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## Service excellence — Principles and model

*Excellence de service — Principes et modèle*



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## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see [www.iso.org/directives](http://www.iso.org/directives)).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see [www.iso.org/patents](http://www.iso.org/patents)).

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For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see [www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html](http://www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html).

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 312, *Excellence in service*.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at [www.iso.org/members.html](http://www.iso.org/members.html).

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## Introduction

Customer expectations in today's competitive world have changed and are constantly evolving. Today, globalization and digitalization and the increased variety of products and services allow customers more freedom of choice. Every purchase and customer contact is a moment of truth.

Organizations often claim they put the customer at the centre of their business. However, in competitive markets it is essential to manage the whole organization around the customer and the experience offered. Organizations that do this will flourish. The optimal delivery of customer satisfaction can no longer be achieved by the offering of basic products and services expected by the customer. To be successful and to stay ahead of competitors, it is essential to delight customers by providing outstanding and differentiating experiences. This is the objective of service excellence.

This document describes the principles, elements and sub-elements for creating outstanding customer experiences. The basic foundations of implementing service excellence are the two lower levels of the service excellence pyramid (see [Figure 1](#)). Levels 1 and 2 are about meeting the expectations of customers and fulfilling the promises. They lead to customer satisfaction. The core service proposition (Level 1) is perceived by customers as delivering on promises. The customer feedback management (Level 2) results in dealing well with problems and queries. These are described in International Standards such as ISO 9001, ISO 10002 and ISO/IEC 20000-1. This document deals with the upper levels:

- individual excellent service provision (Level 3);
- surprisingly excellent service provision (Level 4).

These two levels create an emotional connection with the customer and lead to customer delight. The impact for the business is a strong brand image and attractiveness to new and existing customers as well as competitive differentiation.

Individual excellent service provision (Level 3) results in service that is perceived by customers as warm, genuine, personalized, tailor-made and value-creating. The customer experiences an emotional reaction by feeling valued.

Surprisingly excellent service provision (Level 4) results in service that is tailor-made and leads to emotions of surprise and joy. It is delivered by exceeding customer expectations. This can be achieved by delivering unexpected outstanding customer experiences. However, various approaches can be used to achieve customer delight.

The service excellence pyramid should be used to explain to managers and employees why an organization has to focus on both fulfilling the promises (Levels 1 and 2) and exceeding customer expectations by delivering excellent services (Levels 3 and 4).

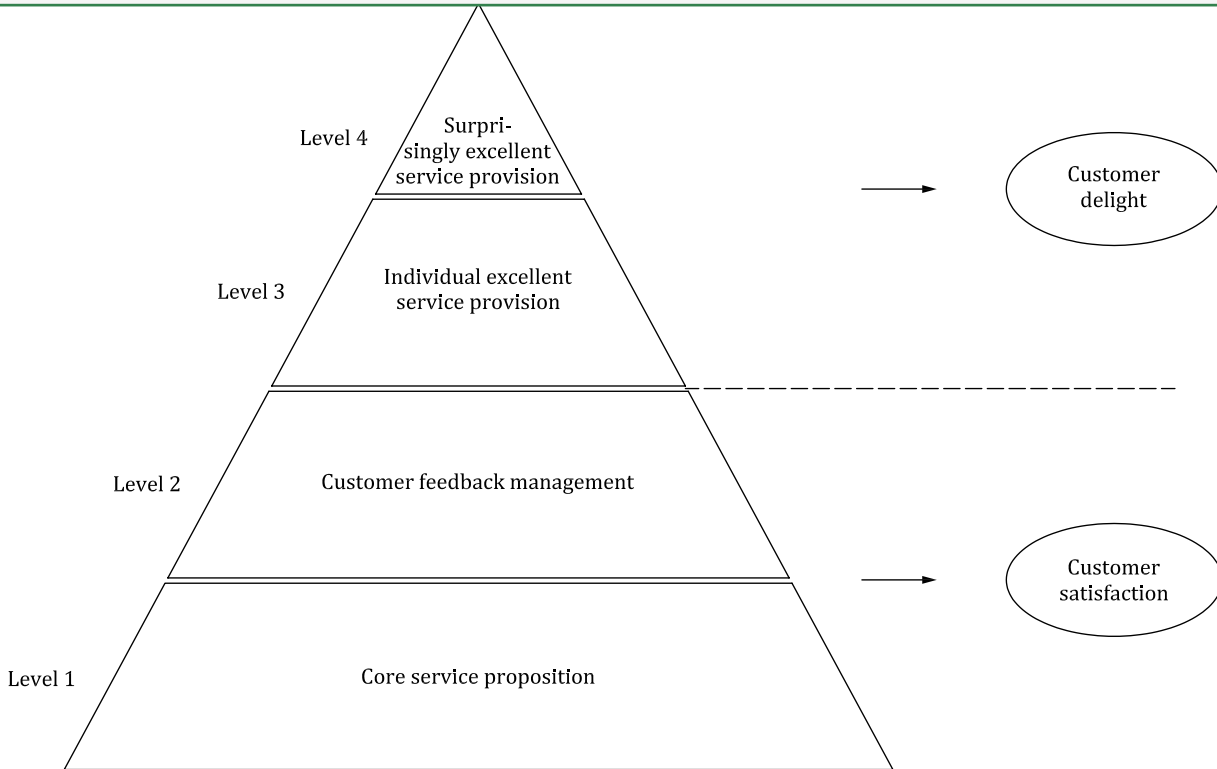


Figure 1 — Service excellence pyramid

This document defines the essential terms, describes relevant principles and builds up a model of service excellence. It delivers an all-embracing framework for further documents to deal with essential elements of the service excellence model in more detail:

- ISO/TS 24082<sup>1)</sup> offers principles, and activities of designing excellent services. It specifies the elements of the dimension “creating outstanding customer experiences” of the service excellence model. Thus, it is related to [7.3](#) of this document.
- ISO/TS 23686<sup>2)</sup> provides an appropriate set of internal and external metrics and methods that can be used to measure service excellence performance, particularly the influencers and substantial effects of outstanding customer experiences and customer delight. It covers all the dimensions of the service excellence model. Thus, it is related to [7.4](#) of this document.

1) Under preparation. Stage at the time of publication: ISO/PRF TS 24082:2021.

2) Under preparation. Stage at the time of publication: ISO/WD TS 23686:2021.