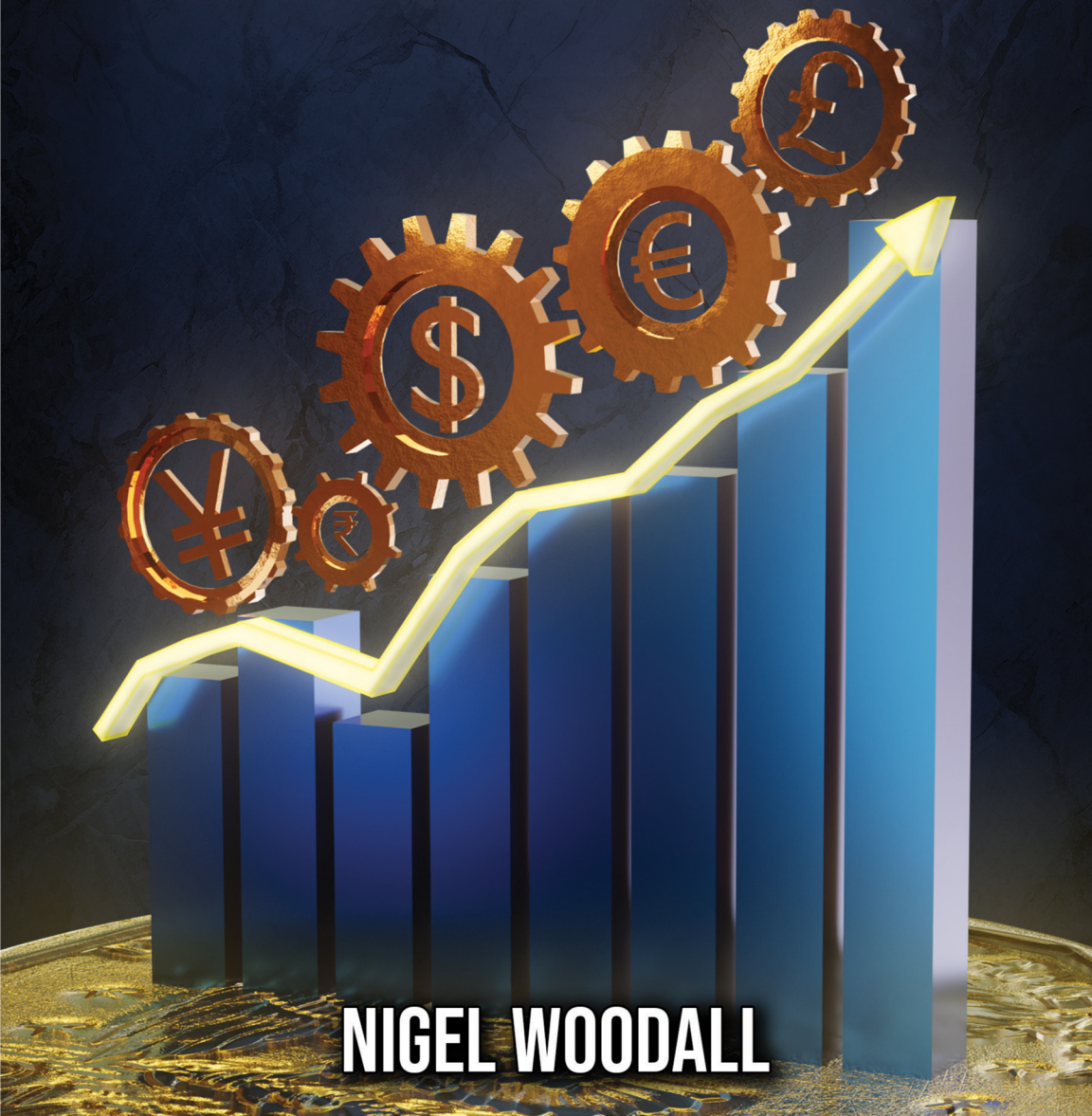
AFTER-SALES EXCELLENCE

DRIVING IMPROVEMENT, CUSTOMER SATISFACTION, AND GROWTH



NIGEL WOODALL

After-Sales Excellence

Driving Improvement, Customer Satisfaction, and Growth

Nigel Woodall

BUSINESS EXPERT PRESS
Leader in applied, concise business books

After-Sales Excellence:
Driving Improvement, Customer Satisfaction, and Growth

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Description

A unique book focused entirely on after-sales that is perfect for entrepreneurs, company owners, employees, students, and anyone else interested in this challenging business marketplace.

Based on the author's successful 46-year career in after-sales, as an employee, senior leader, and business management consultant, this text employs practical case studies to analyze the most commonly recurring problems that prevent the optimal performance of after-sales organizations.

Unfortunately, many times these issues either remain undetected, constantly undermining performance, or due consideration takes a backseat in the rush for solutions, often resulting in them either being far too complex or just plain wrong.

