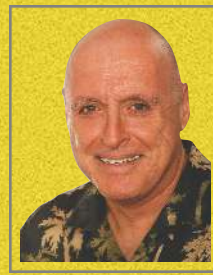


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1189 Service Mistakes Are Expected – Indifference Isn't

I ordered takeout last night for dinner. The food was good, the price reasonable, but the service had a small glitch that detracted from the experience. I'm Jerry Roberts, and I'll explain next, along with a brief lesson on how to handle similar situations. That's coming up, on The Extra Point.

It's dinner time, my wife and I order a couple of meals from what we feel is a good restaurant. Counting a couple of family gatherings, then lunch and dinner on our own, we probably eat in this restaurant every three months.

I made the order, which included the entree, and rice. I didn't want rice and asked if I could substitute a baked potato. No, it had to be rice. However, the meal came with the choice of a salad and a side dish, or two side dishes, one of those being a baked potato, so it was cool. I'd still get the potato. We both chose a cup of soup as a side dish, as we enjoy this particular soup the way they make it.

During the call, I thought I detected a little impatience on the part of the person taking the order, but I didn't say anything. "It'll be ready in 20 minutes," they said. Off I went to pick it up.

The person I'd spoken with brought the order out and everything was there. However, I saw that they had charged separately for the soup and I questioned it.

The response was, "Oh yeah, the soup is (price)." That was all they said. So, customer Jerry is now replaced by customer service training guy Jerry, and I was curious how this might play out. I replied, "But you didn't say there was a charge for the soup. You said it was a side order included with the entree."

Back they came, "Oh sorry, I guess I made a mistake...but we charge (price) for each soup," and then they just looked at me.

As you may have heard me say in the past, my

mother was a waitress, I learned a little about restaurants and how they operated at a young age. She taught me how to communicate with servers, what good service was, and also the proper way to give tips.

In this particular instance, there were a few ways to handle the issue.

1. The server could have given me the option of taking the soup off the order. I wouldn't be charged, and I wouldn't get the soup.
2. They could have taken responsibility for the error, and offer that I keep the soup, and they would remove it from the bill.
3. Maintain the position that they charged the (price) for each cup, and offer no resolution at all, waiting for me to deal with it. That's what happened in this case.

If this server had offered the second option of free soup, I would have declined. I think this particular cup of soup is worth what they ask for it, and I wasn't looking for a freebie. What I was after was their understanding of where they went wrong, because that's when correction begins.

Worse than all of this, the tone of voice and the general demeanor made me feel that they were pretty much indifferent about the whole thing. It didn't seem to matter.

You may notice that I haven't mentioned the restaurant, nor the gender of the server. The identities aren't important here, just to understand what happened and hopefully how to avoid future problems.

In our training, we highlight a list of major customer complaints, and lack of caring is one of the big ones.

So, a couple of takeaways from this. If you're concerned with customer service, maybe you can share these with your team. (Con't.)

First, the wrong attitude will stay with the customer, regardless if your performance is otherwise good.

Second, mistakes are a part of business and we're okay with that. Nobody is perfect. That said, you win or lose with customers based on your ability to react to and find solutions to your mistakes.

Third, an add-on to the last one, is that when a mistake occurs, you always want to give your customer choices on how to resolve the issue.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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