



Food For Thought: Week of April 12, 2014

The Power of an Apology

I was at a lunch meeting last week during the peak of the daytime rush. When our food was delivered, someone was left out and the server said she would go check on the order. A few minutes later, she came back and said:

"I didn't see your food in the kitchen so I looked at my book and I'm so sorry to say I missed yours when punching in everyone's order. I asked if we could move it to the front and they're working on it right now. I take my lumps when it's my fault and this one's all on me."

For a moment, there was silence. I think the server was bracing for an explosion. The reality was we were all in shock. Sadly, it's become so uncommon to hear someone take responsibility for their own actions that we didn't know what to say. Especially in a restaurant, how many times have we all heard "The kitchen lost the ticket" or "They forgot" or "Those guys missed it", but never "I screwed up and I'm really sorry"? I have a particularly soft spot when it comes to servers because I was one for six years after moving away from home and later going to school. Though a long time ago, I still have a strong recollection of how things work in a restaurant. And I also remember all too well how often the back-of-house staff were thrown under the bus for things beyond their control.

So why am I telling you this? In a society & culture that is increasingly diverting responsibility & redirecting blame, the power of an apology for one's own actions has become profound. And this isn't just about lunch. Many would agree you could apply this observation to just about any scenario these days. Hopefully, this is just a phase!

The Bottom Line: At a time when some are exercising personal responsibility about as often as cursive writing, the rest of us have an opportunity to disarm a potentially bad situation with candor and most importantly, an apology. In thinking about this over the weekend, and realizing the power behind it, I'd go as far as assuming more responsibility than you're actually responsible for! Of course, as an owner or manager, this should be your mantra, as it should always stop with you.

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