

Bust Out of Service Fatigue: The What, Where, Why and How Behind a Decline in Customer Service Excellence

Does it feel like no matter how hard you try to please your customer, it isn't enough? Are you in charge of leading others and the faster you train teams and build energy, the quicker it seems to fade? Are you a business owner feeling hopeless about the never-ending needs of staff AND customers while trying to achieve a profitable bottom line? You're exhausted, right?

This exhaustion is what's called **service fatigue**, defined as that feeling that keeps us from delivering the excellent customer service our staff and patrons have come to expect. Left unchecked, this weariness can impact your business in many negative ways, from short tempers to lost business.

Let's unpack the what, where, why, and how of service fatigue and get on the path to busting out of it.

What does Service Fatigue look like?

You know what customer service delivery *should* look like. Attentive. Proactive. Genuine. Service fatigue is "less than," and it presents in many forms. It's when your customer experience is less than you—or they—expect. It's a lack of energy, elevated stress, constant ambivalence, difficulty concentrating, missed deadlines, frequent mistakes, or safety compliance issues. The trickiest kind of service fatigue to spot is the kind the team thinks they can hide from guests. It's still there, lurking beneath the surface, threatening to bring everyone down in its undertow.

Where does Service Fatigue come from?

After a stressful few years, various challenges have caused service fatigue levels to skyrocket. But the truth is, service fatigue can strike at any time, and much of it is really nothing new. It's short-tempered customers who escalate to anger quickly. It's trying (and usually failing) to juggle multiple priorities at a time. It's navigating ever-changing business policies. It's responsibilities that outnumber hours in the day. It's one bad attitude draining a team's morale. Service fatigue can come from anywhere and knowing how to identify it is half the battle.

Why does Service Fatigue matter?

The short answer: It matters because it impacts your bottom line. When service fatigue takes over at your business, everything is at risk. You can play a huge part in lessening that burden for your team and your customers. If it's possible, make work a welcoming, encouraging environment for your staff so they can give your customers a reason to crow about the great experience they had. By recognizing service fatigue and equipping your team with the tools to bust out of its grip before it's too late, you'll ensure that everyone's experience is that much better.

How do we mitigate the effects of Service Fatigue?

There are countless ways to bust out of service fatigue, and no two businesses will adopt exactly the same solution. Decades of experience in the customer service industry prove that there's no silver bullet to finally overcoming exhaustion. Instead, it takes a combination of strategy, patience, and commitment to bolster your team and get them back on track to deliver the kind of remarkable customer service you and your customers expect.

To get you started, here are a few ways to start busting out of service fatigue as soon as today:

Build Better Boundaries

Professional boundaries can be the single best tool to help bust out of service fatigue, whether you need to put them in place with your boss or you need to ensure your team knows that work/life separation is a good thing. Unless it's imperative to your industry, do you *really* need to reply to emails at 8 p.m.? Is that gap or hiccup in a process at work *really* yours to lose sleep over?

We all can and should go above and beyond to deliver customer service excellence. But when you're doing far more than is expected, you may be bringing service fatigue on yourself. Be honest: Are you guilty of your own boundary breakdowns? Are there honest conversations you can have to get those boundaries—and your energy levels—back on track?

Re-evaluate your boundaries today and find where you can firm them up. You'll soon see what a difference they make in boosting your energy and positive attitude.

Grant Yourself Rest!

Who doesn't love rest? Based on how commonplace it is to not get enough of it, you might assume it's not many of us! While some have mastered the art of taking breaks, Americans tend to do things fast—and often multitasking. We like the *concept* of rest, but the demands on our time often get in the way of our ability to truly take a break.

There are as many as seven types of rest, from physical and emotional to creative and spiritual. The truth is, they're all important, and giving ourselves the space to breathe when things get stressful is imperative. Rest can mean putting down your phone an hour early and reading a book instead, or using your shift break to do a brief silent meditation so you're prepared to head back to work.

When we prioritize rest and start to see it as doing *good* for ourselves, we are more energized to deliver customer service excellence.

Bonus: When do I need to address Service Fatigue?

No surprises here: If you recognize the signs of service fatigue, *now* is the time to bust out of it! Start by identifying what's causing the fatigue, then set aside time to plan for change, including both big and small steps to reinvigorate your team and return to delivering customer service excellence. When you commit to the change, the hardest part is already over. All it takes from there is digging in to bust out of service fatigue once and for all!

About the Author

A Hall of Fame keynote speaker, entrepreneur, and author, Laurie Guest, CSP, CPAE, is an authority on customer service excellence. Laurie shares her practical point of view on customer service and staff development with audiences across the country, blending real-life examples and proven action steps for improvement. She is the author of two books and is writing a third on the topic of service fatigue. To learn more or connect with Laurie, visit www.LaurieGuest.com