

Chris Fuller: Hey everybody, and welcome to another interview with inspiring leaders. Today we're talking to Shep Hyken, and Shep, I've got to tell you, the reason you're on here today is no other reason than that you inspire me. Today is launch day for [*Inspired Leadership*](#) (my new book). Shep, I've talked to you about the book a number of times, so let me introduce you to the audience. For those of you who don't know, Shep is the Chief Amazement Officer.

He is absolutely an award-winning keynote speaker from the National Speakers Association. He is a Hall of Fame speaker lifetime award recipient, and just an incredible guy. *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* best-selling author, and as far as customer service goes, you'd be hard-pressed to find a more expert person as it comes to customer service, leadership, culture, and some of those areas within the customer service space.

And let me just say, Shep. Number one, welcome. I know your time is incredibly valuable. Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us today and, again, just want to say welcome.

Shep Hyken: Well, thank you. It is my pleasure. My pleasure.

Chris Fuller: So let me tell you guys what I admire about Shep. Shep is one of the hardest working men in show business. When he has his system, I'm inspired. The Inspired Model—being intentional, serving others, being passionate, integrated, being real, and executing—all of those things, you would be hard-pressed to find another person that actually executes on my Inspired Model. So the intentionality that Shep works with, the diligence in serving others, and his passion, his enthusiasm that comes through in every area, man! Just incredible. You are the quintessential Inspired Leader to me.

Shep Hyken: Thank you very much.

Chris Fuller: You know, there are few people that I look to that helped me set that standard, that reach out and make me like, “Okay, I need to step up my game.” Shep, you are one of those people. So if you aren't aware, check out Shep at Hyken.com and make sure to check him out.

From a customer service standpoint, I want to just kind of pick your brain around these pieces. So I talk about being service-centric or others-centric and the Inspired Model, but I want to hear from the expert. Why does this matter? Why is it important for organizations and leaders to be others-centric?

Shep Hyken: The short answer is that all we have to sell are products that are probably copyable or are exactly like our competitors' products. So if we've got a good product, what's left but to differentiate it with the experience?

There are different levels. I think today as a norm that customers are smarter than ever. They know what great service is. They learned from great companies. They learned from Amazon, Nordstrom, fine hotels that they go to. Maybe there's a server down the street, at the restaurant that just is absolutely amazing, recognizes the guests every time they walk in, calls them by name, lets them sit at their normal table, and don't even have to order because the server remembers what the customer ordered before. So what has happened is that these rock stars, whether they're big or small, set the expectation for the customer, and therefore the bar is higher than ever before. So, if you've got a good product, it's not good enough.

By the way, if you've got a good product, and you've got okay service, your customers will find a place that gives them better service. If you've got *amazing* service and just an okay product, your customers are going to go find a place that at least has a better product, and they might even sacrifice some of the service. So it's still a combination of the two.

And I go a step further and say, even that, in today's world, is not enough, because the customers' expectations rise as companies start to meet those service expectations; there needs to be another level.

I wrote a book a couple of years ago, and it was all about how to be *convenient* beyond just good service. How to be *easier* to do business with, and I think it's proven in this pandemic that whereas delivery used to be kind of a luxury, now delivery is standard. It went from breakthrough to major expectation.

Even some of the convenience principles that I wrote about two years ago as ways to elevate the level of service are now becoming the norm. So I'm now looking for what the next big differentiators are going to be that will help disrupt one company against another, as far as competitive ways go.

Chris Fuller: Now, you guys are listening and watching the video, this is why Shep's the King of Intentionality. So when you talk about being intentional, you just talked about being intentional around number one: *Is your product top shelf?* Number two: *Is your service top shelf?* But now you're talking about trying to look around corners to see how we anticipate what's going to occur within the marketplace. And how do we lead within the marketplace instead of being a lagger or a second into that market space?

Shep Hyken: In the new book coming out next year, which is titled, *I'll Be Back: How to Get Customers to Come Back Again and Again*, it answers the exact question that you asked. "I need to get better. I need to figure out what the next new way of doing business is going to be for my customers." You can't just compare yourself to the competition; I just mentioned earlier when we talked that your customers are comparing you to companies outside of your competition.

