



Five Major Mistakes to Avoid in 2014

Ron Kaufman

2014 will bring changes, opportunities and dangers for your business. Industries are collapsing, careers are converging, and work is migrating or disappearing altogether. Each of us must orient ourselves in a world of constant disorientation, and find new ways to create value and provide service to others. Make the right choices and next year will be your best year yet. Make these 5 mistakes and things will be more difficult for your business and your life.

Mistake #1: Hide Inside Your Box

You want to be as good as you can, or even better, the best. So you dedicate, focus, and eliminate distractions. But watch out. There is a convergence going on that makes no career, company or industry secure. The bookstore becomes a coffee shop. Your phone becomes a wallet. The steering wheel of your new car takes your pulse. Your colleague from a different department suddenly becomes your boss.

In today's world, over-specialisation without healthy diversification can be dangerous to your health. Remember Kodak? Remember the property flippers? Remember how the US depended on imported oil? Breakthroughs

are called breakthroughs because something familiar is being broken. Black swans emerge. Unusual quirks surge into huge cascades. Who would have believed that rating female faces in college would lead the world to [Facebook](#)?

In the year ahead, you can knuckle down, dig deep and learn more about your specialization. But don't let the comfort of familiar turf keep you from roaming far afield for new perspectives and ideas. Read outside your normal genre. Visit stores you've never set foot in. Ask your friend in another industry to show you how they do whatever it is they do – and then return the favour. Be curious about what others are doing and discovering. Keep your eyes open and your curiosity alert. A new world is always emerging.

Mistake #2: Surrender to Technology

It's easy to think technology will make everything better, faster, more customized and convenient. But don't let the tsunami of devices, apps, interfaces, and constant connectivity keep you from connecting with those who count most in your work or in your life.

Sending an email, online survey, link or file to a customer may help you keep contact. But picking up the phone, scheduling a video call, or meeting in person is a more

intimate and enduring way to keep in touch.

If your life is increasingly bound to digital screens, don't make the mistake of thinking that writing or sending something in real-time is the same as investing yourself in face time. Take a step back from the screens to connect, person-to-person, with those you serve, work with, and care about. Make the coming year a bounty of richly rewarding rendezvous and precious conversations.

Mistake #3: Believe that Games are for Kids

The business world is deploying gamification at lightning speed, driven by benchmark experiences in recreation and entertainment, the power of digital technologies, and the high levels of engagement and motivation that gamification puts to work.

The key elements of this massive trend include measurable actions (points, scores, levels, likes), social reputation (platinum, Top 50, five star, badges), and monetary and non-monetary incentives (bonuses, red carpet treatment, special discounts and offers). Gamification can be used at work to improve employee behaviour, increase customer engagement, engage and align your partners. To learn more, [start here](#)

If you think games are only for kids or for enjoying "after work", you will miss an important trend and make a serious mistake.

Leading companies are shaping the behaviour of customers, employees, and partners through successful gamification.

Mistake #4: Believe the Advertising

Customer reviews are not just here to stay, they are here to dominate. For example, if you want to buy a copy of Uplifting Service, which will you read first – the editorial reviews from the publisher, or customer reviews from actual buyers and readers? Which do you believe more?

Which is more likely to move you to action?

In the New Year, become a connoisseur of reviews. Don't just count the stars, read and reflect on the actual reviews. Is this reviewer merely splattering an opinion, or is the review a gem of reflection, thoughtfulness, recommendations or advice? See the stunning contrast between this one-star review by Jorge Montalva and the remarkable reply from Paul Uduk.

In the year ahead, become a creator of your own strong reviews. When you have well-considered points of view, contribute comments, comparisons, and analyses for the benefit of others. It's our world to create together as collaborators for the future.

Advertising is still important. Prospects need to know who you are, what you stand for, and what you have to offer. Good advertising can [promote your identity](#) with clarity and power. But don't be seduced by the beauty of your own expression. In the world of advertising and promotion, it's what others say about you that matters most.

Mistake #5: Sell, Sell, and Sell Some More

Attracting prospects, closing deals, and winning new customers sounds like a formula for success. But this passionate focus on new business ignores the importance of retaining and growing with the customers you've already got.

Pharmaceutical companies face patent expiration cliffs that turns blockbuster drugs into dogs. But they are discovering that investing in family support services leads to better patient compliance and brand loyalty that lasts a lifetime.

Konosuke Matsushita famously said "After-sales service is more important than assistance before sales. It is through such service that one gets permanent customers."

And he was right. If you spend the New Year ignoring your customers and chasing your prospects, your customers today will belong to your competitors tomorrow, and you'll have to spend 2015 chasing all over again.

One More Mistake: Focus on the Past

[Dr. Fernando Flores](#) has been one of my mentors for many years. He visited Singapore recently with his wife Gloria, lead designer Chauncey Bell and his wife Shirah. Fernando was Chile's Minister of Finance at 29 years old, spent three years as political prisoner, was exiled to America, reinvented himself as a professor, author, and entrepreneur, returned to Chile as a Senator, and now travels the world addressing issues and developing [opportunities in global education](#).

At the American Chamber of Commerce, Flores spoke about his remarkable life and in one phrase summed his extraordinary ability to create new insights and new worlds. "I have never been a victim of my past. Who I was is not who I am."

My wife and I recently met with [Marshall Goldsmith, Jack Canfield, and Tony Buzan](#) in Dubai at the 20th Anniversary of Right Selection, our longstanding event partner in the Middle East. Marshall shared an important tip at dinner: "Don't focus on the past you cannot change. Focus on the future that you can."

These two quotes make good sense, and make for good living. We share them with you, with our very best wishes in 2014.

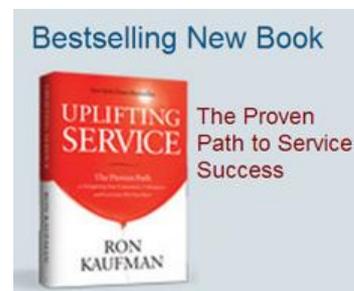
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About the Author

Ron Kaufman is author of The New York Times, USA Today and Amazon.com bestseller, "Uplifting Service! A Proven Path to Delighting Your Customers, Colleagues and Everyone Else You Meet" and 14 other books on service, business and inspiration. He is also the founder of UP! Your Service, a company that enables organizations to build Uplifting Service cultures and enjoy a sustainable advantage.

Co-ordinates

Mail: UP! Your Service
50 Bayshore Road, Suite 31-02
Singapore 469977
Tel: (+65) 6309-9668
E-mail:
Enquiry@UpYourService.com
Web: www.UpYourService.com



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