



**WOULD YOU DO THAT  
TO YOUR MOTHER?**

**The “Make Mom Proud” Standard  
for How to Treat Your Customers**

**JEANNE BLISS**

Bestselling author of *“I Love You More Than My Dog”*

WOULD YOU DO THAT  
TO YOUR MOTHER?



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*For moms,  
who nudge us toward becoming  
the best version of ourselves*



# Contents

**Chapter 1:** 1  
*Picture Your Mom.*

How would your company act if every customer were your mom?

**Chapter 2:** 15  
*Be the Person I Raised You to Be.*

Enable employees to thrive.

**Chapter 3:** 68  
*Don't Make Me Feed You Soap!*

Make it easy to do business with you.

**Chapter 4:** 124  
*Put Others Before Yourself.*

Help your customers achieve their goals.



**Chapter 5:** 178*Take the High Road.*

Establish a balanced relationship with customers.

**Chapter 6:** 230*Stop the Shenanigans!*

Your #MakeMomProud assessment.

**Chapter 7:** 254*Join the Movement to #MakeMomProud!***Gratitude****Notes** 257**Index** 269

# 1.

## Picture Your Mom.

### **Our childhood. Mom's lessons. And our business life.**

They share freely. They have our back. They are there, in good times and bad. They always have our best interest in mind. They are brave.

This describes our moms.

It also describes companies that follow her lead in how they grow their businesses.

**The lessons we learned as kids stick with us.** And often they have our mom's face all over them. Her guidance, her rules, and her sayings are still in our heads. You probably grew up that way too, with a simple, clear understanding of what to do and what not to do.

We were taught to share, trust each other, play nice in the sandbox, and treat others like we'd want to be treated. Those lessons remain some of the best advice we've ever been given.

They also remain some of our most sound advice for how to behave in business.

Companies that **"Make Mom Proud"** grow by *living* those lessons. They remove practices that might curb the extension of care, or limit employees to act in good conscience. They work to remove

boundaries and pressures that prohibit customer-driven decision making. Their actions honor the human at the end of their decisions, establish a balanced relationship with customers and partners, and put employees in positions to act at work like they'd act at home. Like they were raised.

I grew up Italian, the third of seven kids. We lived a loud and crazy life. But we had a set of behaviors that guided us, which we learned by watching our parents. Their actions, more than words, showed us the path to follow. And their character was on display in how they acted.

The women in my life were particularly animated. My mom, Lydia, would sew until all hours of the night, fashioning custom-made Halloween costumes for each of us, and teeny tiny Barbie doll dresses for my sisters and me. My dad's mom, Ermalinda, rarely sat down for a meal she had prepared. Hovering around the perimeter of the table, she would carry large plates of food, spooning it onto our plates whether we wanted it or not, exclaiming "*Mangia! Mangia!*" ("Eat! Eat!").

And my mom's mom, Virginia, would roll out dough every Christmas to make homemade ravioli. Never satisfied unless they were perfect for us, she would throw out mounds of dough she had rolled out but deemed imperfect, even when it meant putting in hours to begin again. Neither grandma let us leave their homes without handing each of us a bag of groceries, scooping whatever food they had in their pantry for us to take home. They were selfless. They were nourishing. They were perfectionists. They thought of us first.

*These* are the behaviors that have become the standard for me, and for most of us, for how to act in our lives. We strive to **apply the lessons we learned as kids** to the way we behave at work. As both employees and customers, we gravitate to companies that create environments to



encourage and celebrate these behaviors. These are the make-mom-proud companies we celebrate and learn from in this little book.

As we learn about their paths, it's important to note that each of the make-mom-proud companies did not achieve this state overnight. It took one action, then another, and then another to give people permission and examples to model. That's why, in this book, we offer a simple way to help prompt these actions: a **lens to guide your company decisions**, by thinking of one person in particular at the end of each of them—your mom.

### **Imagine Mom as your customer.**

Within this book, I'm ever so gently delivering a bit of tough love wrapped in velvet to ask you to think about what you do and how you do it—from the perspective of your mother.

I encourage you to ask yourself when you act, speak, respond, or decide, “What would Mom have to say about this?” “Would we do this thing we are contemplating, to her?”

So take a minute. Picture your mom. What's she doing? Picture her picking up the phone to call an 800 number. Then picture her waiting. Picture the frustration of the wait and then her joy as some-

one connects. And then picture her face as she's asked to repeat all the numbers and facts that she punched in before waiting on hold. Picture her life at the auto dealership. Or walking into a retail store. Picture her nervously waiting for a doctor's appointment. Picture her trying to figure out how to program her phone.

