned by a practitioner. It is not meant to be a generic set of advice: it is advice from battle-hardened professionals who have had a lifetime of experience and proven track records.

The Guru Guide has a pre determined format:

- ✓ It aims to understand a topic/ area of focus
- ✓ It aims to give tools to help you navigate the area
- ✓ It also gives contexts and examples: so that you can customize it to suit YOU

Exploratory, intimate and insightful, the Guru Guide aims to bring to you a wealth of expertise which can only be possible through veterans whose varied and in-depth experiences offer unparalleled insights.

The brevity and simplicity is by choice, and design. Focused on Executives and Managers who want to get quick tips and techniques, who are eager to improve their craft

and trade : the Guru Guide aims to offer 'little nuggets' of advice and importantly, simple tools, which will enable practitioners to up their game and benefit from expertise which may be hard to find in a hurry.

INTRODUCING



**VIDUSHA
NATHAVITHARANA**

Vidusha is currently the Destiny Architect at High5 Consultancy and Luminary Learning and the organization's founder. His areas of expertise are with strategy facilitation, HR strategy development and Leadership Training. He has conducted assignments in 15 countries regionally and consulted for the World Bank, the UN as well as some of the top corporates in Sri Lanka and the Region. He is also a member of the board of directors for Chrysalis, a social enterprise working to empower women and youth by fostering inclusive growth in Sri Lanka and elsewhere.



**ANTON
THAYALAN**

Anton is a multi-faceted professional who has had over two decades of hands-on experience in process improvement, change management and strategic management, and currently works as the Chief Evangelist of Luminary Learning and the Transformation Therapist of High5 Consultancy. As the former AVP at HSBC DPL Anton won accolades for his superlative work there: and won the prestigious HSBC Group Service – Global Talent Management Member two years in a row. Anton currently works as a consultant focusing on efficiency and productivity improvement and process optimization for local and regional clients.

INTRODUCING PATRICK PEREIRA

Patrick is a Client with whom we have been working for quite a while now. He is one of those people who truly offered us opportunities to create some one of a kind programmes.

He started out at the Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management (SLITHM), went on to get his MBA from Anglia Ruskin University and has been in the learning and development space with two of the biggest conglomerates in Sri Lanka. An efficient and pragmatic person, always pushing the boundaries of L&D, Patrick is someone who is rarely happy with the 'status quo' and pushes you to find new ways to train and augment teams. He is also extremely focused on outcomes, enabling him to look at learning holistically, and curate programmes that

often push participants to take a cold hard look at fundamentals in a completely different way.

Patrick is currently the Vice President for Learning and Development for Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts and also serves as the Vice President of Hotel School Graduates Association and is a Member of the Academic board of SLITHM which offers focused training for its alumni and young students, on an annual basis.



BUT WHY 'SERVE'? AREN'T WE ALL DOING A JOB?



Oh yes, that's the question I get asked all the time by my participants and new employees (the ones who have worked with me smile when the 'freshers' ask me this because they know the answer I give, and they have heard me saying this like a broken record all the time !)

To me, the difference between doing your job and doing your job WELL comes ONLY if you have a 'service' mindset. See, ultimately we ALL work 'for' someone else as much as 'with' others. We must never, ever forget that. In our trade, it comes easy because we ARE in hospitality which is built on the principle of service. However, irrespective of your 'trade', I think 'serving' someone shifts your focus from YOU to THEM. IF you are SERVING, you are not just trying to do something and just 'satisfy' them, your ambition and goal is to truly, truly make them happy.

Ask yourself: How would you behave if you were SERVING your spouse, your kids, your parents, your boss or your community? Wouldn't it make a huge difference in how you would go about things ?

BUT ISN'T 'SERVING' SOMEONE BELITTLING? AFTER ALL, WHY SHOULD YOU?

This is a common misconception which I think has not really been addressed even in training for our trade.

'Serving' others isn't about losing your pride, your dignity or your sense of self-worth. Why would it be necessary for you to lose a part of yourself in order to 'serve' another? See, the issue is that we think, especially when we become 'senior', that serving is beneath us.

Serving someone isn't the same as offering 'servitude'. They are two totally different principles; and that is the issue – we equate them even though they are so different from each other.

I think The Ritz Carlton said it best: "We are ladies and gentlemen SERVING ladies and gentlemen."

