

Customer engagement, Digital & messaging

World Cup teaches lessons on service

[Nuance Communications](#)

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In soccer, announcers sometimes refer to a pass from one player to another as “service” of the ball. One announcer in particular referred to it as ‘the great service’. That everyday phrase works great in soccer, and we can also learn from it in our own customer service happenings. Read on to see three uses of the word ‘service’ and how they can make us re-think how we manage customer engagements.

The World Cup is winding down, and this weekend we’ll know if either France or Croatia will lift the cup. The tournament has captivated viewers worldwide with great goals, colorful fans, and even some interesting language. During a recent game I heard a wonderful turn of phrase by a British announcer that caused me to pause and reflect as it seemed out of place – but it was actually brilliant.

While recounting a great goal, the announcer commented that the goal was only made possible by a pass from another player. But rather than being boring and saying ‘pass’ he noted it was *‘the great service’* from another player. *‘The great service’*. It’s an everyday phrase, but when applied to soccer (I know it’s football outside the US) it elevates the meaning to a whole new level.

In our business we are all about providing the great service to our customers, and there is much we can learn from how ‘the great service’ in soccer applies to what we are all trying to achieve in business.

Service as a thing

Many times, service is an activity. It's what you do. 'The great service' in this instance was a thing – a pass. It has physical properties such as shape (direction and angles) and weight (speed). If companies think about their customer service as a thing, does it have the right properties? Does your customer service have the right overall speed? Do your channels take customers in the right direction?

Service as helping someone be their best

The passer in soccer delivers the ball to his team mate. While they may not get the glory, their role in the process is equally important as the scorer can't accomplish anything without the ball, providing 'the great service' allows the scorer to be their best. Customers use your products or solutions to make their life better. Your products may literally help them be their best, or at least be better.

If something isn't right with your service, they'll engage you because it's impacting their day to day lives and taking them away from other matters. Is your organization ready to help them be their best? Are your staff trained how to help customers resolve a question efficiently and effectively so they can get on with being their best? Are your service channels optimized to best help people?

Service as ensuring your needs are secondary to another's

When someone is helping another, they place their needs below those of the recipient. For many, giving to others and helping others is the most noble pursuit. This holds true for 'the great service'. It's possible the passer in soccer could have figured out a way to take a shot themselves. Go straight to the goal and see if they can be the hero. But the team needs a goal and the team's needs must take priority. Many times, looking for ways to put someone or some thing above your needs is often the better course of action. Will your customer support team set aside their own aspirations to help another colleague provide the great service? Are your departments set up to assist customers easily and move them to the right location – even if it means someone else gets credit for helping them? Are your service channels working together, ensuring customers don't feel like they are working with siloed groups?

Achieving 'the great service' is challenging in soccer and business. Only the best soccer pros and businesses can deliver that level of quality. But when service is done well in sports or business, it is noticed and the reward is immediate for both parties.

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