

Excel at Service(s)
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Course Overview

Services are becoming critical for competitive advantage in companies across the globe and in all industry sectors. For manufacturers like GE and IBM, services represent their primary growth and profitability strategies into the 21st century. Superior service quality drives the competitive advantage of excellent companies like Charles Schwab, Marriott Hotels, Starbucks, and FedEx—traditional service businesses. In fact, recent award-winning publications espouse the view that “all businesses are service businesses.”

The course focuses on challenges of managing services and delivering quality service to customers. The attraction, retention, and building of strong customer relationships through quality service (and services) are at the heart of the course content. The course is equally applicable to organizations whose core product is service (e.g., banks, transportation companies, hotels, hospitals, educational institutions, professional services, telecommunication, etc.) and to organizations that depend on services for competitive advantage (e.g., high technology manufacturers, automotive, industrial products, etc.).

Course Objectives

- To draw the connections between service(s) and corporate strategy through illustrating the ways firms compete through service and best practices.
- To illustrate the financial implications of service as a revenue generator.
- To provide frameworks and models for understanding the impact of service(s).
- To illustrate the strategic and cross-functional challenges of service execution through cases and application exercises
- To teach principles and tools for managing customer experiences and service processes, such as services blueprinting
- To provide an opportunity for students to “learn by doing” by applying course concepts and material to their own organizations

Underlying framework

The basic framework for the course is the Gaps Model of Service Quality which is organized around several themes:

- To excel at services, companies must meet or exceed customer expectations consistently;
- In order to do this, organizations will work to close four gaps:
 - Gap 1 – Listening to Customer Requirements
 - Gap 2 – Aligning Strategy, Service Design and Standards
 - Gap 3 – Delivering and Performing Service
 - Gap 4 – Communicating Effectively and Managing Promises to Customers

Understanding the basics of this framework and specific strategies for closing each of the gaps provide the means for achieving the course objectives.

Format

The course will be taught using an interactive approach that allows students to apply course ideas through a variety of means such as short lectures, cases, exercises, and applications to their own organizations. Team discussions of questions assigned for individual cases as well as questions in the Excel at Service(s) Workbook will provide a forum for significant group learning.

Course Materials

Valarie A. Zeithaml, Mary Jo Bitner, and Dwayne D. Gremler, *Services Marketing: Integrating Customer Focus Across the Firm*, 4th edition, McGraw-Hill: 2006.

Cases as assigned – found in the textbook or provided as handouts

Excel at Service(s) Workbook

Course Requirements and Grading

	Points
In-Class Contributions (cases, exercises, workbook discussions)	150
Individual Contributions (50)	
Team Contributions (100)	
Service Quality Gap Analysis Team Project	150
Total	300 points

In-Class Contributions

It is important to be prepared for and participate in class discussion of cases and workbook questions. Much of your learning in this class will take place through team discussion and reporting formats. Reading of assigned chapters and the cases, and preparation of case questions will provide you the grounding to participate in discussions. I will provide questions to guide your preparation for case discussions; you will have the opportunity to discuss these case questions with your teams in class and I will call upon teams to report in our large group discussion of each case. A similar approach will be used for discussion of Excel at Service(s) Workbook questions—small group discussions followed by team reporting.

As with other classes you have taken, you will see that case analyses and the innovative ideas you will develop through your discussions will not be based on “one right answer.” However, that does not mean that every answer is equally good, or that answers are simply based on common sense. Thus, I will encourage you to share your creative ideas, drawing on the frameworks and tools that we are learning as justification. You will also be encouraged to share your own examples based on your work experience, your personal observations as a consumer, or current events in the business world.

In addition to the cases and workbook, we will complete several application exercises in class, allowing you additional chances to participate and learn.

You will be evaluated on your own individual contributions in class as well as on the quality of your team's contributions.

Service Quality Gap Analysis Team Project

Each team will prepare a Service Quality Gap Analysis written project to be turned in following the completion of the course. The written project will be based on the Gaps Model of Service Quality with each team relating common challenges (for each Gap) faced by team members' organizations and potential ways to address the challenges. In addition, as an appendix to the project, each member of the team will be asked to provide a one-paragraph description of one service-excellence change (large or small) they would like to introduce in their organizations as a result of the course. The project will be evaluated as a whole; all team members will be given the same number of points.

Course Philosophy

My goal with this course is for you to learn the foundations of providing excellent customer service and proven approaches for competing through service excellence so that you can help China and your own organizations become service leaders. I truly believe that "all businesses are service businesses" and thus the advantages of competing through service excellence are applicable, at some level, in all organizational contexts. I am also aware that China as a nation has put services at the forefront in terms of planning for global competitiveness in the future. I am not naïve to think that western models of service excellence will translate directly to your organizations or to China. Thus, another goal of the course is to assist you in adapting concepts, strategies and tools to your own organizations and to the competitive context of China and Asia. I will also learn from you, and you will learn from each other, as we explore the role of service and service competitiveness in China and in your organizations.

My approach is to give you the opportunity to learn and explore service concepts through brief lectures, cases, and exercises. You will also apply what you have learned directly through the Excel at Service(s) workbook that will serve as a form of journal for you to record your own ideas for applying course concepts. The Workbook will also provide questions and a framework for discussing course materials with your team.

Excel at Service(s) - Topics and Assignments

Date and Topic	Assignments
Day 1 - October 15, 2011 Introduction to Services, Competing through Service, and Service Quality Gaps Model	
Morning Session 1 Course Introduction and Overview of Trends in Services Management and Service Innovation	Chapter 1 – Services Marketing Text
Morning Session 2 Competing and Profiting Through Service(s)	Chapter 18 – Services Marketing Text
Afternoon Session 1 Introduction to the Service Quality Gaps Model <i>Workbook - Customer Gap Discussion</i>	Chapter 2 – Services Marketing Text
Afternoon Session 2 Case Discussion	Case: People, Service and Profit at Jyske Bank
Day 2 - October 16, 2011 Understanding Customers and Their Service Requirements	
Morning Session 1 Customer Gap - Customer Expectations and Perceptions of Service Service Encounter Exercise	Chapter 5 - Services Marketing Text
Morning Session 2 Gap 1 – Understanding Customer Requirements: Listening, Building Relationships and Service Recovery	Chapter 6,7,8 - Services Marketing Text
Afternoon Session 1 <i>Workbook – Gap 1 discussion</i> Case Discussion	Case: Starbucks – Delivering Customer Service
Afternoon Session 2 Gap 2 – Aligning Strategy, Service Design and Standards	Chapters 9, 11, Services Marketing Text

Day 3 – October 22, 2011 Designing and Delivering Services	
Morning Session 1 Service Blueprinting Blueprinting Exercise	Chapter 9, Services Marketing Text
Morning Session 2 <i>Workbook – Gap 2 discussion</i> Gap 3 – Delivering and Performing Service	Chapters 12, 13 - Services Marketing Text
Afternoon Shanghai Electric Visit	
Day 4 – October 23, 2011 Delivering Service and Communicating Service Promises	
Morning Session 1 Gap 3 – Delivering and Performing Service (continued)	
Morning Session 2 Case Discussion	Case: Merrill Lynch Supernova
Afternoon Session 1 <i>Workbook – Gap 3 discussion</i> Gap 4 – Integrated Services Marketing Communication	Chapter 16 – Services Marketing Text
Afternoon Session 2 Case Discussion <i>Summaries of Key Learnings</i> Summary, Wrap-Up, Team Assignment	Case: Caterpillar in Latin America