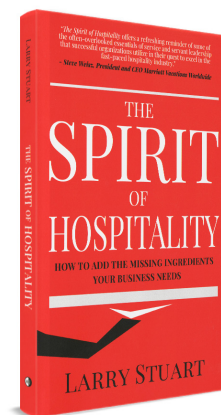


The Spirit of Hospitality

How to Add the Missing Ingredients Your Business Needs

by **Larry Stuart**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

The world has changed, and the human touch in business is a casualty of those changes. Many people seem to believe that everything is about them. Technology allows us, even requires us at times, to transact business with machines rather than human beings. Somewhere along the way, dealing with others with heartfelt kindness has become a lost art.

The Spirit of Hospitality: How to Add the Missing Ingredients Your Business Needs explains how to own a spirit of hospitality and infuse it in your business to make it successful.

Author Larry Stuart, a hospitality expert with 40+ years of experience in hospitality leadership, explains the seven key ingredients of hospitality and what business should be like when they're applied. This book is not about being fake. The spirit of hospitality is caught, not taught. Especially if you are a leader in hotel, restaurant, or airline management, this book will inspire you to "catch" a heart that recognizes kindness and spreads it to others. In the process, your business' bottom line will grow.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- What it means to run a business with a spirit of hospitality.
- The 7 key ingredients in the spirit of hospitality.
- How you can build and maintain the spirit of hospitality.
- How a spirit of hospitality will help your business.

Building the Spirit of Hospitality

How can your business build the spirit of hospitality? It starts with your company's culture. Eat, sleep, and breathe your spirit-of-hospitality culture. Talk about it everywhere, at every opportunity, so team members will make it their own. When the right people are on board and everyone is clear on what the company's culture is, turnover decreases and productivity, morale, and commitment increase.

Integrity and the Spirit of Hospitality

Operating with a spirit of hospitality is not about pretending to care. You and your people must have integrity, which means you must be honest and have strong moral principles. Your good name, and the company's, are critical to success. A good name is built by following through on what you say you will do and doing the right thing for the right reason, no matter the cost. Set a standard of excellence.

Hiring the Spirit of Hospitality

When hiring, the key is to find the right people who are passionate about life, their purpose, and career goals. You must hire quality people who understand the difference between doing their job and serving other people from their hearts.

In hospitality, team members must be people persons. A sunny disposition is a must. Look for people with a natural welcoming smile. If you hire people with these qualities, you can train them to do the tasks you need them to do. To reduce expensive turnover, consider carefully what position to put a new hire in.

Training the Spirit of Hospitality

Your efforts cannot end when employees are hired, of course. You must have a robust training program, and it should include training not only in necessary skills but also in the company's culture. Everyone, from the CEO down, must walk the talk.

It will be helpful to include the following in your training program:

- Team members must know and understand their purpose—what they're responsible for and how to best serve.
- Train your team members *with* empathy and to have empathy when they're serving guests. Team members should consider the guest first and the business second.
- Make sure that team members understand your expectations about the business culture and their job performance—and what the consequences are of fail-

ure to comply. Set achievable short-term goals and set long-term goals or a motivating vision for your team members and yourself.

- Train team members to be flexible, which helps when dealing with difficult or disagreeable situations.
- Use showmanship and drama to create a positive environment. Train your team members to know your product so they can answer questions and make recommendations. Give your products personality! But the show shouldn't take precedence over service itself. Understand when guests want to participate by interacting and when they want to be left alone.
- Acknowledge people for a job well done and recognize their needs. Train team members to go "off script" and converse with guests rather than just give canned responses.
- Time management is the key to productivity.

After formal training concludes, follow up proactively with your team members. Training must be ongoing. Don't hesitate to invest in training. A dollar spent on training will save you three in advertising for new employees. And train your people *with* people, not just technology.

Together Everyone Achieves More

Teamwork, a cooperative effort by members of a team to achieve a common goal, starts with servant leadership. Make it a point to know your team members. Roll up your sleeves and work alongside them, when needed. Treat them like they're part of a larger picture—as indeed they are—so they will be encouraged to take ownership in their responsibilities and stay with the company. Think of your team members as "internal guests." Like external guests, they are people with their own needs, desires, talents, and skills. Without them to serve guests, we would have no guests and no business.

The 7 Key Ingredients for the Spirit of Hospitality

1. Team Unity

Without unity, a team will fall apart. All members of the team, including leadership, need to operate with a like-minded approach—with a servant's heart. Many things can get in the way of like-mindedness, including individual clashes, cliquishness, and competition. To establish a team that works in unity, establish values, review goals, relate the values to the goals, and demonstrate team relations.

Trust is important to promote unity, and it comes down to character. Always keep your word. The better you care for your internal guests, the better they'll care for your external guests. To help build your team members' trust in you and the business, don't micromanage; give team members a chance to prove themselves capable.

2. Encouragement

Servant leaders are champions for others. They know how to encourage others to get past their challenges and failures and continue to grow. Acknowledge the people at all levels who helped you reach your achievements. After all, it was a team effort.

Build up others through encouragement and reward—everyone who contributed, not just the obvious people. Know your people and figure out what kinds of encouragement they most need.

3. Accountability

As servant leaders, we must be willing to admit our mistakes, which builds trust, in turn leading to loyalty.

Our team members should be held accountable as well, because we want to consistently increase productivity, thereby improving guest service. Four ways to hold staff accountable are to review their performance, redirect their work with kindness (and in private), reward them, and, when necessary, remove them from the position.