Understand the difference? For sure, the Ritz is world famous for superlative customer service, but do you see the subtle, yet profound, focus on the dignity and pride of their own employees? The Ritz will NOT allow you to bully their employees simply because you are a 'customer', and anyone who has personally encountered Ritz service will tell you this in no uncertain terms.

So, understand the difference. Serving others is NEVER (or certainly should not be) at a cost to your own dignity and pride.

The other point to keep in mind is that serving with a subservient attitude, which may be evident in this part of the world, is also not the best thing for the person who is serving, the customers and also for the organization as a whole. It takes out the passion and energy needed out of the service and becomes mere "work", and the professionalism and confidence you would expect from a great service organization goes out of the window. So it is vital that the service mindset is created with the pride of the server in mind as much as the receiver. After all, slavery ended a few hundred years ago and we don't need to reinvent it in our organizations.

IS THE 'SERVICE MINDSET' IMPORTANT ONLY IN CUSTOMER-FACING JOBS ?



This is the other issue.

Everyone assumes that a 'service mindset' is required only if you have 'customers' in front of you. We forget that ALL of us have customers on a daily basis.

Your boss is a customer, your colleague is a customer, your brother is a customer, your mother is a customer, your subordinate is a customer – you catch my drift? EVERYONE you meet is a customer and should be 'served' with the same focus as you would your most valued 'paying' customer.

IF you can develop this 'mindset', you start completely changing the way you work, and you will soon realise that you are working at a completely different 'level' because you instinctively home in on the service element which often makes all the difference in the world.

The trick is to also remember that you are a customer too to many people, many times. So, serving others to the best of your ability comes with its own benefits too. As you may have heard: "What goes around comes around."

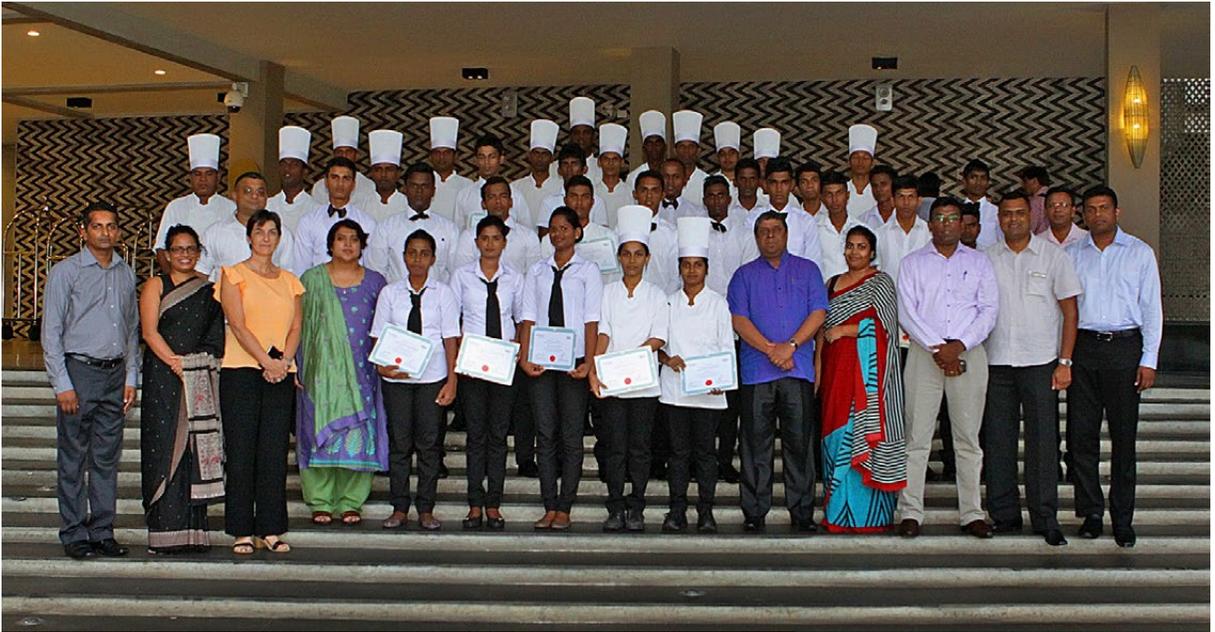
It's time to upgrade

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2.0



PRINCIPLE 1: IF YOU WANT TO SERVE, YOU MUST KNOW WHAT PEOPLE WANT



This really is the starting point of any form of service.

Remember you are serving, not doing a 'favour'. So, understand, IF you REALLY want to serve, you must see things from the perspective of your 'customer'.