Of course, it's not that simple. It's not the asking of the question "Would we do that to our mother?" that elevates behavior and companies. Conditions must be right for the asking. Leaders must encourage and establish a safe environment where asking that question is celebrated and rewarded. People must be encouraged and enabled to act—by imagining someone they love at the end of decisions.

When asking this question is genuinely enabled, it can benefit every part of your organization. For individuals on the front line, this "Mom lens" can help recalibrate personal responses with customers. Inside the organization and with teams, it prompts collaboration to improve experiences. For leaders, it can be a litmus test to determine actions that the company will, or will not, take to grow.

We need to take how we are treating customers personally. This is what prompts actions that elevate a company and its people. Thinking of our moms at the end of our decisions helps to get us there. That's why I suggest that you imagine her in moments when you're making decisions or taking personal actions. The image of her, of what she's meant to you and what you've learned from her, can be a powerful and instant reality check. It can make us pause.

### **What imagining Mom, and this book, will do for you.**

This book is assembled for you to use inside of your company to get traction on the things that impact and matter in relationships with customers and employees. It is packaged to help you advance your work to "Make Mom Proud." Each of the case studies is organized as

a unit for your use inside your organization. You can use them as daily huddles in meetings with leaders or as the content for workshops where you dig deeper.

Each of the four main chapters captures a different aspect of our customer experiences. “Be the Person I Raised You to Be” (chapter 2) addresses the employee experience and the opportunity to elevate and inspire employees’ work. “Don’t Make Me Feed You Soap!” (chapter 3) concentrates on common issues that define each of our lives as customers and celebrates companies that simplify or extinguish them. “Put Others Before Yourself” (chapter 4) showcases the imperative to redefine what companies offer and how they deliver, starting with customer goals and how they live their lives. “Take the High Road” (chapter 5) celebrates the character and values that live within make-mom-proud companies, and how they overturn or resist traditional business practices to earn goodness-driven growth.

You’ll learn actions these companies take to improve, of course. But most important, you’ll learn “how” they were able to get traction. I’ll share the “inside of their clock” to showcase their decisions and actions and to provide you with decisions you can make to earn the right to growth by improving employee and customer lives. Prodding questions after each case study ask you to look at your company through the “Mom lens” so that you can assess where you are now.

The thirty-two case studies provide you with a mini tool kit to use inside your organization. Each is built with lessons that are easily consumable, broken into individual learning modules, and immediately available to you. Chapter 6, “Stop the Shenanigans!” summarizes all of the “Mom lens” challenges as a quiz or assessment, to determine where you are today on your journey.

I encourage you to join our movement to market hope to customers and encouragement to each other, that improving customer experiences is achievable, and that progress is being made. A dedicated

website (<http://www.make-mom-proud>) is now live, where you can honor your mom and be recognized for your progress. Post a picture of your mom and a summary of what you've done to improve customer and employee experiences (more about this later), so that we can learn your advances. We will use the hashtag **#MakeMomProud** on social media to broadcast your efforts.

This is a celebration book *and* a “tell it like it is” book, because we need both. There are many, many companies that are overturning and redesigning “frustrated mom moments” to create “Make Mom Proud” moments all around the world. In the thirty-two case studies, and numerous anecdotes throughout this book, we celebrate actions that companies have taken to move from “everyday” behavior to acts that elevate a company and its people.

In addition to celebrating these great moments, I'll be “noodging” you, as my Italian grandmas would say, to make change where warranted. As friends, we'll look at some moments where we know we can do better: those “you can't make this stuff up” times in customers'



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"I'VE HAD BREAKFAST, LUNCH AND A SNACK. I'VE GAINED 15 POUNDS AND THE CABLE GUY IS STILL NOT HERE."

lives when we make it hard on them, though not intentionally. The plain fact of the matter is that sometimes our lives as customers are not as easy as they're cracked up to be.

To describe these peccadilloes in our businesses, I've turned to humor as shorthand to convey those moments—again, as a friend and as someone living this stuff the same as you are. The custom-created comics smattered across these pages in one brief snippet are intended to capture the customer perspective. And I'll be offering them to you as teaching tools you can access on my website [customerbliss.com](http://customerbliss.com) if you find, as I do, that humor can be both a salve and a catalyst for recognizing an opportunity and driving change.

