

**MAY 2001: WHEN
THE CUSTOMER IS
RIGHT—ADMIT IT!**



MONTHLY FEATURE COLUMN: WHEN THE CUSTOMER IS RIGHT—ADMIT IT!

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Sometimes customers are right. When this happens, it's a good idea to go way out of your way to let them know they were correct. Otherwise, they are likely to remember the injustice done to them every time they visit you. I know from personal experience.

My husband and I have purchased a home with a club so I can swim. Because swimming is so important to me, we carefully checked out the lap pool before committing to purchase in this particular Las Vegas community. I swim basically every day, and I swim a vigorous mile and a half. Temperature of the water is extremely important.

When I first swam in the new pool, I thought it was very warm, almost like tepid bath water, but I was assured that the temperature was only at 80 degrees. I suspected the temperature was, in fact, closer to 90 degrees, but the thermometer showed only 80 degrees. I talked with several people in the club house and they told me that they had researched the matter thoroughly, and that a lap pool should be kept at between 78 and 80 degrees.

Perhaps, I thought, my pools in California were kept at much colder temperatures, because the Las Vegas pool was definitely much warmer. Uncomfortably warm.

On a hunch, I called the swimming coach at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, and he affirmed that a lap pool should be kept at 78 to 80 degrees. I explained my situation and said that the 80 degree pool in my club was very warm. He said that 80 degrees should be cold. All his varsity swimmers find their pool cold when they first enter.

A flash bulb went off in my head. What if the club's thermometer was wrong? I suggested this to several people at the pool. They ignored me. The director of the Sports Club actually said to me, "Look lady, you're not the only one swimming in this pool."

Finally, I convinced one of the life guards who really swims (I wonder about the rest of them!) to stick his hand in the water. He was shocked at how warm it was, and told me he would tell the director that undoubtedly the thermometer was broken.

Two days later, the temperature plummeted. I actually swam in 70 degree water for two days. Now, that's invigorating!

The pool now has four thermometers placed at strategic points around its edges. And, I am happy to report I am swimming in a pretty consistent 80 degrees temperature.

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But no one has come up to me and said, "You were right. This water was too warm." They only did something about it when one of their own, their lifeguard, told them something was amiss.

This is a perfect example of a poorly handled complaint. If we didn't own a house in this complex, I wouldn't be swimming in this pool, even with its perfect 80 degrees temperature. I complained every day about the temperature, and was rewarded with being told several times that I was not the only one swimming in the pool.

How much effort would it take for them to come up to me and say, "Thank you for telling us about the pool's temperatures. By gosh, you were right. That pool was warm. You not only persisted, but we are saving energy costs right and left. Thank you very much."

If I had heard this, I could let the whole month of insufferable swimming be behind me. As it is, every time I walk into the club house and see all the people I talked with, I am reminded how they wouldn't believe me, and gave me every indication that they thought I was an unreasonable, selfish complainer.

Researchers have often said that an apology itself is something real that is offered to customers. I currently have a deep, personal experience of that. My bottom line about this experience: I'll enjoy the pool, but I won't recommend this housing complex to anyone.

WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING: WE'VE BEEN IN LAS VEGAS FOR A COMPLETE MONTH!

Just when we think we have everything settled, we discover yet more things that have to be handled. Moving is a wonderful opportunity, and using TMI language, it's one of the biggest elephants around.

In the midst of all this moving, we continue to offer our best to clients. Jossie Aguilar has begun our Managing People First programs for all supervisors and managers at the Isle of Capri Casinos. Jossie began the process in Black Hawk in Colorado, and Peta Peter finished out the month at the Isle in Vicksburg.

Jack Gallaway, CEO of the Isle of Capri Casinos, was recently quoted in Selling Power about TMI's Putting People First process with the Isle. Fourteen thousand Isle employees "...learned how to identify and interact with any one of the four basic personality types. ...[t]his has been the key in the Isle's quest for the totally satisfied customer." Thank you, Jack.

Bill Oden spent time with Eurand in Ohio. Janelle spoke to the California Department of Insurance, Call Center, in California. These are the wonderful people who can help you if you have a complaint with your insurance company. They field almost half a million calls per year!

Janelle also spoke to two groups at Washoe Health System in Reno. Their motto is, "It starts with the heart"—and an energetic team demonstrated how to do that. These programs, which coincided with her birthday, became an "event" which Janelle will long remember. Both groups sang Happy Birthday, and the hospital wheeled out three huge birthday cakes.

Janelle also spent time in Dubai for the first annual Hotel Intelligence Awards. Janelle was one of the judges and presented the final award of the evening. Kate Rouse and her husband, Paul Rouse, were awe inspiring in their ability to organize a premier event, giving it the feel of an awards ceremony that has been going on for years. The sponsoring hotel, The Al Bustan Rotana Hotel, did a spectacular job, complete with a red carpet and massive flood lights for all the hotel dignitaries upon their arrival at the property. The banquet room tables were decorated with massive flower decorations that had real candles floating throughout them. Janelle also keynoted at the conference that accompanied the awards ceremony.

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