

Servant Leadership

SUBMITTED BY: Kamaila Sanders, The University of Pennsylvania

SUBJECT(S): Communication, Entrepreneurship, Management

GRADE LEVEL(S): 9, 10, 11, 12

≡ OVERVIEW:

Students will begin this lesson with a conversation about their experiences with various types of customer service. Then they will dissect how employees are portrayed in a Southwest Airlines commercial. After that, students will watch a video interview with the CEO of Southwest Airlines, Colleen Barrett, as she discusses her leadership philosophy of “servant leadership.” Students will then discuss the concept of servant leadership and go over the servant leadership pyramid. Once students understand this unique personal leadership style, they will use it to solve a management problem in a service-related business.

≡ NBEA STANDARD(S):

- Communication, III. Workplace Communication
- Management, IV. Personal Management Skills
- Entrepreneurship, VI. Management

≡ WHARTON GLOBAL YOUTH PROGRAM ARTICLE:

- [“MLK Day Tribute: Student Lessons in Leadership”](#)

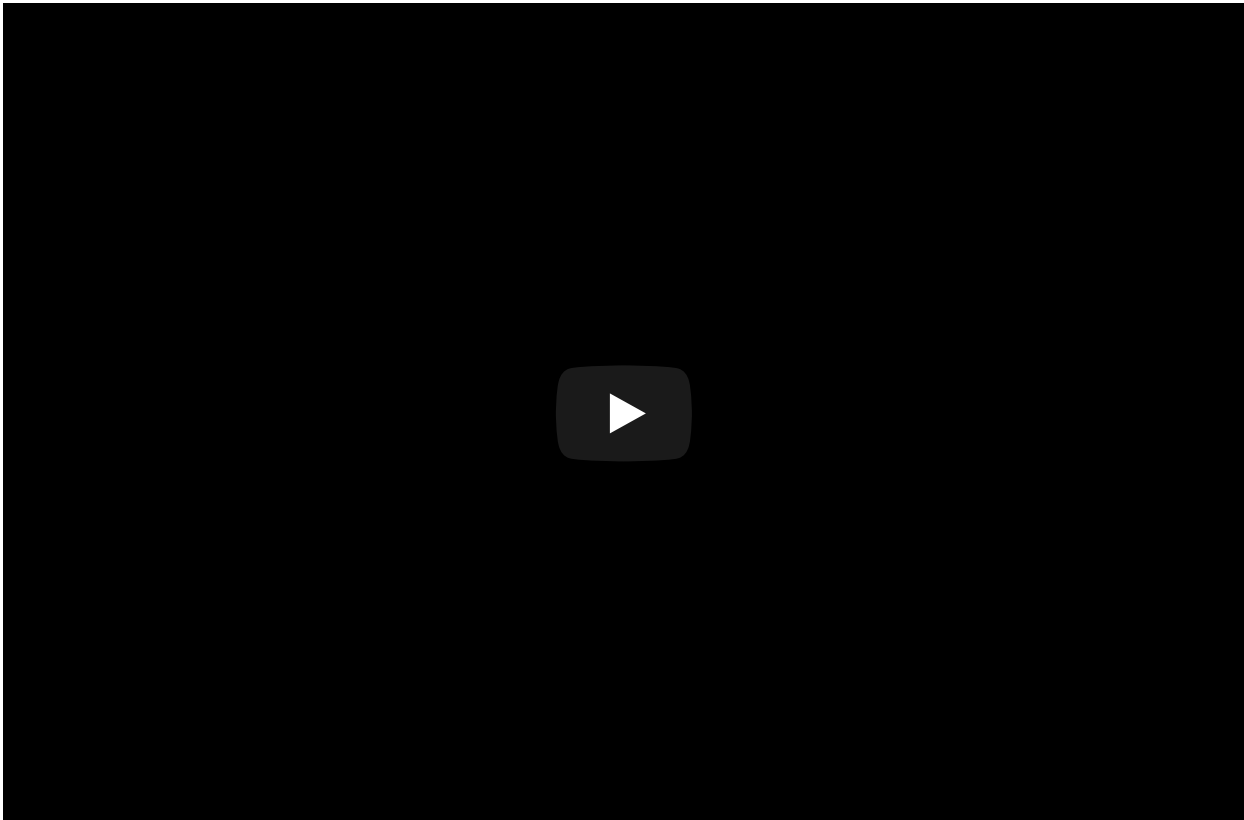
Common Core Standard(s): Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Technology and Digital Media, Comprehension and Collaboration

Objectives/Purposes: In this lesson students will learn the principles of “servant leadership.”

