

True Tales From the Workplace

Customer service
is dead, long live
customer service.

By Haidee E. Allerton

I know this tale is true because I was there. It happened to me.

I was on a business trip to Orlando—home of Walt Disney World and its famed customer service, ironically as you'll find out—and checking into my accommodations at a well-known hotel suite chain called...let's call it A***S****s.

The front desk clerk was a young woman with her shirttail sticking out of her pants and a disinterested look. She dutifully registered me, handed me my room key card, forced a half-hearted

smile onto her face, and said, "This is me pretending to smile."

OK, so maybe she was having a bad day, she was unduly tired, her boyfriend just broke up with her...any number of reasons that put her in a funk. But, I submit, as a customer I am not an approved or suitable object upon which to visit her funkitude. So, I took the card and said, "And this is me pretending to say thank you." She was so disengaged that she registered no reaction to my outstanding retort.

Fast-forward to later that night and I

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push the phone button for a wake-up call. The phone rings...and rings...and rings...and rings. Finally, a voice answers, "Yeah?" Same young woman, I suspect.

"May I leave a wake-up call?"

"Yeah, I heard the phone ringing and hoped it would stop, but it just kept ringing." Nervous laugh.

OK, this is a joke, right? Where's the candid camera?

I ventured on. "Is this the right num-

ber for leaving a wake-up call?"

"Yeah."

"Well then, 6:30 a.m., please."

"You're set." Click.

Miraculously, I did get a wake-up call at the designated time.

If my company had been footing the bill, I would have moved to another hotel, and I know from experience that this would never have happened at Disney World.

Check, as in Stop!

Seeing as how this is my column and I'm on a roll...waitpersons absolutely must without further delay cease and desist from asking this question:

"Are you done, or are you still working on that?" The operative component being "working on that." I brought this atrocity to attention in the October 2002 column and, yet, this wretched practice continues—at even the best and priciest restaurants.

What are the possible responses?

"I am not 'working on that,' as you so delicately and finely phrase it. I am trying to dine leisurely and with decorum at this pretentious chi-chi establishment and attempting to enjoy this lovely dish of artfully arranged morsels for which I am paying a ridiculously inflated price."

Or, "Yeah, darn tootin' I'm still working on that, Mr. Fancypants. You just brang me a bigger fork and then leave me be!"

Or, "Working on that, yes. In fact, I've devised a process through which I might manage this project that I have been tasked with. Timeframe for completion is 20 minutes, at which time I will report out the results."

Or how about this? "I don't tip servers who prepare to take away my plate by asking whether I am 'still working on that.'"

Check, please.