Being able to truly understand what people WANT, and being able to give THAT makes all the difference in the world. Far too many times we serve with our own perceptions and our own blinkers on, and rather than taking the time to really understand our 'customer', we make preconceived judgements about them.

So, first, learn to really observe your 'customers' and do so over a period of time so that you understand patterns and trends. See, unlike a customer who just walks into a restaurant for the first time, people you work with are people you interact with on a regular basis. So, you have plenty of time to really, really observe them. Take the time to do just that, gain an appreciation and seek out how best you can add value to them, based on what they need and value.

The key is this. UNLESS you are offering something THEY think is VALUABLE, you really are not doing anything much !

TOOL 1: UNDERSTANDING WHAT PEOPLE WANT FROM YOU

There are MANY things people want, and this is merely a simple illustration of two of the different dimensions you can bring in.

Interchange the dimensions and see what you can come up with. For example, hierarchy based and egalitarian dimensions, formal vs. informal dimensions, High EQ and Low EQ dimensions, high IQ vs. low IQ dimensions, etc., are great starting points to put into grids and understand what 'types' of people you can meet and what they would want from you in a work setting.

Quality Oriented

Some people want to have a 'relationship' with you. Of course, they want the job done well, and to perfection; but they want to have a chat with you too and want a 'personalized' service rather than merely getting the job done.

These types of people are generally detail oriented, extremely focused and want a certain 'finish' to the work they expect from you. The task needs to be completed, fully, with the level of 'perfection' they demand. They may well be a little 'pointed' in how they interact with you and they will want you to be 'professional' at all times.

Relationship oriented

The speed of response here is with a chat, a friendship and also, possibly, finding solutions together. Being able to have a relationship is as important as burying yourself in the task and getting it done in record time.

Objective Oriented

There are some who value getting things done on time more than anything else. Speed is what they value. Even if there are marginal errors, they would rather have it on time (or early) rather than to 'perfection' a little late. So, ensure you see this, and be able to respond to these types of people with agility and speed of response at the very core of your service.

Speed Oriented

PRINCIPLE 2: TO SERVE, YOU MUST BE WILLING



This is the absolute crux of the service mindset.

You must be WILLING to serve. No one can 'force' you to do it, and even if they do, you won't REALLY be serving out of a compulsion.

Be willing to serve wholeheartedly because you understand that it will bring you and the person you serve mutual satisfaction.

Seeing someone really benefit from something you have done is one of the most rewarding things one can experience, and that in itself is a reward. Most people serve with ulterior motives, and this never equates to GENUINE service – the pure joy of seeing a smile on someone else's face.

Once you experience the joy of truly serving, it really does become a way of life.

However, admittedly, serving is not for everyone. They should have the spark in them, If even after your best efforts to find that spark and create a flame, you fail to help them, then help them get out of your service organization.

TOOL 2: APPRECIATING WHAT A SERVICE MINDSET OFFERS YOU IN RETURN

Many ask the question: 'What is in it for me?' – an important question to answer. None of us is enlightened yet to truly grasp the intrinsic satisfaction and deep sense of value one can derive from serving others.

So, if you want to be 'selfish' in your service mindset, look at things logically and completely selfishly, and even THEN, serving others has massive benefits.

Someone you know

Being able to do 'more than just your job' is a sure way of being able to broaden your skill sets and also, being able to enlarge your own job scope. Enlarging your job scope is one of the fastest ways of actually getting promoted !

If you truly serve someone in an official capacity and they rely on you to get work done, this is when you develop deep professional bonds and become someone 'trusted' and 'relied on': the benefit to you should be obvious.

Not relating
to your job

Job Related

Doing something for someone, which has nothing to do with your own job, is a superb way to forge friendships and relationships outside of your work circles. IT also helps you network with others and learn invaluable new skills without ever being 'trained'.

You have heard of networking haven't you ? How do you truly grow a solid network? it is by serving someone to the best of your ability. Before too long you will have many outside of your 'official' circles relying on you , broadening your circle of influence.

A complete stranger

PRINCIPLE 3: SERVING OTHERS ENABLES LEARNING TO LEAD



One of the GREATEST benefits of being willing to serve others is that it prepares you, without your knowledge – to lead.

Service is at the core of great leadership, and it distinguishes a leader from a manager. The fundamental paradigm of understanding leadership is about 'others' and not about yourself. This can only be 'learnt' if you serve others, unflinchingly. IF you serve, TRULY serve, it is only a matter of time before others start relying on you, trust you and come to you; and that is the cornerstone of leadership.