I want you to ask a number of questions, sit down with your team, and brainstorm. And by the way, when I say team, not just the leadership team; bring people in from the very frontline. Bring people in who may not have the typical customer-facing jobs, but their experience that they create somehow impacts the customer. It could be somebody from finance or billing. It could be somebody in the warehouse.

You need a team to get the best ideas. So the first question is, *Why should someone do business with me to start with? What makes me different from anyone else? Is there truly a difference?* And don't just say, *Our people are better*, because the competitors are saying the exact same thing. What can you say that they can't say?

Number two, even though I don't want you to compare yourself to competitors, I want you to find out, think about and discuss if they are doing something differently than you do that may attract a customer. If so, is that something you could do? And I don't want you to copy it. I want you to make it your own. I want you to make it even better if you can. So once you determined they're doing something ask if you can implement it.

Next question. Let's look at who we most admire outside of our industry. What are companies of all kinds, companies already mentioned—Amazon, Nordstrom, the restaurant down the street—every business. You have this group of people, and they start saying, "Well, I like doing business with the X, Y, Z company." Who's that? "Well, that's our vendor that supplies us whatever." Why do you like them?" I want to know why specifically you like them.

Now we have these companies and we have the reason why we like them. I want you to look at them and ask what is it that these companies are doing that we like that we could also be doing but we're not. So we're learning from others. Bring that in.

Now because they're not a competitor, you can in fact copy what somebody else is doing outside of your industry, just because it's not been brought into your industry before. And when I say *copy*, I mean, take that idea, make it yours. You don't necessarily have to supersize it, plus it, or whatever. And then finally, I want you to go back after you've done all this and then ask the same question you asked at the beginning, "Why should someone do business with us?" So that's the process, and I hope I didn't leave a step out,

because I was doing my research and working on this book, I started coming up with this thought process and realizing it is really a good idea! This is a half-day to a full-day facilitated brainstorming session. And maybe do part of it one day and come back and do another part of it a month later.

I love this concept, and think as I've experimented with my clients, they seem to enjoy it. We've always asked these types of questions. *What do you do that your competitors don't? What are outside-industry ideas that you like that you don't do?* I mean, we've always asked those questions. Now we're just stringing them together as a process.

Chris Fuller: You know, I love it. And I'm sitting here brainstorming, being in that same business type of *how do we transfer organizational knowledge*, and I'm seeing it as a gallery walk. If we put things around the room, walking through the different areas of the room, with everybody kind of collaborating on those things experientially for a half-day, full-day, or partial-day.

A couple of questions around practicality. You know, one of the things that inspire me is this blue-collar mindset. If an organization is saying, "Hey Shep, we really struggle with it." I think you've given us a couple, but I mean, what are the two or three things that they're going to start with? You talked about getting good, interviewing, being curious, and going to every aspect, but can this be permeated through the organization and where do they even start?

People are going, "I want this for my company, but I'm struggling." Apart from typing in Hyken.com and then hiring you, which would probably be their best decision, what are some of those things that they can do?

Shep Hyken: Sure, there are so many things that they can do. The first thing I want to make sure is that you very clearly define what the customer service vision or customer experience vision is going to be. One of my favorite people in the whole world is a gentleman named Horst Schulze. He has the best customer service or experience "mantra", they call it a credo, at the Ritz. It's, "We're ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen." You need to define this very clearly. You need to communicate. You need to train everybody to it.

Your leaders must be role models. Leaders and managers must execute on this credo or mantra better than ever. Leadership and management must keep people, departments, groups, regions, whatever, in alignment. Everybody must celebrate when it's working.

So that is my process, which I could spend an hour and a half on, but those are the steps to creating the customer-focused culture. So it is cultural, but let's get more practical

and rather than give you something big-picture, let me give you more of a “How you can start on this tomorrow if you want.”

