

Entrepreneur Transforms Outsourced Services With Relentless Customer and Employee Engagement – and the Pursuit of Happiness

By Jeff Zbar

Mitchell D. Weiner has seen the workers out there – overlooked, ignored, forgotten in the decades-long transformation of Corporate American. They're the hourly workers who work in traditional, corporate-run catacomb-like mailrooms of the workplace. Their tasks are vital to business, yet their faces are a blur to patrons and higher-ups.

Once upon a time, any job could be the launch pad for a savvy, bright worker's rise through the ranks. No longer. Today, these workers are anonymous to many, and often fated to stay that way.

Consider the tale of the “sweet and kind” barista behind the counter at a local coffee shop. The woman knew her coffee and tea, yet was a Cornell University grad stuck behind the coffee counter in this \$8-an-hour job. Her passion for her work, Weiner knows, separates stellar employees from those destined to sameness and mediocrity.

“With a degree from Cornell, why are you here?” Weiner asked. She couldn't find more suitable work, the barista replied.

So Weiner hired her. She went from \$8 an hour to multiple increases and national responsibilities—transforming what had been just a “job” into a “career” trajectory with no foreseeable limit for someone with her... passion.



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Mitch Weiner, Chief Happiness Officer, CEO, FSO

The Forgotten Demographic

To Weiner, whether the counter or the mailroom, those who run them are critical components to the engines of an enterprise. This “forgotten demographic” is not forgotten or overlooked by Weiner. In fact, he was who they are.

Weiner is the unabashed Founder, Owner and Chief Happiness Officer with FSO. The award-winning, enterprise-wide onsite outsourcing and people solutions company, headquartered in New York City, services a multitude of clients across the nation. FSO provides Front Of House, Conference & Hotelling Services, Call Center Services, Facilities Management, MPS & Device Management, Reprographic Services, Mail & Logistics Services, Messenger

Services, Records Management Solutions, Legal Solutions and Information Technology. Today, the company employs 2,400 folks nationwide. Most have earned effusive kudos from Weiner's clients.

“They are very positive and incredibly helpful, considerate and kind,” New York magazine COO Kit Taylor told Crain's New York Business about the publisher's experience using FSO for its mailroom, front desk and administrative posts. “The first candidate they send me usually nails the criteria I'm looking for, so my time isn't wasted meeting five people in order to hire the right one.”

Praise Speeds Growth

Such praise has helped the company grow 96% in three years, Crain's reported. Actually, Weiner's made a career pulling these individuals, whom he calls his “Rising Stars,” from obscurity into the glow of personal success – and driving corporate value in the process. While competitors perform similar services, Weiner's Unique Selling Proposition is Happiness and a strengthened client bottom line.

Talk to him on the phone. Sit with him in his New York office or a conference room. The self-made success story three times over exudes happiness. It's his competitive edge. In a business world bearing a



Mitch spots stars with “the twinkle in their eye, a skip in their step, and the fire in their belly.”

buttoned-down approach, his is revolutionary and refreshing.

Once a David to corporate Goliaths, his promise to deliver personal, passionate and productive service has earned FSO the 24th spot on Crain’s Fast 50 list of the 50 fastest-growing privately held companies in the New York area and every year since 2012 earned inclusion in the Inc. 500/5000 ranking of the fastest growing companies in the United States.

Today, the company has 225+ sites in 60 cities nationwide, each of whom enjoy a customer engagement experience unequalled, even unexpected, in business. Said a large New York City based bank who, like all of Weiner’s hundreds of clients, used to outsource with a competitor, “I was seriously blown away at the lack of care our former partner showed from the haphazard way they maintained the space and cleanliness, to how they failed to provide any process improvement or innovation. It’s like FSO came in with night vision goggles and looked at every aspect of our back

office (re)IMAGINED and rebuilt it from the ground up. The hospitality, articulation, knowledge and pride these folks take in their jobs is second to none.”

Who is the Chief Happiness Officer?

To hear Mitch Weiner tell it, he’s just a kid from the streets of Queens, New York – the product of a broken family and the school of hard knocks. He had no expectations of anything being handed to him; he stood to inherit nothing from his parents. Everything he earned came from working “100 jobs at once” – parking cars, serving Baskin Robbins, and pursuing his own future with a relentless passion that drives the serial entrepreneur today.

