

- ☑ Develop a mindset and communication style that is professional, positive, and respectful.
- ☑ Talk to the guest as soon as possible. Approach the guest in a friendly manner.
- ☑ Demonstrate that you want to help.
- ☑ Remain neutral, and don't take it personally. Focus on solving the issue, not on the personality of the person.
- ☑ Listen and acknowledge that you are listening without interrupting.
- ☑ Collect the details by taking notes as they speak.
- ☑ Thank the guest for sharing their concern using their name.
- ☑ Always respond with "We" instead of "I." This shows solidarity in representing the team.
- ☑ Apologize appropriately.
  - Saying "I'm sorry" doesn't always mean you're wrong and the other person is right. It means you value the relationship and care about them.
  - Carefully select the content of the apology.
  - Make the apology sincere and truthful. Insincere apologies can be worse than no apology at all.
  - Use a "sad-glad" statement.  
"We're sorry you experienced the situation, and we are glad you told us about it."
- ☑ Confirm their concerns by repeating back what you heard.
- ☑ Emphasize with them. When someone is angry or frustrated with your organization, they want to feel heard and understood.
  - "I know how you feel" is NOT a good thing to say unless you have been through exactly what they have experienced. Instead, try – "That's got to be so frustrating." or "What an unfortunate situation."
- ☑ Determine the compensation if the complaint warrants anything more. Account for the type of guest, their level of engagement, and their years of loyalty.
- ☑ If you don't know what to offer them, it is ok to ask what would make up for the situation.

When addressing a rule infraction with a guest, start the clarification with

**“PERHAPS YOU ARE UNAWARE...”**

then state the rule. By framing it this way, you give the guest the benefit of the doubt and reduce the chance that the guest will become defensive.

- Tailor the response.
  - Loyal guests value their relationship with the team. Research shows that these relationship-focused guests are more amenable to recovery efforts, regardless of any compensation than casual guests. An admission of wrongdoing and sincere apology can be more critical than restitution. The team should communicate that it values the relationship.
  - Casual guests are not necessarily interested in affirming a relationship with the team. They are less won over by proof that the organization values them. Casual guests typically care mainly about financial repayment, with the size of compensation being the most important to them.
- Offer choices on how to resolve the situation. When guests are given a choice, they feel they played a part in the resolution.
- Share the specific steps you will take and include a timeframe for when they can expect completion.
- Tell the guest you hope they will return, that you strive to create a positive guest experience for everyone attending the event.
- Fix the problem and assure the guest you will take steps to avoid a repeat occurrence.
- Be prepared to learn from this situation. Debrief with your team members to ensure the best steps were taken, and brainstorm ways to improve the response should a similar situation occur in the future.
- Follow up to see that their situation has been resolved. If you sent them something, confirm it was received.

### AVOID A REOCCURRENCE

Report the situation to the appropriate person so steps can be taken to prevent the problem reoccurring.

**Ruby Newell-Legner, CSP**, is President of 7 Star Service, a staff development company specializing in guest experience training for employees who work in the sports, leisure and entertainment industry. She works with organizations to build a better brand through engagement with their guests by improving relationships: from front-line employees to guests, between co-workers and their peers, and from managers to the employees they supervise. Ruby's contact information: [www.7StarService.com](http://www.7StarService.com) +1 303.807.8978 [Ruby@7StarService.com](mailto:Ruby@7StarService.com)