And that is to journey-map the heck out of your business. And what I mean by that is, what does the customer journey look like, and where do you want to start? There are different journeys. There's the first time buyer. Depending what kind of business you are. Maybe they find you on an internet search, and now they're on your website. That's a major interaction point. Then they decide to purchase via e-commerce, so there's different processes, or maybe they're forced to pick up the phone because that's the kind of business you are; that's fine.

But what is the process from start to end, all of the interaction points, even the smallest ones that the customer experiences. Now here's where it gets exciting for the rest of the company because you have this top-line customer experience in each one of these touchpoints. You go below each touchpoint to find out what's happening behind there that's driving that touchpoint? I call those *impact points*.

For example, I may check my bag at the curb in St. Louis at the airport. I'm coming to visit you, Chris. And we get to the Atlanta airport, and my bag shows up. Well, I know from a customer journey, I checked my bag, and I picked it up. But behind that are like you know 45 different things that had to happen. It goes down the conveyor belt; somebody down there scans the tag; they put it in a pile; pile gets on the right cart; cart gets driven out to the plane; it's loaded by two or three people onto the plane; it's taken off the plane when we get there. There are lots of people, and there's this process that makes sure my bag shows up on the baggage carousel.

So, when you start to show people internally what they're doing that's going to impact a touchpoint that the customer has, even though they have never seen the customer's smiling face, they say, “Oh, I get it. I am doing something that impacts the customer. I'm in a form of customer experience. I'm part of that!”

Now here's the cool thing about some jobs. Some jobs don't have any interaction at all, or maybe even no impact on that touchpoint, but they impact somebody else who does.

Jan Carlson, who was the former president of Scandinavian Airlines, said that if you're not serving somebody that is taking care of the customer, you could be supporting somebody that does. So manage the internal customer experience the same way.

But let me go with these baggage handlers. They never see the smiling face of the passenger. But if they don't put that bag on the right plane, and it lands, and it's not at the carousel, not only is the passenger upset, but they've now got an internal customer,

they let down. That is the poor soul who stands behind the baggage counter at the destination dealing with irate customers because their luggage has been misplaced or lost. So that person has both internal and external customers. Everybody has some impact on the company. And by the way, if they don't, they probably aren't going to have a job very long when it's figured out.

Chris Fuller: Shep, that's amazing. And again, for our viewers, our listeners, if you don't realize the treasure trove that is Shep Hyken, you just got a taste of it. The years of dedication and focus on excellence in what he does, it just rolls out, permeates from his pores in how he does this, and again, just that model of inspiration for me, that model of excellence. Taking everything to that next standard.

As I hear him talk, obviously I am a little biased and thinking about the *Inspired* book launch, and the meat of the book talking about how we have to be intentional; we have to be service-oriented and passionate. Talking about are our operations integrated? Do we relate to each other internally and externally effectively? And what are all of those execution points—that Shep just called impact points—that allow the outcome to take care of itself? If you don't focus on the impact points, your outcome may not be to that next level.

The “D” of InSPIRED is Diligently Developing Daily; it's being developed over time. And that's exactly what Shep's talking about in that next level—seeing around corners, and how do we go to that next step?

Shep, what keeps organizations from embracing and embodying this amazing concept you are recommending?

Shep Hyken: Sure, there's a couple of things that could happen. Number one, leadership may not care that much about it. Or maybe they do, but they don't set it out right in the process, so there's an inconsistency that happens as a result of lack of communication, lack of training, lack of being role models, lack of keeping people into alignment. Even though they've already created the vision, they didn't do the other steps. So that's one, and number two, I think there's definitely hiring for the right cultural fit. And not just the role and responsibility, but the culture. And I also believe there's not only a cultural fit to the company, but it's like the personality of the company. So does this personality of our potential candidate fit in with who we are and what we are?

The late Tony Hsieh, who just passed away last week in a terrible fire, created this company Zappos.com, and he just was amazing. I've read his book—I don't know how many times—and he has these core values. I always think that one of them's a little

quirky; it says they want people to be a little weird. They like that; they embody that. If you're not going to get into the weirdness of people—and believe me when you hang around Zappos, you wee weird. You see all walks of life: the way people dress, the way people wear their hair, all the different cultural mixes. If you are so straight-laced without any creativity or weirdness, you're going to feel uncomfortable in that environment, and unless you're just mentally weird—which I think is ok— you probably fall under that category.