Being a leader is not about a title. Leading does not require authority either. You NATURALLY become a leader when others see you as someone who is willing to put them first and ensure their interests and problems are at the fore of what you do. So, want to lead? Then, learn to serve first.

Service also helps you understand the bigger picture. It points beyond your views and constantly pushes you to create value; all of which makes a great leader.

TOOL 3: WHAT YOU CAN LEARN ABOUT LEADERSHIP FROM SERVING OTHERS

You learn to let go of your own ego

You learn to focus on a solution and not a problem

You learn to always understand before demanding to be understood

The greatest lesson you learn out of serving others is that you let go of your own ego. To truly serve, you need to put others first, and your ego should not get in the way. Learn to do this, and in return, you will have learnt one of the fundamental principles of great leadership.

When you truly serve others, you want to always find a solution for them. You don't want to make excuses or hide behind policies – you want to solve their problem and ensure they have a proper solution. So, learning to serve gives you a 'solution mindset', another pivotal aspect of great leadership.

When you want to serve, you always listen first and you learn to look at things from the perspective of whom you want to serve. So, this 'instinct' becomes invaluable when you lead too because leadership demands that you listen first and understand others before you demand to have your way or seek to be understood.

SOME FINAL BITS OF ADVICE



- » Great service takes considerable effort. It doesn't happen by default, and hence, it needs to be carefully designed. It is the responsibility of the leaders of an organization to define the service philosophy and the necessary mindset. You need to first understand WHY you are doing it (Vision), then the HOW (Mission) and WHAT is dear to "our" heart (Values) and develop a service philosophy and mindset around it. Once you figure that out, build in necessary policies, processes and tools that would enable consistent delivery on a day-to-day basis.
- » Leadership is probably the most important element in service. Yes, you have heard this many times but this is where most of the issues happen. Remember the bottleneck is at the neck of the bottle. Also, it is vital to understand that it is not only the CEO, but rather, all levels of leadership right down to the Team Leads and Supervisors. Often a greatly created and articulated Service Mindset is lost in translation at middle management and first level leaders due to various reasons including the lack of understanding and connecting to the bigger picture. Hence, a Service Mindset should have an associated leadership strategy that would address the aforesaid.

- » The consistent delivery of service at all levels all the time depends on one critical factor, that is how well-trained and educated your Service Teams are? Whilst it is easier said than done, the Service Mindset needs to be backed by a solid Learning and Development framework where there are training and learning tools / resources available for all employees on a constant basis. The range of offers would vary from a great On the Job Training (OJT) platform to well-articulated leadership trainings by professionals. It is also crucial to understand that training the teams should not be left ONLY to the L&D Team of the organization. It is a shared responsibility of all leaders and seniors of the organization to train, observe, share feedback and provide coaching on a constant basis to the team members whilst the L&D Team should provide the teams with the necessary skills, tools, tech and expert help.
- » A great service experience doesn't only constitute a great Service Mindset. It is the key but not the only element. The same needs to be supported with the necessary tools, technology and infrastructure. A smiling and caring waiter is not going to compensate for an overcooked steak and spoilt wine in a badly maintained restaurant. To deliver great and consistent service, the enablers have to be in place and be properly defined.
- » Keep in mind that despite the best effort by the best of people, things may still go sour. So, it's vital to have two key processes in place.
- » One is to have an efficient and effective service recovery process in place and all of the organization to know what to do when things wrong. The right level of empowerment to the frontline teams is a vital ingredient in the process backed by a tightly defined accountability structure.
- » The other is to have a robust measuring and audit mechanism. What gets measured gets done is the old saying for a valid reason. It is the compass that points you the right direction and tells you that you are on track, and most importantly, when you deviate from it. Clearly defined standards, Key Performance Indicators and Lead and Lag Measures are the pillars of the process. It is also to understand that the Audits and measures should be used as a feedback and guiding tool and NOT as a correction or punishing tool. Unfortunately, very often, it is used more as a cane to hit than as a needle of a compass to point the right direction.
- » Finally to leaders, put your money where your mouth is. This is with regard to all the elements including Compensation of Service Teams, recognition processes, investment in training and development, obtaining new and efficient technology, and maintenance of the infrastructure. Remember, quality doesn't come cheap but it turns out greater benefits in return.

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