

# RAVING FANS

*Books by Ken Blanchard*

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# RAVING FANS

*A Revolutionary Approach to  
Customer Service*

Kenneth Blanchard

Co-author, *The One Minute Manager*®

Sheldon M. Bowles

Foreword by Harvey Mackay

William Morrow and Company, Inc.  
New York

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Blanchard, Kenneth H.

Raving fans: a revolutionary approach to customer service / by  
Kenneth Blanchard and Sheldon Bowles.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-688-12316-3

1. Customer service. I. Bowles, Sheldon. II. Title.

HF5415.5.B528 1993

658.8'12—dc20

92-30255

CIP

Printed in the United States of America

80 79 78 77 76 75 74 73

This book is dedicated to the seven customer-service “Charlies” who have shown us the way:

Senator Douglas D. Everett  
Gary Heil  
Harvey Mackay  
Dev Ogle  
Tom Peters  
Richard Tate  
David Watson

## *Foreword*

Successful organizations have one common central focus: customers. It doesn't matter if it's a business, a professional practice, a hospital, or a government agency, success comes to those, and only those, who are obsessed with looking after customers.

This wisdom isn't a secret. Mission statements, annual reports, posters on the wall, seminars, and even television programs all proclaim the supremacy of customers. But in the words of Shakespeare, this wisdom is "more honoured in the breach than the observance." In fact, generally speaking, customer service, in a word, stinks.

And no wonder. Look at how we've been training our managers. When I was in college, we took courses in marketing and consumer behavior. The assumption was that the public was a mindless group of buyers and that with proper advertising and promotion, products could be produced en masse and sold to naive buyers. Unfortunately, as I tour the country speaking, I find too many young managers still think this way. Advertising, product positioning, and market-share pricing strategies are all important. But when all is said and done, goods aren't *sold*; products and services are *bought*.

Since most service is awful, America is ripe for a revolution. Although we may not be following the mission statements and wall posters, the recognition of the need for customer service is there. More and more, managers in individual organizations are zeroing in on customers, and their success stands as a beacon for others. Five to eight years ago, the quality wave was about to break over us. We discovered quality isn't enough. Today the customer-service wave is swelling larger than the quality wave, and when it fully hits, those not prepared will be washed into history.

What success I've enjoyed in business, with my books, my public speaking, and the many volunteer community organizations I've worked for, has been due to looking after customers—seeing them as individuals and trying to understand all their needs. I wish I'd been able to read *Raving Fans* years ago. This book is Ken Blanchard at his best. And that is very, very good indeed. He and co-author Sheldon Bowles have taken an important, complex subject, peeled back all but the critical core, and set out fundamental truths in a simple, understandable, and enjoyable form. **Decide, Discover, and Deliver** will become your guideposts, as they have become mine, to creating Raving Fans.

I can't think of two better people to write about this subject than Ken and Sheldon. I have known both of them for well over a decade through our involvement with the Young Presidents' Organization—an educational association of presidents under the age of forty who run companies with more than fifty employees and \$5 million in sales. Sheldon and I were members of YPO, and Ken has been a top resource teacher for this group since 1977. Ken has been my writing mentor and the initial “prodder” for me to write *How to Swim with the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive*. He has an incredible way of making complicated subjects simple and leaving people with gems they can apply immediately. Sheldon, along with a team he would insist be given credit here, built Domo, a full-service retail gasoline business, into a customer-service legend.

*Raving Fans* may be an easy, fun read, but the message is dead serious. I'll be buying a copy for every single one of my employees at Mackay Envelope Corporation. Those wanting to create Raving Fans and enjoy future success will do likewise.

Thanks, Ken and Sheldon. It's an honor to be asked to write this foreword. I've only one request. Please, please, please don't tell my competitors about *Raving Fans*.

—HARVEY MACKAY, FOUNDER  
Mackay Envelope Corporation  
Author of *How to Swim with the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive*

# RAVING FANS

Panic. Palpitations and Panic. He was aware of sweaty palms and cold feet as he wandered around his new office, the Area Manager's office.

He had expected to feel the responsibility of the new job resting heavily. What he hadn't counted on was the President's advice.

Thinking to prove himself worthy of the new position, he had promised the President to drive for quality in his department. Total quality.

“Great idea. Too narrow a focus,” the President had told him abruptly. “Quality is how well our product works in relation to the customer’s need. That’s just one aspect of customer service. Customer service covers *all* the customer’s needs and expectations.”

Then she’d added in a quiet but firm voice, “Remember, this company was built on customer service. If those others had understood *that* they’d still be here. I trust you’ll do better.”

The Area Manager knew that “those others” were the three Area Managers who had cycled through the office before him. Each lasting about eight months. The Area Manager also realized that “those others” had all known more about customer service than he did. He wondered what chance he had to hold the job.

“The only positive thing about this panic,” he thought, “is that it shows I’m in touch with reality.”

The Area Manager eased himself down into his chair. He closed his eyes and leaned back, wondering how long it might be before he too was ejected and joined “those others.”

As he thought about his future and customer service, he heard a small, attention-getting cough. He decided it must be his imagination and kept his eyes closed.

A second, louder, more persistent cough caused him to look up. At first he saw nothing. Then he realized a man was sitting on the couch. A stranger wearing sport clothes, and beside him, a golf bag.

“Ah, there you are,” said the stranger as if he had just discovered the Area Manager, who, shocked to find anyone in his office, managed to stammer, “Who are you? I mean, what are you doing here?”

“I’m your Fairy Godmother,” the stranger replied seriously. Then he added brightly, “As for what I’m doing here, I’m here to show you the three magic secrets of creating Raving Fans, the ultimate in customer service.

“Also, I’d hoped we might get in a round or two of golf. The heavenly links are so crowded you have to book at least a month in advance,” he added with an apologetic shrug, gesturing toward the golf clubs.

“I’m not in touch with reality,” the Area Manager thought. “I’ve already gone off the deep end.”

“No, you haven’t,” said the stranger, reading the Area Manager’s mind. “Nothing is more real than your Fairy Godmother. You’ll want to remember that.”

“You can’t be my Fairy Godmother,” the Area Manager challenged, “you’re a man.” That obvious fact, he decided, was irrefutable evidence that he was dreaming.

“I know it’s a bit unusual, but I came in on the quota.”

“The quota?”

“Yes,” confirmed the stranger. “You see, Fairy Godmothering is traditionally a female job and so, under the Celestial Equal Opportunities legislation, the job has been assigned a quota. When I applied I was snapped right up.”

The Area Manager gave his head a sharp shake as if to drive the stranger away.

“Hi, still here,” said the stranger gleefully, lifting his wrist and wiggling his fingers in greeting.

“Well, then, do you have a name, Fairy Godmother?” the Area Manager asked.

“A name? Yes, I keep forgetting about names. Here people usually call me Charlie. Let’s make it Charlie, shall we?”

“Fine. Charlie it will be,” said the Area Manager, wondering how he would get this nut case out of his office. “You’re here about customer service, then?”

“You could say that,” said Charlie. “Although, in another way, I *am* customer service. It’s all a bit tricky,” smiled Charlie, “depending on how you approach it.”

“Of course,” the Area Manager said in a tone of voice most people reserve to humor the very young or the very old. “So where do we begin?”