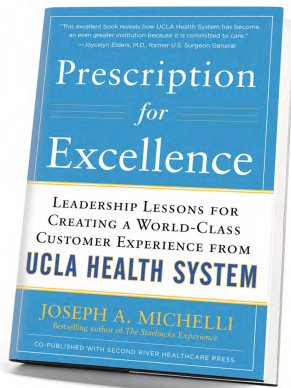


"This excellent book reveals how UCLA Health System has become an even greater institution because it is committed to care."
— Joycelyn Elders, M.D., former U.S. Surgeon General

Prescription for Excellence

Leadership Tips for Creating a
World-Class Customer Experience
from UCLA Health System



5 LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES

**TO INSPIRE, ENGAGE, AND ELEVATE
THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE**

A Patient Experience Revolution

UCLA Health System transformed patient satisfaction from the 35th percentile to the 95th percentile by treating care as a leadership discipline, not just a clinical outcome. These pages distill five principles from *Prescription for Excellence* into practical leadership actions for any organization committed to world-class service.

Commitment

Care behaviors are defined, trained, and measured — not assumed.

Safety

Zero errors require a disciplined operating system, not reactive fixes.

Innovation

The best ideas often come from frontline staff given permission to try.



A Note from Joseph Michelli

When I was invited inside UCLA Health System to help elevate their patient experience, a journey that led to the book *Prescription for Excellence*, I expected to find clinical excellence. What I found instead was a masterclass in leadership. The leaders at UCLA had done something most organizations only talk about: they made caring a measurable outcome. They defined it behaviorally, trained it systematically, and embedded it into hiring, performance reviews, and daily operations. Patient satisfaction scores that had languished near the 35th percentile climbed to the 95th — not through a marketing campaign, but through a disciplined commitment to human connection.

The five principles in this eBook are drawn from that research. They apply far beyond healthcare. Any organization that serves people — which is every organization — will find in them a practical framework for elevating both the experience they deliver and the culture that makes that experience possible.

I hope these pages spark both reflection and action. And if they prompt a conversation about your own organization, I welcome that.

With gratitude,

Joseph Michelli, Ph.D.

Keynote Speaker & Customer Experience Expert

Global Gurus: Top 5 Customer Experience Thought Leader, 10 Consecutive Years



PRINCIPLE ONE

Commit to Care

CICARE and World-Class Practices

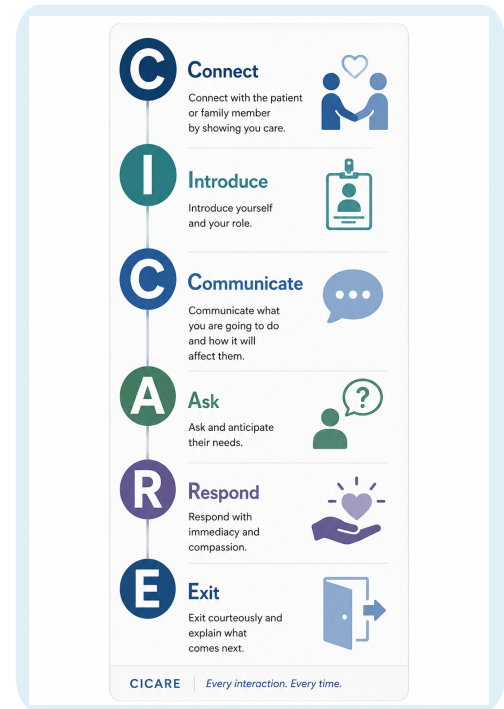
"Effective leadership depends upon influence, not control." — Joseph Michelli

Commit to Care

UCLA Health System built its patient experience revolution on a deceptively simple insight: caring behavior can be defined, taught, and measured. The vehicle was a communication framework called CICARE (pronounced See-I-Care) — an acronym that gave every employee, from surgeons to housekeeping staff, a shared language for human connection.

Connect with the patient or family member by name. **I**ntroduce yourself and your role. **C**ommunicate what you are going to do and how it will affect them. **A**sk and anticipate their needs. **R**espond with immediacy. **E**xit courteously and explain what comes next.

This framework was augmented by a document called “World Class Practices: My Commitment to Care,” signed by every employee before being hired. The act of signing matters — social psychologists have established that people strive to behave consistently with prior commitments. Caring was not an aspiration at UCLA. It was a covenant.