Written in a clear, concise, and logical style and leveraging the author's direct experience, the book dissects the most frequently recurring issues and presents proven solutions to them. It delivers the examples of poor practice and critical guidance for improvement in a manner that is both easily accessible and easy to understand. Essentially, it is like having your own very business consultant sat on your bookshelf for a fraction of the price.

Operating within after-sales are OEMs (Original Equipment Manufacturers) and independent stockists, distributors, repair and services organizations, replacement part manufacturers (copyists), and recyclers. They are all chasing the same customers and, in doing so, create a fast-paced, high-volume, highly complex, and constantly changing marketplace. Great customers are the "jewels" that all after-sales businesses seek, and this book will enable the reader to better understand how to address, attract, win, and keep them and ultimately deliver optimal ROI (return on investment).

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Review Quotes

"A pragmatic and insightful, end-to-end view of the after-sales service and support marketplace. **After-Sales Excellence** *delivers a concise and practical roadmap to both overcome and proactively avoid the common challenges that prevent success."* **—Toby Chisnall, Ridgeline Consulting**

Acknowledgments

I want to thank those who have supported me in this book-writing endeavor. In particular, I would like to extend thanks to my two brothers, Dave and Andy, as well as Bjorn, Toby Chisnall, Glyn "old pal" Henderson, Steve Poole, Kevin Yaremchuk, and Kevin Michaels of AeroDynamic Advisory, for their help with proofreading, review, and, of course, reminders on the points I had forgotten.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to my ex-colleagues, peers, and mentors whose experience and support (always freely given) have undoubtedly shaped my career. I also can't forget my many customers. We've shared some great times, and it has been a very enjoyable journey (admittedly sometimes less so—you know who you are!), but it was never less than challenging and thought-provoking.

I wanted to make the book a "local" project, and so a special mention and thanks goes to Harry Chiplin, for the fantastic cover design. Harry is an ex-Brockenhurst College student who is also undertaking a graphic design degree at Solent University.

Finally, a well-earned mention to my family, who have supported and encouraged me throughout.

To all the above—you have helped me enjoy both a successful career and reach this point today. Here's a heartfelt thank you to all—please take a bow!

Preface

Throughout my 46-year career, the B2B (Business to Business) after-sales (aka aftermarket) arena has been the focus. Since midcareer, I have been fortunate enough to have had senior leadership roles with original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and independent maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) and distribution organizations. These roles have been in the customer-facing areas of after-sales, including, customer service, account management, field service, technical support, reliability, warranty, sales, marketing, contracts, and commercial. That time served has provided me with an unusually broad and deep understanding of the marketplace.

The COVID-19 pandemic lockdown provided time to reflect on what I had achieved in my career. This period of personal reflection was crucial as it defined my genuine enjoyment of roles that were an enabler to driving positive transformation within organizations, as well as mentoring and fostering the growth of others. Having always been an employee to that point, I decided it was time for a change, and so, since 2021, I have been running my own after-sales consultancy practice.

The idea for this book grew out of conversations with colleagues and clients, as we all agreed that the after-sales sector is underserved when it comes to dedicated written resources. With me approaching the latter part of my business life, they were also concerned about the potential loss of my accumulated knowledge—prompting their encouragement to document and share the key insights I have gathered over the course of career. Those discussions, together with the ongoing demand for my consulting services, convinced me as to the relevance of my expertise for individuals and SMEs and, therefore, I took the plunge.

Many business books are heavyweight deep-dives with a strong theoretical focus, which can make them challenging for business practitioners, and other interested readers to relate to. In contrast, this book is grounded entirely in my direct and indirect real world experience, focusing only on the most common issues that routinely affect after-sales

business performance. My aim has been to create something both practical and enlightening. It offers a wealth of examples and proven solutions to the recurring problems that hold businesses back and lead to suboptimal results.

The presentation is deliberately generic, as the market sector where I gained my experience may differ from your own. However, the basic principles and challenges of sales support—whether after-sales or OEM—such as managing customer, supplier, and competitor relationships, are similar in all businesses. Hence, what I am presenting will fall somewhere in the middle of being partially and fully transferrable. Nevertheless, I recommend that all business types can benefit from broadening their perspectives by exploring ideas and best practices from outside their immediate industry and market.

Ultimately, my goal is to create a valuable, reusable resource for anyone interested in the after-sales marketplace, including entrepreneurs, businesses, individual practitioners, investors, and students.

Finally, I have tried to avoid writing this in the typical dry style of many business textbooks. Hopefully, this and the other elements referred to above combine successfully to make it an accessible, enjoyable, and, most importantly, valuable read.