“I didn’t inherit anything or take it over from somebody else,” says Weiner. “I’ve built it all from scratch, passion, belief and drive with people who share those traits and want to bring success to life.”

His start in onsite outsourcing began before there was “onsite out-

sourcing.” Weiner learned the mail business while with Friden Alcatel. While at the mailing technology company, he rose through the ranks, improved the mail facilities, doubled sales – and recognized that facilities problems couldn’t be solved by technology and equipment alone.

Thus was born onsite outsourcing of services.

Then, about 20 years ago, mailroom outsourcing was born – essentially bringing his employees into law firms and other companies to manage all aspects of the mailroom. After growing the company, Archer was sold to Océ in the mid-1990s.

After building a second outsourcing company to 100+ million revenue and acquisition by Swiss Post, the foundation was laid for FSO as we know it today.

Consistent through all his pursuits has been Weiner’s “Happiness-Centric” perspective on business in the service sector. The model delivers on three key differentiators. First, customers receive service they’ve never before come to expect. In a world of behemoth organizations that seeks to instill into employees their dogmatic, formulaic and unyielding protocols for customer engagement, Weiner instead hires for attitude. He calls it hiring for “the twinkle in their eye, a skip in their step, the fire in their belly.” Any manager can train off the company manual, but you cannot train for the right attitude, one where an employee means it when he says, “How are you doing today?”

Second, Weiner is returning a personal touch to business that has been lost in the customer service experience. Consumers – whether

to accept, even expect, a lackadaisical – even lousy - interaction with customer service representatives. So when an organization delivers outstanding, over-the-top customer engagement, it's like some golden nugget delivered each day to those 500 customers by a partner – not a vendor – who connects culturally, strategically and who truly cares about their success. “When my customers have pain,” he says, “it pains me.”

Success Measured in Savings

Finally, if hiring Weiner doesn't save customers money, then he's failed to serve them. Each customer can expect to save from 10% to 40% by contracting with FSO and embracing its business model of personal, passionate and productive delivery of service. He delivers to



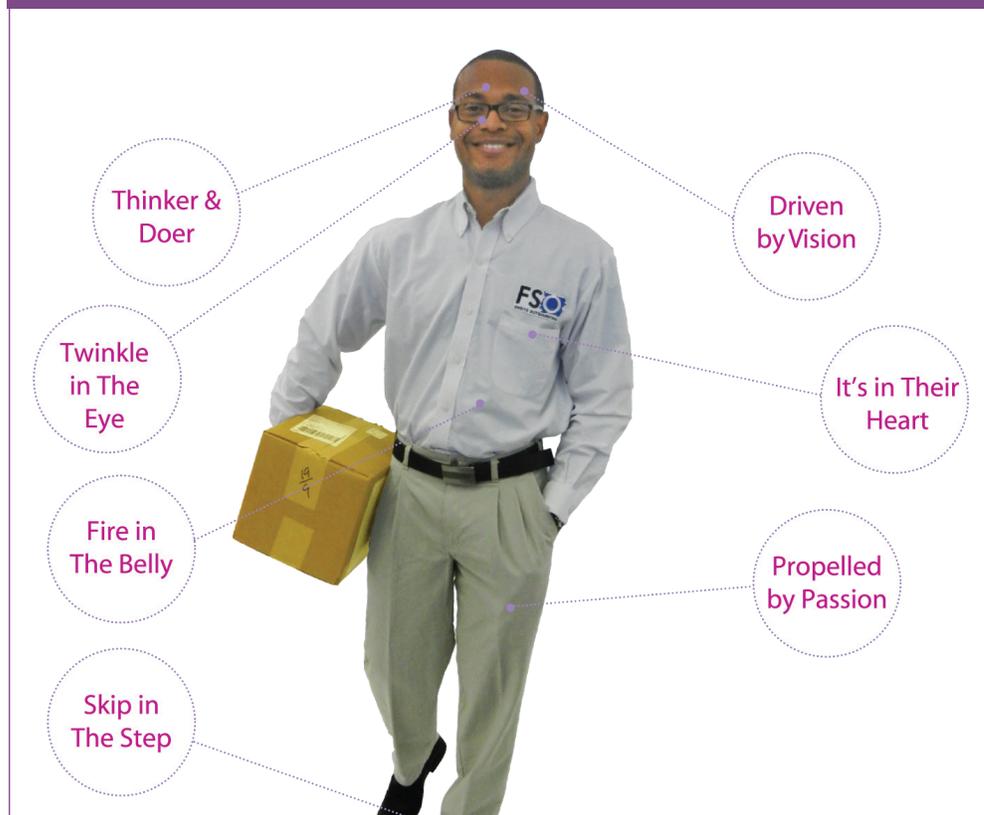
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every client what each one cannot find on its own: Power buying. Through scalability across a litany of onsite outsourcing solutions: Luxury Building Services Solutions; Conference Services Solutions; Front Of House, Conference & Hotelling Services, Call Center Services, Facilities Management, MPS & Device Management, Reprographic Services, Mail & Logistics Services, Messenger Services, Records Management Solutions, Legal Solutions and Information Technology.