YOUR DIAGNOSTIC CHECK-UP

- How aligned is your senior leadership team on a vision of service excellence?
- Have you defined the specific communication behaviors you expect in all customer interactions?
- Have you created a broad set of service behaviors that serve as expectations for colleagues and customers alike?
- Are customer service behaviors included in the job description of every employee?

PRINCIPLE TWO

Leave No Room for Error

Priority plus Communication Consistency

"The key to a safety culture is developing an operating system that allows you to keep making progress." — UCLA Chief Medical Officer

Leave No Room for Error

Safety at UCLA was not treated as a reactive response to crises. It was an operating system — a set of disciplined processes that ran continuously in the background, like a computer's operating system, ensuring that important priorities never got crowded out by the urgency of the moment.

Amir Dan Rubin, Chief Operating Officer at UCLA, described the system: identify safety as a priority, connect it to values, select and train for it, set measurable targets, develop meaningful analytics, offer timely data, and constantly monitor and problem-solve toward those targets. Each step was non-negotiable.

The contrast with reactive safety cultures is stark. When safety becomes a matter of responding to the most recent incident, progress stalls. When it becomes an operating system, the organization moves steadily forward — with less need for crisis reaction because the system prevents crises from forming.



YOUR DIAGNOSTIC CHECK-UP

- What are you doing to consistently hold safety as a corporate priority?
- How are you addressing safety awareness in your selection, orientation, and training processes?
- Have you set measurable safety targets tied to your core objectives?
- How would you characterize your safety focus — primarily reactive or proactively systemic?

PRINCIPLE THREE

Make the Best Better

Quality and Timeliness

"Quality healthcare is not about producing excellent outcomes in a vacuum. Those outcomes must be delivered in a timely and empathetic manner." — Dr. Patricia Kapur, UCLA

Make the Best Better

UCLA was already ranked among the top academic medical centers in the country. The leadership question was not how to become excellent — it was how to make the excellent more accessible, more timely, and more human.

Dr. Michael Steinberg's Radiation Oncology department expanded treatment hours to serve patient schedules rather than physician convenience — and doubled daily patient volume in the process, with *higher* satisfaction scores. Dr. Michael Yeh answered his own phone for his first year as program director, ensuring patients always reached a person. Dr. Patricia Kapur's anesthesiology team used remote screening technology to eliminate unnecessary pre-surgical visits for 80% of patients.

The pattern across all three: they questioned the assumption that current practice was the only practice. Quality and timeliness are not in tension. The organizations that discover this unlock a competitive advantage that is very difficult to replicate.



YOUR DIAGNOSTIC CHECK-UP

- Where does "this is how we have always done it" thinking impede timely, customer-centric delivery?
- How do you customize service based on the demographics and circumstances of your customers?
- Do you define quality to include timeliness of service delivery?
- What opportunities exist to streamline your service without compromising its quality?

PRINCIPLE FOUR

Create the Future

"Let's Shape Tomorrow"

"Extraordinary leaders are slow to say no. They listen to staff suggestions and give a rationale when ideas do not seem viable." — Joseph Michelli

Create the Future

Much of great innovation at UCLA did not come from the boardroom. It came from frontline staff who saw a problem, proposed a solution, and were given the space to test it. The leadership posture that made this possible was deceptively simple: say yes whenever you reasonably can, support the trial, and let the results guide the decision.

In 1994, UCLA became one of the first hospitals in its region to explore animal-assisted therapy. What began with a dog visit and a fish tank on a cardiac care unit became a nationally recognized program serving more than 500 critically ill patients per month — with research-validated reductions in anxiety, stress hormones, and blood pressure.

Ross Scales, an emergency department technician who studied massage on his own time, asked permission to offer chair massages to stressed families in the waiting room. That conversation grew into a system-wide massage therapy program now embedded in service recovery protocols across UCLA. Neither program was a strategic initiative. Both were staff ideas given room to breathe.



YOUR DIAGNOSTIC CHECK-UP

- Do your people feel genuinely comfortable bringing innovative ideas to leadership?
- What recent staff suggestions make business sense and deserve a trial?
- How have you helped your team gather data to validate the viability of new concepts?
- What breakthrough programs in your organization could serve as examples to inspire further growth?

