

## **"While you may complain about a service defect, you will rave about how we handle it!"**

Below are six simple examples of what works - and what doesn't.

We have had the pleasure of vacationing a few times at the Marriott's Ko Olina Beach Club in Oahu, Hawaii. The General Manager there, Chad Jensen, runs a world-class resort. One time, upon check in, our room was not ready when promised. Without any complaint from us, the front desk associate said, "We apologize for this inconvenience, and I am putting a \$35 credit on your room account. Feel free to enjoy lunch on us or some drinks in our lounge while we get your room ready." Who can complain with service like that? We were disappointed the next time we came that our room was ready on time for us! But that is truly zero risk. We go back to Ko Olina Beach Club because of the comfort and security of knowing that we will get great service, and if for some reason we don't, they will make it right!

[Extreme Customer Service](#)

### **More Common service defects**

I wanted to purchase the new, latest and greatest iPhone when it came out, so I went into a wireless store that was selling them and asked a bunch of questions. Does it sync with Outlook? How often does it check for new email? What about the battery life, etc? The sales clerk didn't know the answer to any of my questions and just responded, "Not sure," or "I don't know about that." When I asked how I could get this information, insinuating I wanted her to inquire for me, she responded, "You can go online. There are a lot of forums where consumers discuss these issues." Two lessons that all businesses need to learn: 1) know your product, and 2) don't make the customer do your job!

### **Do you have reservations?**

Tom Smith, National Sales and Indulgence Officer, shares the story of a common service defect that he had to tackle when he managed the hotel and restaurant at Falling Rock. When potential customers walked in, the hostess would ask, "Do you have reservations tonight?" Even though the restaurant may have had several available tables, this was the standard question. That greeting had the potential to intimidate the hotel guests into thinking they needed to have reservations and they feared looking stupid. Often they'd respond, "No, just looking around," and then they walked out. Obviously, a better hostess greeting would be, "Welcome to ABC restaurant. Will you be joining us for dinner tonight?"

This is similar to a common service defect at many restaurants where hostesses greet couples by saying "Two?" upon arrival, implying *only* two for dinner, instead of greeting them the appropriate way.

### **Over sharing**

Many companies are troubled by front-line employees *over sharing*. In the event of a customer service defect, all employees need to make things right immediately. The customer does not



need to know how or why the problem happened, or even that it almost happened. They just want the experience they were expecting. For instance, have you ever been on a flight where suddenly the pilot gets on the intercom and says, "Holy cow! We almost crashed!" No, none of us needs to know those things. Unless the plane is going down, the pilot needs to keep everything else to himself. Here are some examples of "near crashes" that did not have to be reported.

### **See, it's not my fault!**

I was having one of my public *Secret Service* workshops at a beautiful hotel. My company, The DiJulius Group, made all the hotel reservations for the attendees. In the lobby, I bumped into David Akers, an attendee and friend of mine. He said that the front desk could not find him on the check-in list. After checking, I realized we hadn't made reservations for him because I did not see his name on my list of attendees. I immediately told him I'd take care of it and headed over to the check-in desk -- but David followed. The front-desk manager who was aware of the situation greeted me. He immediately said to me, "We do not have Mr. Akers on the list you sent us." Trying to avoid David realizing we were the ones who screwed up, I responded, "Sir, do you have any more rooms?" The manager held up the list for both of us to see and replied, "Yes, but here is the list of attendees that your office sent me, and he is not on here." Great! Since there were available rooms, the manager agreed to check Mr. Akers in, but not until he made it clear that it wasn't his fault, but rather his customer's, The DiJulius Group. He obviously overlooked the fact that we were the company responsible for bringing a few hundred people to his hotel! The proper remedy would have been to book Mr. Akers into a room and then, after he left, figure out what went wrong. But NOT in front of the customer!

### **It wasn't me**

My wife called the local hardware store to rent an industrial shop-vac. They didn't have any available until Saturday, so she reserved one for that day. When she arrived to pick it up on Saturday, they couldn't find a record of her reservation. After about 15 minutes, the clerk finally said, "Whoever you talked to didn't reserve one for you, but luckily we have several available." Did she need to know that they didn't reserve one for her if they had some on hand?