

The Guest

R E P O R T

By Roberta Nedry

It was late Monday evening, after a day that already felt like a week. Though we were hungry, our work was unfinished so we lugged a laptop computer, DayTimers and cellular phone into the restaurant ... probably not the best meal etiquette. Seeing our heavy load, the hostess seated us at table 64, in the back, in the corner, behind some plants. Wondering if we'd ever be discovered in this remote part of the restaurant, we'd barely sat down when our server greeted us with a warm, infectious smile.

She seemed to understand our anxiety as well as our need to relax and rushed to get our drinks.

After prompt delivery of our selected dishes, a chicken salad and a plate of ribs, we were back at work.

The salad was not what I had expected, and my fork seemed to twirl aimlessly through the salad. Within minutes, our server was back to check on us and noticed my salad neglect. When I explained why, she instantly grabbed it and insisted I order something else.

I was pleasantly surprised by her concern and chose another salad, which she delivered with her consistent smile. Believe it or not, the second salad had been drenched in dressing, a bit soggy for my tastes, and my fork twirled again.

Like a concerned mother, our waitress noticed once more and inquired if she could do yet something else for me. I didn't have the heart to say anything after her first noble effort, thanked her and said this salad would be fine.

Within minutes, she was back with salad number three, with the dressing on the side. Needless to say I was amazed at her extra efforts, her initiative and her attention to detail, especially with the restaurant only minutes from closing time.

This restaurant server is an outstanding example of service excellence and going the extra mile to meet the needs of a customer. Throughout this entire meal, I had not initiated any complaints and/or concerns. She was the one who noticed and wanted to make sure I was happy. She also was very sensitive to our anxiety of working late and to our need to relax a little.

Without interrupting us; she went out of her way to play a role in creating a positive guest experience for us, even though her shift was almost over and the time was late. She takes her role seriously while having fun at the same time. She seems to understand the impact she has in the overall experience of eating at this restaurant and delighted us with her caring desire to serve.

Service excellence

Going the extra (s)mile can pay dividends

Needless to say, we acknowledged her service in the tip and will probably visit this restaurant more frequently because of her extra efforts. A casual, late-night dinner with no expectations turned into a surprisingly memorable experience.

Another unexpected experience took place at a local self-service gas station. I noticed my car's left rear tire was looking flatter than normal and as I needed gas, hoped the attendant would also check the air. The station temporarily was out of gas, but the mechanic immediately responded after hearing my concern about the tires. He intently studied the tire in question, filled it with air and studied it again. Not satisfied, he jacked up the car, spun the wheels around, poured water on the tire in question and found both a puncture and a nail in it.

Fearing I would need a new tire, I took a deep breath and waited for the sales pitch. Without skipping a beat, he went straight to the garage, assembled tools to plug the hole and remove the nail and had the whole job completed within ten minutes.

Even though I was not purchasing gas, this mechanic recognized my need, immediately addressed my anxiety, resolved the problems quickly and performed an extraordinary and unexpected service. His honesty, initiative and dedication for service delivery left a powerful and lasting impression. I'll be back.

Both of these individuals show a commitment to service above and beyond their routine jobs, and they performed their roles with sincerity, enthusiasm and smiles. They both represent two very competitive industries, restaurants and gas stations. Both of these environments potentially affect thousands of tourists, visitors and residents alike.

I know the next time I go to fill my stomach and/or my tank, I will remember Melissa, our server, at Houston's in Pompano Beach and Dick, the mechanic, at Coastal Gas in Wilton Manors. They went the distance by going the extra mile — and in my book won the race for exceptional service.

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