

Dare To Be Better - By J. Ragsdale Hendrie

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It is a strenuous leap from the pretty good to the excellent, and that chasm represents a stretch for many of us. So, let's focus on what we do well and aim to move the Hospitality Bar gradually.

Hospitality has been battered this year. The litany of missteps, calamity, cycles and volatile variables has been significant - the economy, the weather, short term thinking. (However, it really is the economy!) But, we shall rise from the bruised landscape, renewed, invigorated and smarter. In our retrenchment, we were forced to minimize and curtail our typical products and services - prices were slashed, deals were cut, staff reallocated, renovation on hold - our confidence shattered. As we wend our way out of this miasma (peek out of that hole), we shall look differently, as will our Customer/Guest/Visitor.

So, we need to take stock, understanding that we must adapt as our Consumer has changed, too. This is a two-fold transitional review - what we offer and what our Consumer expects. What do we know about our Customer/Guest/Visitor? Perhaps, we have relied upon Comment Cards or Mystery Shops or the comments we read on the Internet - all valid, but only a piece of the picture. These do not establish valid Benchmarks - these views are fleeting glimpses. We need to do better! If there ever were a time to establish a Customer Satisfaction Program - constant feedback, timely results, smart analysis - it is now. You are only as good as the market says you are. The market has spoken, and the reviews are not laudable!

Now, you have one side of the Equation - what the Consumer says you are and the Experience they had with your business. In-house, what do you look like? No operator has the total view or perspective - it is clouded by proximity, hubris and avoidance behavior. We certainly know how to fool ourselves so well, and the truth hurts. But, if we do not understand the full picture of our business, we cannot possibly move forward profitably. That's a fact. If there were ever a time to bring QA (Quality Assurance) to your business, it is now. A tailored made Program (preferable) or even generic will provide untold truths and realities, information you need to either address shortcomings or enhance value. This becomes your baseline and road map to improvement and reputation.

Now, you can match the two with a thoughtful Marketing Plan.

You know what the Consumer thinks and wants, you know what you have and what you do well. Keep your message honest, simple and authentic. Use your good common sense to relate the story. The era of 'smoke and mirrors' is over.

Very few reach that Excellence plateau. It is the journey that counts and your drive to do things better, striving to improve. This message does resonate - with your staff, your community and your Consumer. Dare to be better!

The author, J. Ragsdale Hendrie, believes that Remarkable Hospitality is the portal to the Guest Experience and offers solutions through www.hospitalityperformance.com.

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