

Lynne Cunningham's
Book Review

I just read a great book that I think should be added to your Service Excellence Library.

Book	<i>Why is everyone smiling? How to turn a commodity business into a great place to work</i>
Author	Paul Spiegelman
Pillar of Excellence	People
Publisher's Book Description	Spiegelman's new book tells the story of a successful health care call center business that could have morphed into a larger company by overseas outsourcing or cutting costs of employee benefits, but instead chose to focus on employee loyalty as the most important component of his company. The book explains low- or no-cost practices that will impact the lives of employees and the success of small or large businesses.
LC Review	<p>This is a great book. Spiegelman describes the ABC's for becoming a great company - from building the brand to become a premium provider while at the same time being a top place to work. The first-person, connect to purpose employee stories at the end of each chapter are powerful.</p> <p>This book would be a great preassignment for an LDI focused on People Pillar skills – selection, retention and reward/recognition. This is a must read for any leader with a large numbers of employees.</p>
Page	<i>Lynne suggests that you pay special attention to some of these features in the book.</i>
xvii	Life and business are both about the same thing – relationships.
xx+	In an industry where turnover usually averages 80 to 90 percent, ours is 17 percent. Our client retention rate is 95 percent, and we charge significantly more for our services than the industry average. I wrote this book to offer some pointers on how to turn a small, privately-owned business into a premium provider that delivers a higher level of profit. I also wrote the book because I'd like to see fellow business leaders stop treating their coworkers like commodities. Beryl's culture story proves two things: when you treat your people like true contributors, it does the business tremendous good; when you focus your business on solid values, it benefits both the community and the economy.
13	Beryl's Circle of Growth – Employee Loyalty > Customer Loyalty > Profitable Business
25	A reputation for stellar service is a sure path to the premium-provider status that guarantees leverage in pricing.
69	BerylCares is the name of the behind-the-scenes program that gathers information

	about events in a coworker's life.
71	You can't have a good culture without having fun. We believe that so strongly that our human resources group is formally titled the "Department of Great People and Fun."
77	Our values: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passion for customer service • Never sacrificing quality • Always doing the right thing • Spirit of camaraderie
78+	Our PRIDE@Beryl program lets coworkers praise others for living one or more of the Beryl values or for doing something extra special. It stands for Peers Recognizing Individual Deeds of Excellence. Our main culture committee decided to call itself the Better Beryl Bureau. They took the job very seriously and made it clear early on that the focus of the BBB was not going to be "fun." They wanted to work on enhancing and improving the culture through a wide variety of practical applications, some of them fairly sophisticated.
87	For the last four years, the Dallas Business Journal has named Beryl one of the "Top Ten Places to Work" in the Dallas/Fort Worth market, and the Texas Department of Business has ranked us twice on their roster of the best employers in the state.
102+	<p>Our internal communications program gives me multiple ways to cycle messages and collect feedback. The "town hall" meeting format has worked especially well. Our COO and I do a very informal presentation about what's going on in the business and our goals for the year. When we talk about the vision, it's always in the context of "What does this mean for you as a call advisor or member of another functional team at Beryl?" It's really important to boil it down to speak in those terms.</p> <p>Our COO and I invite twelve to fifteen different coworkers who represent various part of the company to have lunch with us monthly. These Chat 'n Chew sessions are very informal sit-downs, strictly intended to help us all get to know one another better.</p> <p>Our monthly business review meetings include about fifty primary managers and department representatives. Like every other company in the work, we share specific monthly results as well as trends of the year. These meetings are also a learning opportunity and bring in outside speakers to give us fresh perspectives on pertinent issues.</p> <p>One of our most popular intranet functions is called "Ask Paul." It's an advice column knock-off where anybody can send a question to me that will be answered in the next issue of our magazine for coworkers and their families.</p> <p>Floor tours are another example of personal communications that are a little more in line with my personal note card approach. Several times a month, I pop down onto the call center floor with no particular agenda other than to say hello and visit with coworkers.</p> <p>A monthly personal e-mail letter goes out to the whole company. This is a combination of personal stories, business updates, and philosophical observations.</p>

	<p>Our COO does a similar e-mail called "Did Ya Know?" It's a hodgepodge of funny facts and interesting topics that always tie back to a current issue at Beryl and just another way to underscore the fact that the leaders are human beings.</p> <p>We post all of our monthly financials publicly and see no risk in that.</p> <p>"Weeding the garden" is the way I look at developing leadership around me. It doesn't mean firing weak performers. It means creating an environment where people with great potential can grow into peak performance. Here are a few rules of thumb:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly one-on-one meetings are required for all direct reports. • Quarterly reviews for everyone. • As a leader, I strive to be the single most responsive coworker in the company.
128	Focusing on the core includes finding the exact right people to deliver the services your customers need. At the call advisor level, we call it "hiring the heart, not the head." We're looking for people with compassion who have the behaviors we need to deliver a high level of customer service.
129	There do come times when it's apparent that someone is no longer a fit for the organization or doesn't have the skills required. We generally never do it as quickly as we should, even when we know that it's the right thing to do.
142	Businesses that want to become premium providers are well-advised to develop a similar recipe for success, a manual which, if followed, guarantees customers a consistently high-quality experience with what you sell or what you do. Don't write it in stone; continue to refine the process. Take the things that worked well when you tried them and make them absolutely repeatable as a discipline. And you can't do that without establishing some structure and accountability.
145	Silos come from breakdowns in communication and lack of business process. Tasking people with a job and asking them to do it is not enough. They need to understand why they're doing what they're doing and why that role is important in the bigger picture.
147	Among the many small things any company can do, few pay off as well as book clubs.
151	When we invest in people's training, we hold them accountable to execute on what they've learned. If we send somebody to a three-day seminar, I don't want to hear that they had a great time. We ask them to write a document explaining how they're going to apply the new knowledge to their situation or their team.
175+	<p>Top Lessons Learned</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Honesty 2. Persistence 3. Not burning bridges 4. Setting goals 5. Optimism

	6. Listening 7. Gratitude	
194	The culture strategy that made us number one is built squarely on the belief that business is really only about people. Technology enables people. Process enables people. People enable people. If you're confronted with the choice of skimping or stretching on human resource development, always stretch to maximize your people's potential. Do absolutely everything you can.	
197	The ultimate secret of success at the Beryl Companies has been the absence of ego. Keep it in the big ring! The coach explained to me that "ring" is another word for gear sprockets on a bike. If you don't want to pedal too hard, if you're not really a serious competitor, you can always shift your chain down onto the smaller sprockets and sort of hang back in the pack, working those little rings.	
Overall rating	Outstanding – you will read this book and say, "I want to work for this company." I was privileged to read a draft of Paul's manuscript and liked the book even more when I read the published version.	
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