

The Guest

R E P O R T

Service excellence

Memories of service . . . may they not be forgotten

Service in its simplest form means doing good for others. It starts getting complicated when we define individual levels of good and how our own expectations of service can impact each guest and customer encounter, both on the giving and receiving end.

Service delivers feelings and emotions as well as actions. How guests react to those feelings, whether positively or negatively, can make the gainful difference in whether they come back, spend more and tell others.

Many outstanding examples of service excellence exist and each of us has our own memory of those companies and individuals who touched us with exceptional service.

As we begin the new millennium and consider the public's growing appetite for quality service encounters, especially those that feel good, note some favorite memories from some of our own leaders in service excellence, this time from the observing and receiving end.

J. Charles Lehmann, executive director, Palm Beach County Tourist Development Council: The contractor I hired to build my house, showed me that service is sometimes not getting what you want, for your own good. In a fatherly fashion, he would take me aside, tell me why using the cheaper materials I wanted would be more expensive in the long run. When I was unhappy with an additional \$700 for certain architectural shingles, he bought them himself out of his fee. He took the risk to be honest and then followed through on my informed desires. In tourism, I relate this to the travel agent who tells you to buy trip insurance, the desk clerk who steers you away from rooms with construction noise, the waitress who steers you away from your original order and recommends a substitute. These people care about your safety, your comfort and your experience. They take the time and interest to present alternatives even when you want to do something else.

Mark Gatley, general manager, Broward County Convention Center: During an international convention, a patron was dropped in front of our building by taxi. There was some dispute, perhaps due to a language barrier, and the taxi operator started to drive away with the patron's luggage. Our security officer chased the taxi down on foot, stopped him, and retrieved the luggage. Even with risk of bodily injury, he reacted instinctively to assist a patron. The patron was extremely thankful and our security officer was recognized for destination hospitality.

Stuart L. Blumberg, president, Greater Miami & The Beaches Hotel Association: Joe's Stone Crab, in South Beach, is my favorite example. Beginning more than 80 years ago, Joe Weiss and his wife began providing excellent service and great food. This tradition was handed down to their son Jessie Weiss who continued delivering exceptional service. Jessie in turn handed the reins over to his daughter JoAnn who was and still is the epitome of service. She has now turned it over to her son, Steven and daughter, Jody. End result: Four generations of consistent and constant excellent service and a quality product ... and the clientele to prove it.

Garrison duP. Lickle, regional president, U.S. Trust Co. of Florida: Home Depot versus Brand X home supply stores. At Home Depot, employees are trained to know where anything is, will actually walk you to the section or to another person who can help. At Brand X, when asking someone at the

front counter for light bulbs, they either reply with an immediate no, without checking, or just point to a 50,000 square foot abyss with an abrupt "over there!" I will drive out of my way to go to Home Depot and bypass Brand X which is much closer.

Donna Boucher, owner, The Mantaray Inn, Hollywood Beach and President, Superior Small Lodging Association: Gilles Grenier from the Silver Spray Motel in Hollywood Beach had a guest whose transmission blew up. Gilles called around for the best price and service, took her to the repair shop, looked after her needs while the car was being repaired, including taking her shopping, and then took her back to pick up the car. He even made sure that she paid the agreed upon price. The guest was ecstatic and will never stay anywhere else on Hollywood Beach. These are frequently the characteristics and types of unsung actions of small property owners.

Miguel Pena, chef concierge of The Mutiny Hotel, Coconut Grove and past president of the Southern Florida Concierge Association: The entire staff of the Park Hyatt in San Francisco. Late last year, my wife was ill while she was a guest at this property. The staff reacted above and beyond the call of duty to accommodate her. Room service consistently delivered hot tea and soup, without us even asking, the housekeepers would slip notes under the door and take the extra steps not to disturb her, the concierge staff was meticulous in checking up on her and meeting her needs. It was as if an all points bulletin had been issued with a message of comprehensive care and concern for my wife. It was an example of the goodness of many people's hearts.

Madeline Christiano, owner, Marias Floral Designs, Fort Lauderdale: Anthony's Runway 84 restaurant in Ft. Lauderdale. My family has been going here for over seven years and will continue to frequent this favorite dining spot because of their outstanding service, especially waiters Howie, Paul and Tony. We usually have parties of 10 or more, with lots of demands, changes and off the menu requests. The service staff always remains enthusiastic, flexible and personally attentive to our needs. Anthony, the owner, always greets us with a warm welcome, checks on our food without being intrusive and always makes us feel our business is appreciated. We will continue to be regulars due to this service dependability and quality food experience and will continue to send tons of business their way.

These are just a few examples amongst many but they speak volumes for the personal touch, consistency and caring initiative of service excellence. May the personal feeling of service touch all Journal readers, both on the giving and receiving side ... Happy New Year!



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