

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1695 Needlessly Disappointing Customers

Guam may not have a large population, and we certainly don't have as many options to spend our money as our family members and friends who live in larger communities back in the mainland. Still, there is decent competition in many sectors here. Certainly, enough so that losing customers even when you do things right is a reality of business. What we never want is to invite them to leave us because of poor service. I'm Jerry Roberts, and I'll give you a story told to me by a friend, next on the Extra Point.

A person I've known for some time and highly respect told me of their recent experience at a restaurant. I'm not going to use her name or the name of the restaurant. This is a well known eatery, has been in business for a long time, and a large party of people sat down for a meal. I'll refer to my friend as Ann.

The restaurant was not busy that day, and they were greeted pleasantly and led to tables that would accommodate their numbers.

Ann noticed that the floor under her table dirty and sticky. She brought this to the attention of the staff and was told that someone should be out to clean it.

After a few minutes, the cleanup person had not appeared. Ann is still standing, waiting. Minutes passed, and Ann asked another server for assistance.

This server looked preoccupied with her section of the restaurant, which gave Ann the impression that this was not her area of concern. However, she did she would check on the cleaning person.

After waiting a little longer, a maintenance lady came out with a dust pan and a broom. No mop, just the broom, and the broom was worn out — almost no bristles on it.

The lady tried to sweep up the mess, but was unable to remove some food which was stuck to the floor. When it was clear the old broom

wouldn't do the job, she grabbed a napkin to remove the stuck food. The food was gone, but the stickiness remained. Ann is a mild-mannered person, but she admitted to me that she wasn't happy.

Further, she told me she likely won't be eating at this place for awhile. A restaurant owner who understands the business will know that it could be months or years before a dissatisfied customer returns — if they ever do.

A smart owner will also know that this story will be passed along to others, this time along with the name. To top it off, there are 12 other people in the party who witnessed the dirty floor and how long it took to partially clean it. Maybe they won't be back, either.

I won't tell you what Ann does for a living, but I will say she is very well versed in teamwork and communication in an organization. She said it was missing at this restaurant.

There was no sense of urgency or desire to make the customer feel important. Where was the pride in keeping the place clean? Does nobody check around tables after a party leaves, to make sure it's ready for the next set of diners?

And whose job is it to make sure that the equipment is in good working order, like the broom might have enough bristles to do the job it is intended to do?

I think we can sum it up by saying that there is a lack of leadership at this place — nobody is paying attention.

The restaurant industry is struggling. Many of our citizens are eating out less because of high prices. Good operators do everything they can to deliver a satisfying experience, so they have a decent chance to get customers back.

(Con't.)

One more thing. Ann lives here and though she and her party may tell this story to others, the story stays within our shores.

What if a group of tourists had sat down at that table before Ann and company had arrived? Maybe this story would have lived on through Korean or Japanese social media, and ultimately could influence future travelers to bypass Guam in favor of another destination?

I've eaten in plenty of restaurants in those countries, and I've never encountered what Ann did. Our visitors expect higher standards.

Maybe our eateries can't do much about the costs that drive prices ever higher. That being said, there's no excuse for not offering a clean and sanitary place to enjoy a meal.

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

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