This book includes instructor materials. Please contact charlene .kronstedt@businessexpertpress.com to request the accompanying ancillaries.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

After-sales is a vast global marketplace. It includes everything from replacement light bulbs and maintenance (repair and Spare parts) and post-sales support for white goods such as washing machines, to equipment for industries like farming, oil, gas, aerospace, and nuclear (and more).

To provide context to the size and importance of this market segment, here are the 2025 forecasts for just three examples (two business to business [B2B] and one business to consumer [B2C]).

- Global light duty automotive (essentially cars and small vans) will reach $444B (Statista 2023).
- The commercial air transport (civil passenger and cargo aircraft) *maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO)* will be worth over $100B (Oliver Wyman 2023).
- The coffee capsule market will exceed $16B (The Business Research Company 2024).

There are many more sectors that form part of the total global after-sales marketplace—which is estimated to generate over ***$9 trillion annually*** (figure extrapolated from Aberdeen Group estimate of US aftermarket size (cited Cohen et al. 2006, 1) and World Bank Group global and US GDP data (World Bank Group, 2025).

The after-sales marketplace is also a cornerstone of sustainability, extending product lifespans, reducing waste, conserving resources, cutting emissions, supporting the circular economy, and promoting responsible consumption. Through timely repairs, maintenance, and upgrades, it prevents premature disposal, while refurbishment and component replacement keep products in use for years rather than months. This, in turn, reduces the demand for new manufacturing—the largest contributor to many products' environmental footprints. Beyond protecting

the environment, after-sales services enhance the economic and practical value of products for businesses and customers alike. Given its scale, environmental impact, and integration into the daily lives of organisations, investors, consumers, and communities, the sector's performance and reliability are vital to us all.

At its most basic level, what is it that an after-sales customer wants from its suppliers? They want suppliers to provide justifiably priced, reliable *products*, services, and support that perform as advertised. They expect these to be delivered within acceptable lead times, consistently on time, and accompanied by responsive, helpful communication. In summary, the customer desires satisfaction encompassing the purchasing decision, sales experience, and post-purchase support.

If your business has been meeting customer expectations and performing consistently well, then it is time to cheer for yourselves. However, I would also suggest that you continue to read on, as I have yet to find a business that is anywhere near perfect.

In reality, delivering a product to meet customers' immediate needs is only a qualifier—it is a transactional approach.

Some organizations may prioritize immediate profitability; however, a truly sustainable and successful after-sales organization is built upon customer loyalty and repeat business. As Chip Bell, customer loyalty guru and author said, "Customers who are merely satisfied will remain your customers only as long as everything goes their way" (Bell and Patterson 2007, xx). This clearly reveals the ever-present danger in "just doing enough."

What sets successful businesses apart is their capacity to foster loyalty by surpassing customer expectations through outstanding performance and added value. This higher service level provides more than customers thought they wanted and more than they thought they needed. This is integral to the art of building a sustainable competitive advantage (Heppell 2015, 14–15).

Delivering performance is an operational challenge, whereas adding value is a conceptual challenge (initially), requiring a business to think differently and switch from a transactional focus to a services strategy. We call this *servitization,* and this book provides many examples. Remember, this activity will happen in a competitive setting and, therefore, the business demands will be constantly moving.

Alternatively, what is it the after-sales organizations themselves want? Well, from my experience, it is simply to deliver products and services to customers at the highest price and lowest cost. They will typically want to have an acceptable level of customer service, while growing the business year over year (preferably higher than organic market growth). Finally, they want to be respected by their customers.

These requirements combine to present the supplier/customer business equation that needs to be solved. Furthermore, as the marketplaces in which we operate are constantly evolving, it would make sense that how we answer today's challenge will differ from how it needs to be answered tomorrow. Instead, our response is something that constantly needs to be addressed and rebalanced. Therefore, to achieve after-sales excellence, businesses must constantly adapt to evolving marketplace demands, balancing the needs of customers, plus responding to the actions of suppliers and competitors.

It is also worth considering some rather sobering data that states for the 10 years up to and including 2023, within two years, 20 percent of the private sector business startups in 2013 had failed. By Year 5, that figure has risen to approximately 50 percent and by Year 10, only approximately 35 percent remained in operation (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024). I could not find a data source for the UK, but general commentary appears to point to similar results. Furthermore, the results of a postmortem analysis of 101 failed startups (CB Insights cited Fortune 2014) showed the 20 most given reasons for business failure were self-inflicted wounds of one sort or another—for example, poor planning and strategy deployment, inconsistent execution and mistaken decision-making, and so on. The financial statistics associated with poor customer service are equally eye-opening. The UK Institute of Customer Service states the cost of poor service is an astonishing £7.3B per month within the UK (The Institute of Customer Service 2025). The Qualtrics XM Institute estimated that globally, as customers reduce their spending with poor service providers, $3.7 trillion of sales were at risk from bad experiences in 2024 (QualtricsXM 2024). These astronomical figures highlight not only the negative effects of poor service but also the potential benefits to be gained from improvement. While none of these examples has a specific after-sales focus, being drawn from various

market sectors, they offer a cross-sectional perspective and remain directionally pertinent.

