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Branded Customer Service by J Barlow & P Stewart
Berrett-Koehler, 2004 (A\$49.95)

In an era of cost-cutting, increased technology and demand for greater shareholder returns, dissatisfaction with customer service is burgeoning.

Even as businesses struggle to improve their customer service with management trying to build a strong brand, Janelle Barlow and Paul Stewart, authors of *Branded Customer Service: The New Competitive Edge*, argue that service standards have fallen and the public has leapt ahead of organisations on brand. They argue that branding customer service requires something much more complex than the bolt-on activities currently parading as 'relationship' building. Rather, it implies developing a recognisable style and personality, with important implications for brand marketing.

An important chapter delves into the role of HR departments and their ability to position their human capital expertise as one of the strategic elements that comprise business success.

The book suggests that employees must work within, and feel engaged by the system that aligns them to the strategic positioning of the business, and helps them to deliver on-brand behaviours. A thought-provoking read for any forward thinking professional with a mind to strategic HR and effective customer service.

Content: 9/10

Presentation: 10/10

Value: 9/10