PRINCIPLE FIVE

Service Serves Us

Service Economics: Profitability and Customer Referrals

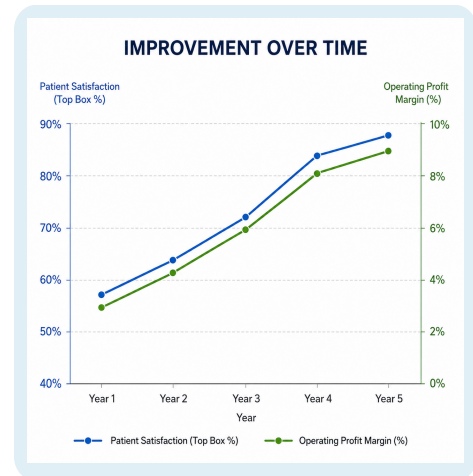
**"Increased service and satisfaction is paying for itself more than 8,000 times over." — Dr. David
Feinberg, CEO, UCLA Health System**

Service Serves Us

The skeptical view of customer experience investment is that it is a cost center, not a revenue driver. UCLA's data argues otherwise. As patient satisfaction scores climbed, so did profitability — through stronger referral networks, improved insurance contract conditions, and organic word-of-mouth growth that no marketing budget could replicate.

Research supports the pattern well beyond healthcare: 68% of customers leave a business because of poor treatment by a staff member, not product failure. Companies that create both functional and emotional bonds with customers have retention rates of 84% versus 30% for those that do not. High service-quality organizations average 12% return on sales and grow 6% per year. The economics of caring are not soft — they are measurable.

UCLA CEO Dr. David Feinberg put it plainly: the graph of patient satisfaction improvements and the graph of profitability improvements were the same graph. If you achieve the experience, the numbers follow.



YOUR DIAGNOSTIC CHECK-UP

- How do the principles of service economics apply to your business model?
- In what ways are you delivering service versus creating a full experience?
- What outcome measures would you use to track your Return on Experience — revenues, retention, referrals, cross-sell?
- Which area needs the most improvement: cost control, exceeding service expectations, or driving referral business through emotionally connected experiences?

The Five Principles at a Glance

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Commit to Care | Define caring behaviors, train them systematically, and make them a condition of employment. |
| 2. Leave No Room for Error | Build safety and quality into an operating system, not a reactive response. |
| 3. Make the Best Better | Challenge the assumption that current practice is the only practice. |
| 4. Create the Future | Give frontline staff permission to experiment, and support their best ideas. |
| 5. Service Serves Us | Invest in the human experience — the financial results will follow. |

Leadership Application: pick one principle as your focus for the next 90 days. Translate it into one behavior, one measurement, one story to share, and one ritual to reinforce.

Connect with Joseph Michelli

This eBook is drawn from *Prescription for Excellence: Leadership Lessons for Creating a World-Class Customer Experience from UCLA Health System*, available wherever books are sold.

Reach Joseph:

josephmichelli.com

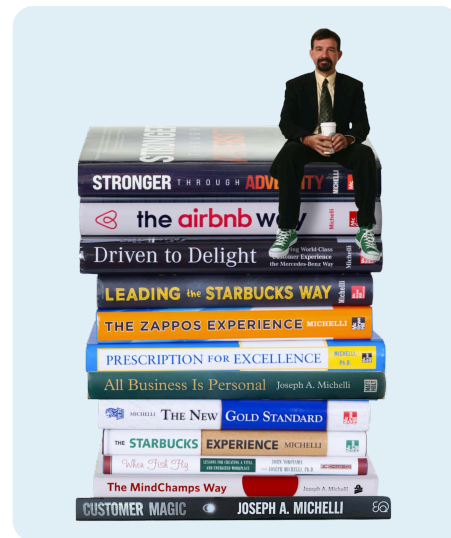
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All books available on Amazon

- Prescription for Excellence
- The Starbucks Experience
- Leading the Starbucks Way
- The New Gold Standard
- Driven to Delight
- The Airbnb Way
- The Zappos Experience
- Stronger Through Adversity
- When Fish Fly
- All Business Is Personal
- Customer Magic
- The MindChamps Way



Ready to go deeper?

These insights are the starting point. Joseph's keynotes and training programs translate each principle into practical tools, facilitated conversations, and implementation roadmaps your team can act on immediately.

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