I want to clarify that I am not implying that mismanagement or human error are the sole cause of all failed businesses. There are many external factors, such as war, pandemic, regulation, and social changes, which can also contribute to their downfall. Nevertheless, a significant number of businesses have either failed or compromised their performance because of poor decision-making.

Some may also ask "Why write a book on after-sales, surely the core issues are potentially present in any business?" and I acknowledge there is validity in this point. But, as my clients have pointed out many times, there are few books available aimed purely at after-sales. So, this text takes a different approach, choosing to focus only on those repetitive issues within an after-sales context. That said, it is also fair to say that many of the themes raised will also have applicability to a much broader marketplace.

In summary, after-sales is a very competitive and complex marketplace. Many *original equipment manufacturers (OEMs),* independent stockists, distributors, repair services, copycat part-makers, and recyclers are chasing the same customers. The required velocity, high transaction volume, and significant customer base amplify the negative effects of poor post-purchase service.

Given the challenging, dynamic market, high customer expectations, and the history of underperformance, I believe this book is necessary. In the pages that follow, you will find both examples of and proven solutions to some of the most common issues that cause that underperformance and prevent after-sales businesses (and many others) from achieving their true potential.

About the Author



Nigel Woodall is a married UK resident with two adult children and lives in the south of England.

My professional journey began in 1979 as an engineering apprentice with a UK airline. Subsequently, I progressed through various management and senior leadership positions within SMEs and multinational corporations, encompassing airlines, OEMs, and independent maintenance and spares distribution providers. These have all been business-to-business (B2B) roles and have included all the customer-facing functions, for example, sales and marketing, customer service, account management, product and technical support, commercial/contracts, and, finally, spares and repair services management.

I gained an MBA in 2005 and, over the years, have also been a speaker at many industry events and conferences. This experience has provided me with an unusually broad and deep understanding of the after-sales marketplace.

Throughout my career, I have always enjoyed tackling challenges and delivering organizational improvement, be that at a strategy, process, or people level, but the COVID-19 crisis prompted some valuable self-reflection. The result was that rather than heading back out to the "employee" workspace again, I set up my own business to share some of the valuable lessons that I have learned during my career. Since then, I have independently operated a successful post-sales business management consultancy, advising companies on enhancing customer-facing aspects of their after-sales operations to deliver optimum ROI. This focus on delivering maximum stakeholder benefit through enhanced service has been a key focus of much my career.

In late 2023, following discussion with and encouragement from clients and colleagues, I began writing this manuscript—my first venture into book authorship. It has since become both a hobby and labor of love, and I hope you enjoy it and benefit from the guidance it offers.

Having taken the time to read my book (thank you), I would be very grateful if you could also leave an online review.

AFTER-SALES EXCELLENCE

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"Finally, a complete guide for the vital subject of after-sales support! Services revenue drives the business models of many companies, and after-sales care is a crucial determinant of customer satisfaction." **– Kevin Michaels, MD at AeroDynamic Advisory**

"The after-sales space is constantly evolving, and this book offered new/updated insights on the business and also had me stepping back to re-evaluate what I'm doing at my current global operation." **– Kevin Yaremchuk, 16 years of after-sales leadership experience at Fortune 500 companies in aerospace, power-generation, and life-sciences**

Fix what is broken, elevate what works, and lead in after-sales!

After-sales Excellence: Driving Improvement, Customer Satisfaction, and Growth **is *the* essential guide for anyone navigating this highly competitive world.**

Drawing on over 45 years of hands-on experience as an employee, senior business leader and consultant, the author delivers a practical, no-nonsense roadmap for business improvement.

Operating within the after-sales (aka aftermarket) marketplace for products and services are:

- Original equipment manufacturers (OEMs)
- Stockists
- Distributors
- Maintainers
- Replacement manufacturers (copyists)
- Recyclers

Chasing the same customers, they create a fast-paced, high volume, complex and constantly changing marketplace.

Written in a concise, accessible style, the book focuses on the most commonly occurring challenges that prevent after-sales organisations from achieving optimum performance. Using many real-life examples and industry insights, it reveals proven strategies, frameworks and key secrets used by top performers to attract, retain and grow high-value customers.

Ideal for entrepreneurs, business owners, leaders, investors and students, this book is like having a dedicated consultant on-call to help you transform performance, boost return on investment (ROI) and stay ahead of the competition.



Nigel Woodall has extensive after-sales experience, having worked for SMEs and multinational corporations, including airlines, OEMs, and independent maintenance and spares distribution providers. He has held senior management positions in all customer-facing elements of after-sales and now runs his own successful, after-sales business management consultancy. Nigel resides in the south of England.

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