

The Chronicles of SIR VIVAL

Customer Service Under Siege



Joan Fox

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*This book is dedicated
to my brother Jack,
whose entrepreneurial spirit
ignited my own.*

Acknowledgements

To my family – Chuck, Chris, Andy, Erin, Maura and Cathy. You are the core that nurtures, inspires and drives me. I love you.

To the group of busy professionals and friends who cared enough to review the text of this book – in some cases multiple times – and contributed the insights that made this work better, thank you is not enough. Your generosity and loyalty overwhelm me.

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Special Appreciation

A special thank you to my supporters in this project – you are “difference makers.” Thank you for being the never-failing role models of what customer service can be.

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“Much has been written about customer service but nothing comes close to Joan Fox’s spin. If you don’t read another book on customer service, you’ve got to read this one.”

*Jack R. Delperdang, Director of
Customer Service Oldcastle Materials*

• • • • •

“J. Fox has wittily delivered a serious warning that complacency is as dangerous to your business as bad service. First place is temporary. Taking the lessons of this little book to heart will extend your run.”

*Deborah S. Adams, Partner,
Frost Brown Todd LLC*

• • • • •

“Long term success requires an enthusiastic implementation of customer service. This unforgettable story will motivate you to charge on, and out perform your competition.”

*John R. Arend, Chairman of the
Board & Founder Inter-Chem*

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Foreword

I have worked in “customer service” for most of my life – as a daughter, a student, a teacher, a wife, a mother, a grandmother, a professional speaker, an author, and even as a friend. What I have learned over the years is that we are ALL in this world to serve one another, whatever our “work” may be. Life is all about relationships!

In this delightful, inspiring parable about the kingdom of Celelot, Joan has captured the essence of what it takes to create an organization which is based on serving – both internally and externally. The story is simple because the principles are simple. Like the king, it is only our lack of vision and our focus on the “business” part of our organization that gets in the way!

For so long, the emphasis on systems, processes, re-engineering and quality has kept us from focusing on people and relationships in our work. Of course, we must have a quality product to survive; however, in today’s world, that is no longer enough. So, thank you, Joan, for so powerfully opening our eyes to the importance of the *human* level in serving others.

This story will make you smile, but it will also challenge you to examine your own “kingdom,” wherever that may be,

to determine how well you are serving your customers. Your “Sir Vival” will depend on it!

Blessings,

Barbara A. Glanz, Author of *CARE Packages for Your Customers – An Idea a Week to Enhance Customer Service, Building Customer Loyalty – How YOU Can Help Keep Customers Returning*, and co-author with Ken Blanchard of *The Simple Truths of Service As Inspired by Johnny the Bagger*.



CHAPTER 1

SCROLLS AND TOLLS

Once upon a time, King Steward III and Queen Jennifer reigned over the medieval Village of Celelot. They lived in the Castle and had enjoyed governing Celelot from there for more than twenty years. This village was special to them. It was where they began their married life and they earnestly wanted for it to be the best town in all the land.

For many years Celelot prospered. Favorable weather had produced an abundance of excellent crops that were known far and wide for their taste and size. The prosperity that followed ignited a surge of innovation, and improvements of all sorts were popping up everywhere.

One of the more industrious agricultural employees of Celelot discovered that feeding geese a special diet of clover and timothy grass resulted in an irresistible goose paté. An employee in the Berry Research Division of the Village added hot peppers to jam and created a blazingly sweet concoction he called “Berry Fire Jam.” People flocked from all over to buy the ingenious products and boast to their neighbors about their superior purchases. Celelot had become famous for being

progressive and it enjoyed the reputation, bounty and responsibility of being a premier commerce center.

The Castle provided all goods and services to the villagers and to do this it employed a vast array of specialists. Cobblers, parchment makers, weavers, carpenters, drawbridge attendants and many others worked daily to serve the villagers in Celelot, who were their customers. However, recently, there had been an upsurge of unrest in the village, and a lot of growing tension between the townspeople and the Castle.

Scrolls with complaints about Celelot had been rare when the King and Queen began their reign, but were becoming disturbingly commonplace. One scroll told of a weaver who would not exchange a moth-eaten blanket for a new one, even though the original transaction was only hours old. Additionally, complaints of the drawbridge attendants sleeping on duty and displaying a surly attitude were plentiful. The town lookouts were a source of contempt as well, always looking down on the villagers.

