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YOUNGME MOON JOHN QUILCH

## Starbucks: Delivering Customer Service

In late 2002, Christine Day, Starbucks' senior vice president of administration in North America, sat in the seventh-floor conference room of Starbucks' Seattle headquarters and reached for her second cup of toffee-nut latte. The handcrafted beverage—a buttery, toffee-nut flavored espresso concection topped with whipped cream and toffee sprinkles—had become a regular afternoon indulgence for Day ever since its introduction earlier that year.

As she waited for her colleagues to join her, Day reflected on the company's recent performance. While other retailers were still recling from the post-9/11 recession, Starbucks was enjoying its 11th consecutive year of 5% or higher comparable store sales growth, prompting its founder and chairman, Howard Schultz, to declare: "I think we've demonstrated that we are close to a recession-proof product."

Day, however, was not feeling nearly as sanguine, in part because Starbucks' most recent market research had revealed some unexpected findings. "We've always taken great pride in our retail service," said Day, "but according to the data, we're not always meeting our customers' expectations in the area of customer satisfaction."

As a result of these concerns, Day and her associates had come up with a plan to invest an additional \$40 million annually in the company's 4,500 stores, which would allow each store to add the equivalent of 20 hours of labor a week. "The idea is to improve speed-of-service and thereby increase customer satisfaction," said Day.

In two days, Day was due to make a final recommendation to both Schultz and Orin Smith, Starbucks' CEO, about whether the company should move forward with the plan. "The investment is the EPS [earnings per share] equivalent of almost seven cents a share," said Day. In preparation for her meeting with Schultz and Smith, Day had asked one of her associates to help her think through the implications of the plan. Day noted, "The real question is, do we believe what our customers are telling.

Jake Batsell, "A Grande Docade for Starbucks," The Soutile Times, June 26, 2002.

Professors Youngme Moon and John Quelch prepared this case. It was reviewed and approved before publication by a company designate. Funding for the development of this case was provided by Harvard Business School and not by the company. Hits cases are developed solely as the basis for class discussion. Cases are not intended to serve as endowements, sources of primary data, or illustrations of effective or ineffective management.

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# **Starbucks Delivering Customer Service Harvard Case**

**Kellie Gonçalves** 

**Starbucks Delivering Customer Service Harvard Case:** 

Decoding **Starbucks Delivering Customer Service Harvard Case**: Revealing the Captivating Potential of Verbal Expression

In a period characterized by interconnectedness and an insatiable thirst for knowledge, the captivating potential of verbal expression has emerged as a formidable force. Its power to evoke sentiments, stimulate introspection, and incite profound transformations is genuinely awe-inspiring. Within the pages of "Starbucks Delivering Customer Service Harvard Case," a mesmerizing literary creation penned by way of a celebrated wordsmith, readers embark on an enlightening odyssey, unraveling the intricate significance of language and its enduring affect our lives. In this appraisal, we shall explore the book is central themes, evaluate its distinctive writing style, and gauge its pervasive influence on the hearts and minds of its readership.

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