**Use this book to tell the story of your customers' lives. Then take actions to "Make Mom Proud."**

This book leads us back to those memories of our childhood, of how we were reared, to simplify how we make decisions in business. It's the simplicity of those childhood lessons that made them easy to follow.

Below is a summary of the chapters of the book, organized to help you cut through the clutter and focus decision making and actions on what matters most so that you can inspire new behaviors inside your company. And grow your business by improving customers' lives.



## **Chapter 2: “Be the Person I Raised You to Be.”**

The make-mom-proud companies find the people whose upbringing and values align with what they want their company to stand for. And then they enable them to bring the best version of themselves to work. Selecting who will, and will not, become members of these companies is job number one. But after that, the focus is to help them to prosper. To enable them to achieve, and be true to how they were raised. They nurture memory creators who take joy in their work. And enable people to thrive.

## **Chapter 3: “Don’t Make Me Feed You Soap!”**

The make-mom-proud companies are steadfast in removing “bar of soap” moments from customers’ lives. These are the moments that make it hard to be a customer: waiting, complexity, uncertainty, and sometimes fear and concern. These companies work to show up more humanely where customers have to put in an inordinate amount of time and effort to get what they need. They turn these moments of struggle into ones of reliability, respect, and caring.

## **Chapter 4: “Put Others Before Yourself.”**

The Make-mom-proud companies prove with their actions that they have their customers’ best interest in mind. This is at the heart of companies that grow most organically, earning ardent admirers. Operating at this level remains elusive until the paradoxical realization

kicks in, which is that to achieve your goals, you need to help others achieve theirs.

To take this approach to growth means opening up everyone to a new order of design and decision making. It goes well beyond “whack-a-moling” problems away to imagining people and emotions and their lives. This starting point enables make-mom-proud companies to design moments that elevate their place in customers’ lives.

## **Chapter 5: “Take the High Road.”**

Make-mom-proud companies over turn or resist one-sided business practices. They take the road less traveled to earn honor-bound relationships with customers, partners, and employees. They choose to reverse the trend of business practices that have defined their industries.

They establish *balanced* relationships where both sides win, where both customer and company are better off because they are in each other’s lives. They honor customers as assets. They work to flip “Gotcha!” moments to “We’ve got your back” moments. They applaud accountability. They practice reciprocal trust. Their goal is for customers to prosper.

### **Six Actions That Build Make-Mom-Proud Companies.**

Throughout this book, you will be receiving what I found to be a constant source of joy: learning about actions, often bravely undertaken, that elevate companies, and forge genuine and caring bonds between

employees, customers, and companies. After studying hundreds of these forward-thinking organizations and leaders, I've distilled their impact down to six most common among them in advancing their practices and operations. In this book, you'll learn about many companies whose actions changed the course of an entire industry. Then you'll learn about others whose strikingly simple actions had lasting impact on their culture and business.

### **One Action Can Open the Door.**

The power of make-mom-proud actions is that, once put into place, they set others in motion. They give people permission to do the right thing. As you'll see in the case studies, any one of these simple actions can start a groundswell for good. For example, in the chapter "Be the Person I Raised You to Be," you'll learn about Cleveland Clinic's transformation. It began with the commitment, accompanied by an investment in training and communication, that everyone in the organization was considered and given permission to act as a "caregiver." Years of actions later, which built upon that commitment, they are rated the number two hospital in the United States by *U.S. News & World Report*.

### **Actions for Hiring and Development Set the Tone.**

You will see the deliberate and well-orchestrated actions that make-mom-proud companies take to hire people whose values and behaviors are in sync with their own. Pal's Sudden Service, a drive-through restaurant based in Tennessee with twenty-six locations, enlists a 60-point psychometric survey to determine whether the teenagers

who will deliver food to your drive-in window or make your burger will sync with the values of the company and the team they will join. They then receive more than 120 hours of training and ongoing mentoring. Their turnover is one-third the industry average, and they have lost just seven general managers in thirty-three years. Pal's enjoys one of the highest revenues per square foot in the quick-serve restaurant industry. CEO Thom Crosby connects this to the company's teams, and how they are hired and developed.

### **Human and Mindful Actions Create Joy.**

The make-mom-proud companies provide opportunities that enable their people to take spirited actions, and to be authentic in their gestures and behavior. First Direct Bank took the action to have a human available every day, 24/7. And the humans you reach have your back, and permission to do what's right for you. Every person whom customers reach is trusted to change processes, procedures, and policies to improve their situation. Ninety-two percent of First Direct customers say that they would recommend the bank to someone else.