Yet these were not the only sources of discontent in Celelot. Lately, tolls were assigned to nearly everything, from drawing water from the village wells to crossing a footbridge. The price of living in Celelot was rising as the value of the service was falling.

And silly rules were becoming ridiculously numerous. There was a rule for this and a rule for that. There was a jest that upon awakening in the morning one had already broken

two rules—waking up without permission and breathing the King’s air.

The village was becoming a spoiled stew. It was seasoned with a spoonful of disappointment, a cup of frustration and a quart of disenchantment. Unbeknownst to the King and Queen, it was about to boil over.



CHAPTER 2

THE VILLAGE REPORT

At first the King and Queen turned their heads from the signs of discontent in their village. The Nobility that managed the staff gave reports of the situation at Castle meetings. At times, they even suggested solutions, but it didn't seem so bad as to warrant real concern. After all, people from the farthest reaches of the kingdom still came to Celelot to enjoy the luscious fruits, poultry innovations, Berry Fire Jam and the designer goose paté.

Late one morning as the King and Queen slept, they were startled by a hearty knock on their chamber door. The King opened the large, creaky, wooden door to a small, rather sweaty fellow who appeared before him. He panted as he explained that he had just jogged through the village, climbed the hillside, and sprinted over the drawbridge to give the King an urgent report. Still winded, he reached into his robe for his ledger and into his breast pocket for his ever-present quill, as he was the Census Taker.

“Your Majesties,” he wheezed, “I have come with news

that requires your immediate notice. I have just finished the census and I have discovered a matter that is of great concern. For the first time in the history of our great village, the population is down by more than one hundred and fifty.”

“Get to it then, Census Taker. Inform me of the reasons for these departures,” demanded the King, rubbing his eyes and drawing his royal dressing gown closed.

Regaining his breath, the Census Taker continued. “As you know, Your Majesty, the villagers have been complaining, some even to the point of submitting scrolls about their encounters. We have known about ill-treatment from the parchment makers, the drawbridge attendants, the lookouts and many others. They also find fault with the many rules and numerous tolls which add to these sore points.”

“Surely there is more to this,” the King replied.

“Yes, Sire, there is. I have been told that there are nearby towns where the villagers and the Castle get along very well. Some of these towns are offering the citizens of Celelot ten geese, ten pheasants and a fortnight of free accommodations to move to their town.”

“They will be back when the geese and pheasants run out,” interjected the Queen. “We are still one of the largest villages around, and a few disenchanting peasants who desire pheasants should not cause us to fret. Let’s forget this foolishness and speak of more important matters. We have a feast to plan

for the Centennial Celebration of Celelot. And, we are in search of an artist to sculpt a likeness of our excellent King for the new fountain in the village and the search is tedious. These are the things we should be worried about.”

“Respectfully, Your Majesty, one hundred and fifty-three villagers is quite a lot of our town,” the Census Taker insisted. “I have run the numerals, my King, and if we lose more villagers, our commerce will surely suffer.”

“Indeed, you have convinced me this is a matter of significance,” replied the King turning from the Census Taker.

“My stunning Queen, I have made a decision,” the King said firmly. “This defection must be stopped. Tend to the Centennial Celebration and sculpture as you will, but be advised that our first responsibility is to this concern. If we do not succeed in stopping our villagers from leaving, there will be no more anniversary celebrations, as Celelot will be but a fable!”

That night as the King lay his head on his pillow, he murmured over and over again, *What shall we do?* As he nodded off into an uneasy slumber, the King thought, *I shall summon a meeting of the Knights.*



CHAPTER 3

KNIGHTLY SOLUTIONS

“We have been commissioned by our beloved King and Queen to resolve the issue of our departing villagers,” began the senior Knight, distractedly rubbing his shin with one hand. “I really wish this table were round,” he added, “I keep hitting my leg against it.”

“Anyway, our wise King has appointed a Scribe who will stay close to our quest and document our progress. Our Scribe, Simon, being our town crier by previous assignment, is uniquely suited for this endeavor. Let us begin.

“Simon, do record our path completely, accurately and candidly.”

“This is so very simple,” began the youngest of the Knights, “and not worthy of this gathering of some of the most splendid resources of the Castle. We just need to tell our villagers that we love them and ask them to stay.”

“Brilliant idea,” added the second youngest of the Knights. “We will make it sound pretty and post it all over town. Everyone wants to be told they are appreciated. Our post could say something like: “The villager is King.”

