



Literature Review

Best Practices: Building Your Business With Customer-Focused Solutions

TCS *International* plans to maintain a regular *Literature Review* column for books related to TCS issues and concerns. The Policy and Strategic Planning Division (TBX) has offered up the first in this series. Below is a summary of a review by Tom Brown on *Best Practices: Building Your Business With Customer-Focused Solutions* by Thomas B. Kelly, Robert Hiebeler, and Charles Ketteman, April 1998. The book resonates with DFAIT Performance Measurement Initiative (PMI) actions now under way. Copies of the book are available on loan from TBX. Readers of *TCS International* are invited to submit summaries or reviews of publications that they feel would benefit fellow readers.

This new management book profiles the customer service techniques used by over 40 of the world's leading organizations to achieve "best practice" in customer service. The companies were rated by Arthur Andersen consultants using a process-classification system that involves six steps, such as: understanding current markets and clients; improving marketing and selling; and creating customer-information management systems.

Best Practices then shows how these top-rated companies got to where they are. The book combines entertaining stories of corporate success with detailed and relevant checklists and advice on customer service. The authors suggest that organizations, "survey...customers frequently, systematically, directly, and personally" and "develop an integrated system for processing orders tailored to customers' needs." Each chapter ends with a

series of questions designed to evaluate the quality of an organization's customer service.

Best Practices is described as a "compressed compendium of what top companies are doing to get, please, keep, and expand their customer bases." Arthur Andersen consultants conclude that "best practices do not belong to any single company [like FedEx or Dell] or industry [hotels], but instead have universal application to companies large and small across all industries." The authors assert that, "By examining the history and refinement of each basic universal process, managers at any company, in any industry, can discover more innovative and effective ways of solving their current business problems and responding to their customers' needs."

Bottom line: best practice is all about looking outside yourself, "an intensely personal journey." *Best Practices* concludes that once an organization "learns to speak the language of process, builds relationships of trust with stakeholders, and is proactive rather than reactive with the forces of change, it will create value for both itself and its customers."

"Are you a Player or a Fan" by Tom Brown, *Across the Board*, United States Conference Board, April, 1998.

"*Best Practices: Building Your Business With Customer-Focused Solutions*", by Thomas B. Kelly, Robert Hiebeler and Charles Ketteman, Simon & Schuster, 1998.