

NOVEMBER 2001: COMPLAINING OVER THE HOLIDAYS



MONTHLY FEATURE COLUMN: COMPLAINING OVER THE HOLIDAYS

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It's not easy to complain in most situations. Complaining has such a negative connotation, it feels particularly unseemly over the holidays. "Where's your good cheer?" someone might complain about your complaints!

And it's more true this year than ever before. Many people believe that complaining in 2001 after the World Trade Center September 11 terrorist attacks to be unpatriotic—or at least petty.

The key to complaining over the holidays is to be extra gentle as you deliver a complaint "gift" to someone. So, assist those low-paid clerks who stand on their feet all day long to help a crowded, noisy, and sometimes ungrateful public.

But don't hold back your complaints! We'll never learn anything if you don't deliver your feedback.

Here are some approaches you can use to keep the good will of those around you and yet get your feedback to the right people in the organization.

1) Thank the person for their help. Tell them how much you appreciate how hard they are working this holiday season. And also suggest that in this spirit you want to provide a bit of feedback. Then tell them—with a sincere smile on your face.

2) Tell the person that you have some feedback for the company and you want to make sure it gets to a level that can do something about it. Ask if they are the right person for you to talk with, or if you should go to a manager.

If they are receptive to your complaint, they'll indicate they are the right person. If they don't want to hear your "gift," at least you'll get the name of someone who can help you.

3) Tell the person you once did a similar job, and you always appreciated knowing how to make customers happier. And in this spirit, you want to tell them how they can do the same.

In other words, make it easy for the person who is helping you to keep listening to you. Remember, they are frequently both young and inexperienced, and if you approach

them carefully you can make a genuine contribution to their careers.

That's the way we can maintain holiday cheer while at the same time continuing to help our providers get better at serving us!

WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING: TMI IS BUSY IN PARADISE!

Since we are still relatively new to Las Vegas, we continue to marvel at the weather—especially this time of the year. The days are mild, yet warm. The evenings brisk. On this last day of this month, we can even see snow on Mount Charleston.

As a vacation and convention destination, Las Vegas was hit hard by the September 11 attack on the Twin Towers, but it has largely recovered. The community here has been very clever in advertising to people who live within driving distance, and next month, the giant Comdex convention will be here with up to 300,000 people. Impressive.

We've been busy, too; and as many of you know, keeping busy is one way to pay a little less attention to the anthrax scare. We are careful to tell our clients when we are using the U.S. mails, and they seem to appreciate that.

We continue to present our Management and Supervisory training programs to Isle of Capri managers and supervisors in Lula, Mississippi; Kansas City; Tunica, Mississippi; and Bossier City, Louisiana. Jossie Aguilar adeptly presented our Putting People First in Spanish to the Isle of Capri, Black Hawk. We're quite amazed and inspired by the gratitude of those whose first language is Spanish when they hear TMI messages in their mother tongue.

Mary Connors is working with us for Credit Suisse First Boston in New York. Their management development project has been a coordinated effort between TMI,US and TMI,UK. We always love it when we have an opportunity to cooperate with our UK team.

Janelle Barlow has been busy as well. She was part of a panel that presented the "latest and best" trends in customer service at the American Gaming Association's first annual convention in Las Vegas. Virginia McDowell, with Argosy Casinos, moderated the panel. There are many heavy hitters in the casino industry, and Virginia McDowell is one of them. Janelle talked about branded customer service and what that concept means to the casino industry.

Janelle then flew to Orlando, Florida, where she spoke for Maximus. There is an interesting and competent group! Rarely does Janelle have the opportunity to work with a group of people who not only are at the top of their game, but still are passionate about getting better. Maximus has an interesting mission statement: Helping Government Serve the People. It's not easy to find five words that so appropriately describe what a company does. Janelle delivered a keynote in the morning session to one group. They liked it so much, she was asked to stay and deliver the same keynote to a second group in the afternoon session!

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Janelle also worked with Satmetrix, the Mountain View, California, company whose work definitely needs more than five words to describe. (Some of us are in that same predicament.) Here's their bottom line: If you need to wrap your hands around the reactions your customers have to your e-business so you can react quickly and appropriately to maintain them as long-term customers, then Satmetrix is your company. This is a company with extremely bright employees. Management is more than qualified and caring. Janelle worked with them on a program we called Service Excellence.

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