“Blasphemy!” retorted the senior Knight. “The King is the King. The villagers aren’t Kings. I don’t get your meaning.”

“I’ve got it. I’ve got it,” interjected the youngest Knight excitedly. “The villager is always right.” Or “We try harder for our villagers.” Or “Our villagers are number one.”

More and more ideas were born as the meeting proceeded. But the Knights knew without a doubt that the post of words expressing their true feelings would surely keep the villagers in Celelot. After all, it was true. No one before had ever told the villagers they were special. This indeed was the answer. There was a buzz in the hall as the Knights creatively discussed how their intention should sound. So throughout the evening, after several pails of berry wine, the conclave claimed success. They had settled on the post.

They were excited. They were sure. The post would read:

EVERY DAY IS VILLAGER DAY IN CELELOT



The Scribe's Journal

This indeed is an excellent assignment—it pays much more than the town crier gig. After pails of berry wine To resolve the problem of our villagers leaving Celelot, it has been decided by the Knights to express our appreciation for them, as this has never been done before. It is agreed that the villagers are leaving because they are feeling unappreciated. Would you like some cheese with that whine? Boo-Hoo! Posts will be placed throughout Celelot displaying the words “Every Day is Villager Day in Celelot.”



CHAPTER 4

BEYOND WORDS

There was curiosity everywhere as the team of postmen hurried throughout the Village of Celelot attaching the posts to every flat surface. The Knights had decided to cover and seal the boards to hide the words until the unveiling. Several mischievous children attempting to remove the coating from the posts were caught, flogged lightly, and sent home to their parents.

The energy in the town bubbled higher and higher as people passed on rumors and spun wild tales about the mysterious message on the posts. There were reports of the King and Queen sharing their significant profits with the villagers. Other reports told of a day where everything in Celelot would be free to all villagers.

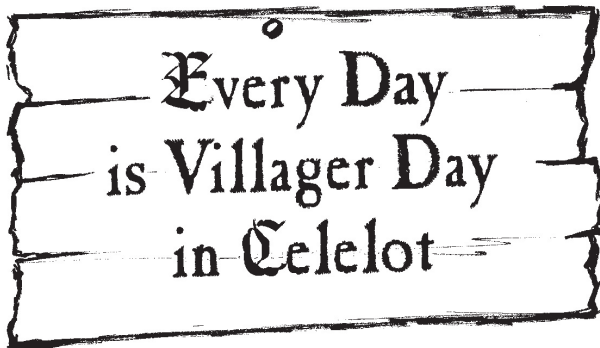
A marvelous mood had overtaken Celelot. The unveiling was to take place at a special town celebration.

On the day of the celebration, merry men danced, jesters performed, and the Village Orator spoke lofty words. The Castle even planned a jousting match for the entertainment of the villagers.

When the trumpets sounded, the King and Queen, adorned in robes of ruby and gold (they enjoyed dressing alike) floated into the gathering. The Knights swiftly took their places flanking the posts, ready at the signal from the King to reveal their content.

“My dear villagers,” began the King. “As we approach the Centennial of our beloved Celelot, I deem it fitting to bestow upon you something not experienced by any villager until this moment. As you know, of late, some of your fellow villagers have left our swell town for other places. We in the Castle have spent many days and nights trying to figure out why. And I am proud to tell you, we think we now know. Everyone wants to be told they are appreciated. So my dear souls, I am happy to give you this long overdue gift.”

Excited voices raised from the crowd as every villager anticipated the message on the posts. The King gave the signal and with one swipe of each Knight’s sword the cover was removed from each post. The people gasped with excitement, anticipating the words on the post. There they were, exposed for all to see.



Silence befell the crowd.

“Look! They are speechless!” remarked the Queen as she excitedly clapped her hands. “They are absolutely speechless.”

The King, visibly happy with himself, spoke again. “I see you are in awe of these fine words. And indeed they are sincere. We appreciate you. So let us continue this grand celebration until the sun bids farewell for the day.”



The Scribe's Journal

And yet another exciting event to report! I regret that this entry may be my last, as success has come quickly. ~~Damn it—Cake jobs like this are hard to find.~~ Upon unveiling the posts of appreciation at a grand village festival, the villagers were speechless. This appears to have been the problem all along—that our villagers felt unappreciated. ~~Who knew? The end.~~

