

GOING BEYOND THE EXPECTED

By Bev Smallwood, Ph.D.

I'd arrived in Jackson, Mississippi, on the 9:50 P.M. flight. Weary and loaded with luggage, I was standing in the median of the loading zone, not-so-patiently waiting for the shuttle from the Comfort Inn, where I'd stayed the night before I'd departed.

"Hello, there, Ma'am. Are you going to the Crowne Plaza tonight?"

I turned around to encounter a big smile and twinkling eyes on the face of the Crowne Plaza shuttle driver.

"No, Sir. I'm waiting for the Comfort Inn shuttle. Thank you."

End of conversation...or so I thought.

"I'm so sorry you made that choice," he continued. "May I ask why you didn't choose the Crowne Plaza? We would love to have you as our guest."

Now he had my attention.

I answered, "Well, I guess I chose the Comfort Inn because it's closer to the airport, and the Crowne Plaza is downtown. I just never thought about staying at the Crowne Plaza when I'm flying out."

"Well, as you can see, we have a shuttle, and I'll be happy to deliver you right to your flight and back. And there's no comparison between the hotels."

Very unusual guy. I stood musing about my interaction with him. Still no sign of my shuttle.

My thoughts were interrupted by that engaging voice.

"Ma'am, it's pretty hot out here tonight, and my shuttle is air conditioned. Would you like to sit down in my shuttle so that you can stay cool while you wait?"

"What is your name?" I asked him.

"Steve. Steve Warren. And what's yours?"

"I'm Bev Smallwood. Steve, what is your boss's name and telephone number?"

Steve looked puzzled but gave me the information. I immediately dialed the number from my cell phone to "report" an exceptional employee who had gone out of his way to serve.

At this time of night, Steve was probably tired. But he was definitely not in the bored, let's-get-this-last-run-over-with mode. Not at all. He'd gone beyond the expected, and he just might have gained a customer. Getting to the Crowne Plaza from my home was a little more inconvenient, maybe even a little more expensive. But if Steve Warren were an example of the service there, it would be worth it.

Let's reflect together on what Steve did that created this positive and memorable "magnetic moment" for me.

1. He went beyond mere courtesy.

Steve asked me real questions and seemed genuinely interested in my answers.

(An interesting side note...courtesy earns you no real brownie points. Why? Because it's expected. However, the lack of it can subtract points very quickly!)

2. He made a personal connection with me.

He smiled. He took the initiative to engage me in conversation.

He didn't just tell me a shuttle could pick me up. He said that HE would take care of me.

3. He made me think.

Before he began to tell me all the reasons I should have stayed with the Crowne Plaza, he got me thinking and talking about what was important to me in my decision about where to stay. He opened my mind to new possibilities by challenging me to consciousness about my decisions and by listening to my views.

4. He was attentive to my wants and needs.

He went beyond the admirable, but expected question about how he might be able to help. Instead, he observed and anticipated my needs and wants. He offered a solution to my discomfort (air conditioning for the the heat and humidity), though I had not verbalized it.

Today, as you interact with your customers...and your “other customers” (co-workers, supervisors, supervisees)...will you take the time to make the interaction memorable by GOING BEYOND THE EXPECTED?

About the Author:

For twenty-plus years, psychologist Dr. Bev Smallwood has accomplished her personal mission of bringing out the best in people and her two-fold business mission: 1) building “Magnetic Workplaces” ® that attract and keep the best people and 2) helping individuals create meaningful lives.

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