### **Acts of Trust Are Necessary.**

Lemonade Insurance puts trust first in the manner in which they fulfill member claims. On the Lemonade app, members chat with Lemonade's bot, AI Jim, who asks about what caused their claim. Next, "he" asks them to sign the honesty pledge on the app—a vow made not only to Lemonade, but also to the other members who benefit from fairness in reporting, claims, and payments. Finally, this oh-so-smart and mom-like company, via the person of AI Jim, asks customers to look him in the eye and record a video oath with the

reason for the claim. On Lemonade's transparency blog, where it freely shares its performance, it was noted that Lemonade has captured 27 percent of policyholders who are newcomers to insurance in their current New York market area. There is power in the attraction of truth and trust.

### **Clarity of Purpose Actions Show the Way.**

REI generated an estimated 6.7 billion media impressions as it fearlessly closed its doors to encourage everyone to #OptOutside on Black Friday. Starting with the simple question "How do we want to show up during the holidays?" REI's purpose inspired customers with this action heralded the world over. More than seven hundred companies banded together in REI's movement, and hundreds of state parks offered incentives to get people moving and outside on Black Friday. Financially, REI continues to grow, while its comparable competitors are struggling. Like REI, research proves that organizations who lead with clarity of purpose and deliver on that purpose can outperform the market by more than 350 percent.

### **Acts of Fairness Earn Word of Mouth and Growth.**

Virgin Hotels decided to act with fairness by eliminating "nickel and diming" at their hotels. There is no charge for Wi-Fi. "Bandwidth is a right, not a revenue stream," Virgin communicates to its customers. You also won't get dinged for room service fees or add-on service charges. And there are no fees for early or late check-in. What's getting them the most word of mouth and buzz is their "street pricing" on minibar items. They charge you in the room what you'd pay at the corner market.

"We shouldn't feel like 'we've got you,'" says CEO Raul Leal in rebuffing fees customers often feel imprisoned by at other hotels. After only its first year of business, the Virgin hotel in Chicago was

named the number one hotel in the United States by the Condé Nast Traveler Readers' Choice Awards.

### **“High Road” Actions Earn Love, Admiration, and Advocacy.**

The Columbus Metropolitan Library took the action to get rid of late fees. Its objective is to help kids meet their summer reading goal, not worry about that ten-cents-a-day fee. The first major urban library in the United States to do this, its action focuses the organization back to its mission. There is a bit of tracking; you're asked to get that book back in 28 days, which is reasonable. Automatic renewal has been put in place so that instead of calling your book late, it is renewed back to you. Because of this act and many others, the Columbus Metropolitan Library is one of the most progressive and acclaimed libraries in the United States.

In our lives, we remember the companies, the people, and the times when we were honored as a friend, as a partner, as a customer. Two-way trust, open and honest communication, and fearless sharing are cornerstones of the relationships that come to mean the most to us.

And these feelings hold just as true in both our personal and business relationships. These foundational behaviors we learned as kids stay with us all of our lives. Perhaps that's why they are so important as we evaluate the companies and people we want to stay in contact with and do business with.

### **Picture your mom.**

You've pictured your mom. Now, as we close this chapter, picture your life as a customer.

Then picture your customers as they seek support, value, and the delivery of your promise. Picture their lives as your customer, and what they think about in those moments. And how they feel.

Picture your mom's face. Or picture your friend's mom's face. Picture her life. And decide what impact *you* will have on it. As *you* serve your customers. As *you* affect their lives while *you* process their paperwork or fill an order. As *you* make leadership decisions.

Now, ask yourself. Do you ever have to take an action or approve an action or drive your company to take actions that you'd never, ever do to your mom?

Picture Mom as you make decisions and see what happens differently in your business, in your interactions, and in your life. Because at the end of the day, your decisions are what affect customer experiences. They drive customers to either stay with you, or leave you.

Our collective decisions tell each customer a story about who we are, what we value, and about the role we choose to play in their lives. How we choose to correct something that goes wrong—how steadfast we are in delivering the goods, ensuring quality, and keeping our promises—tells customers about how much we think of them on the end of our decisions. And that's what shows up on the internet. That's what grows or gets in the way of our business growth.

**You hold the power to improve customers' lives.** To make a choice when you act, when you decide, when you choose to react or respond. Simply pause and think: Would I do that to my mother? Then examine and guide your behavior with these four essential business lessons.