Of course, we as leaders and all team members must be accountable to provide great service to guests. When things go wrong, we should do everything we can to correct the error, regardless of what caused it.

4. Generosity

In hospitality, we must allow ourselves to be generous, so our guests will be blessed, and then we, in turn, will also be blessed. Greedy people will suck the life out of the work environment, step over others, and treat guests with disdain. That's no way to live and no way to conduct business. Give with a joyful heart—time, money, even something small like a smile.

When giving any kind of gift to guests or to team members, it's important to recognize what they (not we) would appreciate. Every guest and every team member wants to know that they are important. Servant leaders need to be willing to go the extra mile for them.

Rewards to team members should be distributed in a standard, consistent way in order to avoid discrimination or even the perception of it.

5. Kindness

Many people have forgotten the value of kind, which is a shame because when we act with kindness, the recipient is made to feel exceptional, important, and special.

People don't soon forget kindness. The guest who enters your establishment needs to feel your and your staff's kindness from the time they step foot through the door until the moment they leave. Otherwise, they may not ever come back.

It's not difficult: look for ways to do acts of kindness as part of daily life and treat others as you would like to be treated.

6. Humility

Change is good; don't be afraid of it. Adopt the mindset that you're always learning and open to new ideas. Every business and everyone who works there has strengths and weaknesses. Recognize what needs to be changed and be humble enough to admit your mistakes—immediately own a mistake, admit it, and make any necessary apology.

Humility is all about putting ourselves before others. In the hospitality industry, there is no room for pride or selfishness.

7. Gratitude

Regardless of how guests and others treat us, it's important that we maintain an attitude of gratitude in every situation. When we recognize that life isn't about us, it becomes easier to be thankful when serving others. We can make a choice not to take others' emotions and actions personally and go down their negative path. In other words, we can choose the spirit of hospitality. Happiness is circumstantial; joy comes from within. Choose joy.

Working with a Spirit of Hospitality

Empowering the Spirit of Hospitality

The best thing you can do for your team members is empower them to do their jobs well and provide a system of accountability so they can take responsibility for their mistakes, failures, and successes. Give them the support, coaching, training, and authority to make one-time, on-the-spot decisions for the benefit of the guest and the company. When a guest explains a problem to a staff member, the one who hears it owns it.

What the Spirit of Hospitality Looks Like to Guests

Guests want to be welcomed into a warm, inviting environment, to be noticed, to be treated like they matter, to be served, and to perceive that the server cannot wait for the

opportunity and pleasure of serving them. Exceed their expectations. Make eye contact, recognize each guest before they get to you, and give them a warm smile.

Regardless of how much the guest is spending, give great service to each individual guest. Guests who don't feel appreciated aren't likely to return. If you listen to their concerns, solve their problems efficiently and amicably, and consistently serve them from the heart, they will return.

Serving the Spirit of Hospitality

Serve your brand by providing extraordinary guest service. Wow your guests! They will notice and spread the word about how they felt welcomed by your business.

The key to a life of service is compassion. Someone who operates with a servant's heart has five characteristics:

- They don't see labels.
- They don't fear the consequences of doing what they see as right.
- They are never too busy to meet a need.
- They don't bat an eye at what it will cost them to care for another person.
- They expect nothing in return.

Excellent guest service is not a reaction to guests' needs but a sincere proactive effort toward building a warm relationship by serving guests from the heart.

For you and your team members, knowledge is key. Everyone should be able to anticipate what guests are going to ask—they ask the same questions all the time—and be prepared to answer with a variety of answers depending on what seems most appropriate for the individual guest.

Knowing how to read people helps greatly—and genuinely listening to them will take you a long way.

Conflict and the Spirit of Hospitality

In hospitality, as in every part of life, conflicts will happen. The key is to have a plan for how to handle conflict internally and with guests and make sure your team knows what is expected ahead of time.

The integrity of a true service-oriented business is shown in how it responds when things go wrong. No matter how a guest is acting, stay calm, listen carefully, and empathize. Guests aren't interested in excuses and explanations, so accept responsibility for solving the root problem to the guest's satisfaction. Unfortunately, 96 percent of unhappy guests never complain about rude or discourteous treatment; they just don't return. Even worse, they spread the bad news about their experience.

Return on Investing in the Spirit of Hospitality

To increase our business' ROI, there are three things we need to make a point to be aware of: first, our external guests' satisfaction; second, our internal guests' satisfaction; and third, how we stack up in the industry against our competition.

ROI is about relationships. When a business loses customers, the biggest reason is service-related. Sixty-eight percent are turned off by and disappear because of an attitude of indifference on the part of a company team member.

To sum up, the spirit of hospitality comprises the extraordinary ingredients that are necessary for a business' success in today's world. Weave the spirit of hospitality into every nook and cranny of your business relationships and you will see the rewards in your quality of life, your relationships, your career, and your business' financial success.



Larry Stuart is a Hospitality Professional who has spent a lifetime serving others. He is a true “Servant Leader” who has built Enthusiasm, Excellence, and Greater Purpose into the teams he has been honored to serve.

Larry is a Graduate of Cornell University's School of Hotel and Restaurant Administration, an Adjunct Professor, Forbes Contributor, Author, Speaker and, Emeritus President of the Cornell Hotel Society FL. He currently owns and operates a 24-year-old business in Walt Disney World. He has started up, opened or operated over 50+ Restaurants, 7 Major Hotels, and 1 Airline.

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