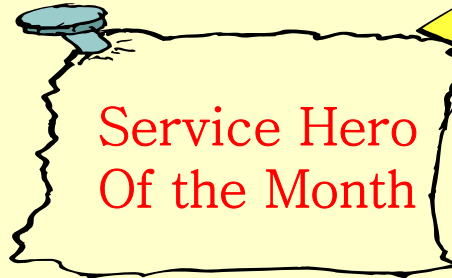


## CONNECT WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS



Service Hero  
Of the Month

Emilie van Nierop, KLM Airlines (KLM44490)

The Centre for Customer Care (CCC) Malaysia, being the champion for service excellence in Malaysia and Asia, has been randomly visiting service/hospitality outlets for the last 3 years and our objective was to spot employees delivering excellent service to their customers. As a recognition for their excellent service rendered, CCC will accord them the Service Hero of the month award. This month's award goes to Emilie van Nierop, an air-stewardess with KLM Airlines.

I met Emile on my way back from Italy and happen to fly KLM Airlines. I noticed that the service level has improved tremendously compared to the last time I flew KLM in 2000. However, I noticed one particular air-stewardess who stood out among the rest. I summarise my observation in just one word:

**CONNECTION.** What's Emilie's secret? Her facial expression, body language, witty jokes and most of all her, her wonderful smile. Though she was busy serving, she was able to "balance a few balls in the air" and attended to the needs of a passenger who had difficulty with the air outlet and cracked a joke at the end of it all. I saw a friend helping another friend. Though I was observing that scenario from nearby, I felt good inside. I am sure that passenger felt good too. Emilie really connected with her passengers and was actually developing a personal bond with her passengers though she may not be aware of this. This kind of personal bond is memorable and develops into long-term customer loyalty.

To connect with customers, companies increasingly must listen to their customers, both to maintain high-quality service and to identify unmet needs that represent new revenue opportunities. Business success can depend on how well your employees know your customers and provide them with a rewarding experience. Enabling your people to work more effectively across boundaries—with each other and with partners—can help your company give its customers what they want, before they go somewhere else.

### Becoming customer-centric has never been more critical—or attainable.

The days of growth through product differentiation alone have passed. Customer experience is increasingly replacing the traditional differentiators such as price and product quality. How well your employees know your customers and work together with your partners to give them a rewarding experience can determine your business success.

### Your Customers' Experience Determines Your Competitive Differentiation

In the changing world of business, product commoditization fueled by global competition and outsourcing has left many manufacturers dependent upon after-market services for up to 30 percent of their revenue. This creates a challenge to companies that have traditionally organized themselves around products. To survive, businesses must evolve toward an increasingly customer-centric model. They must listen to their customers, not only to maintain a consistently high quality of service, but to identify unmet needs that represent new revenue opportunities-before their competition does. To address the growing complexity of the value chain in a global market, companies must increasingly rely on partners, suppliers, and outsourcing to manage segments of the customer experience. This creates its own set of potential problems, including inconsistency, lower quality, and lost visibility to some customer interactions. Businesses need to extend their customer management programs to collaborate across the value chain and involve both suppliers and partners in improving the customer experience.

It is essential to foster a culture where customer experience is the top consideration of every team member. This requires not only the right tools and processes, but also recognition of the importance of collaboration and communication with customers and partners.

We are not in the coffee business service people, but in the people business serving coffee – Howard Schultz, Founder, Starbucks

Dr. Allen Teh  
CEO, Centre for Customer Care (CCC) Malaysia

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