Chris Fuller: One last question. What or who inspires you? Of all the things that you've got going on, pull behind the curtain a little bit. Has there been somebody that really impacted your life, or somebody that inspired you? What grabs the heart, mind, and soul of Shep Hyken?

Shep Hyken: Sure, what grabs the heart are some of my mentors. Some are business mentors. I could give you the cop-out answer: my parents. They taught me a lot. But I had two friends, Kim Tucci and John Ferrara. Both have since passed away over the years. When I was young, probably about 19 or 20 years old, I'd known them for several years, but I went to work for them. I was in the entertainment business. I did comedy and magic. They hired me to work in their nightclubs, and we became really good friends.

I'll never forget when I was having a really big dilemma. I was sitting at dinner one night with them and asked, “Why are you so nice to me?” And these guys were probably at the time Kim was probably 40 or 42, John was maybe a few years younger than him. They looked at each other, and almost in unison they said, “Because we love you.” Other than my parents, maybe I got lucky, a girlfriend might have said it to me by that time; I don't remember—but nobody ever said that to me.

Wow. That was so impactful. And then this is what they said. And this is the difference-maker. They said, “When we were younger, there were people in our lives that we respected and looked up to, and we feel we need to constantly be giving that back, and we hope that you'll do the same.”

I just took those words to heart, and Chris, you and I've known each other for I don't know how many years now, but you know me, and every time you've called and asked me questions about the book or about the speaking business or whatever, I don't say no.

As a matter of fact, this is dangerous to say, but I will give everybody the chance to spend a few minutes with me or ask a question. I'm not going to spend hours and hours with you, but I mean, if you've got something specific that you think I can support you with, give me an email or shoot me a question. Go to my website; ask it.

I do have many mentors so inspiring. Bud Dietrich who's passed away (he would probably be about 104 right now), I remember on the week that I started out, I told him I was getting ready to do this, and he responded, "So tell me about your day." So I went on to tell him, he said, "Very good. If you spend 40 hours a week getting business—working on your speech, practicing your speech...you can do that at nighttime and on the weekends—but you can't talk to clients at nighttime or on the weekend. So spend 40 hours a week getting the job and you'll be successful."

The job is not doing the gig; it's getting the gig. He is really inspirational about that.

All my friends in the National Speakers Association that have been so gracious to help me, inspire me. Phil Wexler, Dr. Tony, Alice, and I could go on and on and on with my friends, my mastermind groups.

I'm in the kind of business where people seem to want to share their success stories. I think partially because we're proud of it and they want other people to be. They want other people to know the easiest way to learn. So they just give knowledge away and let them know what you're doing.

It's a very caring and sharing group. So that's what gets me, plus the support of my family; my wife is my number-one cheerleader. That's pretty special, and I know yours is probably your number-one cheerleader.

Chris Fuller: Absolutely! Shep, I can't even say it enough, man. You Inspire Me. And for those of you who have just heard a taste, you know that we have a special gift in our lives with Shep Hyken. From the Inspired Leader standpoint, the level of leadership, the level of commitment that you bring to your craft, and all of those things for all of us that are following in your footsteps as sort of our older brother on those things. Thank you so much for the standard that you have set.

If you want to get a hold of Shep Hyken, you've heard a taste of what he can do for your organization around customer service. Shep, how do they reach you to get *amazing* into their company?

Shep Hyken: Sure. Just go to Hyken.com. If you go to my YouTube channel Shep.tv, there are like 600 videos on there. You can play them like once a week at a team meeting. They're short, most of them. The customer service tips are about three or four minutes long. They're great conversation starters, and there are so many. You can just choose one a week, and I keep producing at least one a week, which I've been doing for years.

Chris Fuller: You're amazing Shep. Again, thank you so much for your time, and the impact that you've made on the people watching this and listening to this is incredible.

Shep. Thank you so much for your mentorship. Thank you for your friendship and thank you for your time today.

ShepHyken: Thank you. Ditto to you.