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The Ideal Candidate According to Mitch



Providing these services to hundreds of clients gives FSO significant clout and buying power with the likes of Staples, FedEx and UPS, for example – he wrings significant savings for every customer.

The Essence of the Plan

That's the essence of Weiner's business plan: Always improve the customer's business – no matter what; always take care of his people, through better incentives, training and career pathing; and always save the customer money. For FSO itself, the model isn't about goals; it's about results. He might be hired to handle a specific task or function.

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Weiner will always be that guy in the space who cares enough to take care of the hourly employee from the middle manager down. Big companies are too big to care – to teach these employees, to embrace them, to help them create lasting careers.”

Is Passion ‘Nature’ or ‘Nurture’?

Our Business Operations manager has been an absolute Godsend,” enthused one global advertising agency executive recently about a manager Weiner placed in the firm. “He’s always good-natured, no matter what problems, complaints, weird questions, we throw his way. He’s unbelievably organized despite the chaos over here, and his team schleps our correspondence and packages back and forth across town with no complaint, I don’t know what we’d do without him.

Finding Positive Elements Daily

Now, Weiner suggests, can such passion be trained? Or is it ingrained? When looking for that twinkle, skip and fire, what he’s really looking for are people who “love life.” He wants people – like himself – who don’t spend their days wondering why things went wrong, but how to find positive elements of the day. Like he taught his kids, “Avoid the B.S. and drama, and focus on what will make you happy.”

“You are the unsung heroes,” said a senior managing director of operations whose real estate finance and investment company’s move was handled by Weiner’s team. “Coordinating the details of the rest of

the move, making sure everyone and everything gets packed and moved and set back up so that people can arrive on Monday, unpack their personal space, get



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a cup of coffee and get to work. This was a big and thankless job. You are responsible for this move going incredibly smoothly.”

Over his career, Weiner has launched and sold three business. With each, he’s laid a bit more of the foundation of his legacy. FSO – and the acceptance of onsite outsourcing within multi-billion dollar companies, he believes, will be his corporate legacy.

Yet he’s still that upstart kid from Queens and he still possesses the passion of David against the Goliaths out there. Moreover, his approach to employee care and inclusion will be leadership legacy.

Weiner will always be that guy in the space who cares enough to take care of the hourly employee from the middle manager down. Big companies are too big to care – to teach these employees, to embrace them, to help them create lasting careers.

“My legacy,” he says, “is to take care of the forgotten demographic.”



About the Author: *Since the early 1990s, bylines, blogs, executive biographies and recurring columns by Jeff Zbar have been published in scores of regional and national publications and websites, including Advertising Age, Entrepreneur, Inc., and Herman Miller’s JuggleZine, Florida Trend, Writer’s Digest, the South Florida Business Journal, the South Florida Sun-Sentinel.*

Contact Mitch Weiner for expert advice on your onsite outsourcing or workforce happiness challenges at 212.204.1193 or mweiner@thinkfsg.com Visit FSO at FSO.co