Knowledge@Wharton Article: [“Southwest Airlines’ Colleen Barrett Flies High on Fuel Hedging and ‘Servant Leadership’”](#) (Video)

Other Resources/Materials:

- [You Tube Access to watch Southwest Airlines Commercial: \[Bags Fly Free\]](#)



Activity:

1. (15 mins) Begin the lesson by leading a discussion about customer service.

Ask students to:

- Share stories of good and bad customer service experiences they have had at different businesses.
- Brainstorm some businesses, locally or nationally, that are famous for having great customer service. Then ask why they think these places have such great customer service? Why do some places not have good customer service?
 - Examples of Good Service may include:

- Starbucks
- Inn & Out Burger
- Southwest Airlines

- Examples of bad customer service may include:
 - McDonalds
 - Wal-Mart
 - Public Transportation

2. (5 mins) Now that you have students thinking about customer service, it is time to move into the next part of the lesson. Ask students who have flown on a plane before what their view of customer service on airplanes is or to generalize about the airline industry. Lead a short discussion on this.

- Now show the short video clip of the Southwest Airlines commercial “Bags Fly Free.”
- Ask and discuss with students what their impression is of the airline based on the commercial.
- Ask and discuss how the employees of the airline are portrayed in the commercial.

3. (25 mins) Have students watch the video embedded in the article “Southwest Airlines’ Colleen Barrett Flies High on Fuel Hedging and ‘Servant Leadership.’” There are multiple videos listed on that page but you can have students watch the full 25 minute interview or have them watch the first 10 minutes of the first video, and then the video on adopting customers and servant leadership.

Lead a discussion on the video where you have students respond to the following questions.

- What is Barrett’s leadership style?
 - A: Servant leadership is where she puts an emphasis on customer service for her employees because she thinks that a happy and motivated workforce will extend that goodwill to customers.
- What are some possible reasons for why Barrett has developed this particular leadership style?

- A: Because of her unusual rise to become V.P. and then CEO after being a secretary in the company.

- In the video/article, Barrett mentions a pyramid diagram. Draw the diagram on the board and have the illustration display that servant leadership focuses on employee satisfaction first, needs of passengers second, and shareholders last. Discuss the diagram.

3. (10 mins) Now students are going to work on an activity to demonstrate “servant leadership”. Break students up into small groups of four. Assign each group a different type of business that offers a service (example: movie theater, restaurant, gym, clothing store) or you may allow them to choose their own. Tell students that they are the managers of their assigned business and that their revenues are down because their business is known to have bad customer service. Customers are choosing other businesses that offer the same goods. Have students in each group work to develop a management strategy that focuses on principles of “servant leadership” to improve employee satisfaction so that they provide better service to customers. Have each group share their strategies with the class.

Tying It All Together: As students work on the problem-solving activity, make sure they keep the servant leadership model in mind. It is especially important that students focus on the employee to address and find new ways to continue to address the needs and desires of the employee. Have students imagine that they work at the business they are developing strategies for so that they can better understand the roles and functions of the employees and in particular how the employees interact with customers. Doing this will help students to better trouble shoot and develop strategies. It is also important that the strategies students develop are feasible and require resources that are likely to be available to employees of the business.

Practice Outside of the Classroom: The next time you encounter bad customer service, let a manager know so that management can take appropriate steps to enhance customers’ experience.

What Worked and What I Would Do Differently: I found that students really enjoyed this lesson. Customer service is something that they all have experienced, and most have had both good and bad experiences that they can share. It is important to give students some time to brainstorm their list of good and bad customer service experiences and to recall any related stories or incidents. It is also very fun to allow time for multiple students to share their stories. Try to make sure stories of very good customer service are included so that all of the stories are not negative.

Something I did as I taught the lesson was to list the examples of businesses that had good and bad customer service reputations on the board throughout the duration of the lesson. Then for the problem-solving activity, I had students work in groups and choose one of the businesses that was listed on the board for having bad customer service as the business for which they developed strategies. This helped students to relate to the business in a way that was interesting and more engaging for them than if it was a made-up business or a generic business genre.

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