



## The Leaning Tower - Part I

Foundations dictate potential. They determine how high an enterprise can be built. This is true for the Leaning Tower of Pisa, or a service contractor.

In 1173 A.D. the Tower of Pisa was started and immediately the foundation began to tip. By 1178 three floors were completed and the tower tilted noticeably. In 1272 the lean had increased so dramatically a new architect was brought in. The next four floors were built at an angle to compensate for the tilt.

In 1374 the tower was completed with the lean permanently cast in stone.

Here's our hypothetical service contractor. In 1990 a contract was won. Employees were hired, trained and supervised. Money collected and a business foundation completed. By 2000 bigger contracts were won, hiring and training tried to keep up. In 2006 quality was a roller coaster, decisions took longer. New leadership was brought in, but growth had stalled.



In 2007 our contractor had matured with its lean permanently cast in place.

This is the first of a two part article about building on bedrock for maximum potential.

Regards,  
Chris Arlen, President, Service Performance

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## 2 Lessons from the Leaning Tower

### 1) Build on Bedrock

### 2) Align All Efforts Vertically True

Ignore these lessons and does the sky fall down? No. Contractors exist, but most are leaning. Their potential limited by their tilt. And who knows about their long-term durability.

The Pisa stone masons couldn't find bedrock. But they built anyway, blindly guessing and hoping.



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Service contractors are similar. They know their business bedrock exists. They just can't see it. And if they can't see it, they can't build on it.

So, what do service contractors do? Same as the Pisa stone masons.

### 3 Characteristics of Bedrock

Before we can find business bedrock, we have to know what it looks like when we see it. Here are three descriptions to go by.

#### Characteristic #1 - The Customer Experience

Business bedrock is the sum total of all the experiences customers have with a contractor. Not just the ones they intend, or plan. But all experiences, with all customers.

And customers experience a contractor in many ways beyond brochures or tradeshow, such as:

- How employees interact with customers on-site
- The receptionist's attitude when customers call
- Accuracy, timeliness & clarity of invoices
- How customer conflicts are resolved
- A web site's information & usefulness

#### Characteristic #2 - The Promise Kept

Business bedrock is also recognized as the "promise" a contractor keeps with its customers. Not promises a contractor makes - but the one it keeps.

Marketing smoke evaporates and mirrors shatter, leaving only the reality of the "promise" kept.

#### Characteristic #3 - Employees are Customers Too

Employees keep the contractor's promise with customers.

A contractor tilts when employees don't know what that promise is, or how to keep it. A contractor leans dangerously when it doesn't keep its promise with employees.



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### 3 Signs to Finding Bedrock

Customer Experience bedrock is uncovered, not created. It exists where three conditions overlap. All must be present, and only their intersection is bedrock. My contractors' version is based on work by Parker LePla. Thanks Lynn & Joe.

#### 1st Sign - Look for What Customers Value

Customers value what they're willing to pay for.

Also, when qualities, such as integrity, reliability and diversity influence customers' decisions they can be added to the list.

Where do you find what customers value? Ask them.



#### 2nd Sign - Identify What You're Good At

Contractors have strengths, but not all strengths are valued by customers. It doesn't help to be good at something customers aren't willing to pay for. Look only for strengths customers value.

Where do you look? Ask employees. Ask customers.

#### 3rd Sign - Find a Unique Place in the Market

A contractor can't pick a place in the market that someone already has - or they're ignored. Consider FedEx. No one would start an overnight courier service with the promise of "absolutely, positively overnight", would they?

How do you find a unique place in the market? Check out the competition (but not like Watergate).

#### Next Month's Article

In our next article we'll look at how to get maximum growth from building on business bedrock. After all, a little lean is OK in a 900-year old tourist attraction, but not in your company's ability to grow.



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## Summary

Finding business bedrock is simple, just not easy. To reveal the bedrock of your Customer Experience promise you'll need to:

- Survey customers, employees & check the competition
- Look for the intersection of what customers value, what your good at, and only you own it
- Define your promise into actionable terms (see our next article)
- Contact us, we can help you find your true bedrock

## About Service Performance

We help raise clients' revenue through industry-specific sales training, collateral materials, proposal and presentation upgrades. Our clients secure contracts more frequently and retain more of the accounts they already have.

- More info on revealing your Customer Experience promise call 206-780-2963, or email [info@serviceperformance.com](mailto:info@serviceperformance.com)
- More sales insights from our Revenue-IQ blog, visit: <http://www.serviceperformance.com/blog>
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