

---

## Front Desk Fails To Catch America's Hospitality Spirit

---

*By David M. Brudney, ISHC, November 2001*

Like so many other Americans, I've been out there doing my small share as a citizen, consumer and businessman since September 11th.

I've been flying commercial airlines, consulting with hotel clients, taking leisure trips, eating out, making purchases, and going to the movies. All that stuff.

### **Finding genuine hospitality out there**

What's been amazing to me is how much genuine hospitality I've found. It began with my first flight on September 17th and ever since then I've been greeted and treated almost like royalty by flight crews and pilots, in particular.

I've experienced so many wait people in restaurants wherever I've traveled, putting their hearts into their work, so grateful for Americans dining out.

I visited three national parks in October and could not have been more impressed with the warm greetings and courtesy, the thanks and the helpful information and advice from the U. S. park rangers.

Even a conductor on the Durango, CO tourist train got into the act. He was so grateful for all the tourists that purchased tickets for the train ride to Silverton. He walked about all dozen cars or so, a terrific tour guide, interacting with the passengers, answering questions, helping retrieve personal belongings.

And it was contagious. Passengers picking up on the hospitality theme, began serving one another, opening windows, changing seats, distributing brochures. Conversations broke out across the aisles, everyone happy to be out and about.

### **Aren't we supposed to be the hospitality role models?**

I expected to find hotels leading the way in embracing American travelers with open arms, smiles and genuine gratitude. I read so much about the hotel industry's new focus on guest recognition and reward programs, the advent of CRM, new resources for database management and mining. I would think that now, more than ever, would be the time for hotels to connect with guests, particularly with those registering for the very first time.

Unfortunately, I found none of this. Nada. Zip. I witnessed such a poor show by the front desks at the mostly branded limited service hotels I patronized during the past eight weeks that I came away shocked, disappointed and embarrassed.

Time after time I found a single desk clerk working check in, eyes frozen like a deer from an oncoming car's headlights. No warm greeting. No eye contact. No thank you for traveling. No inquiry as to where I had been, where I was headed. No offer to help with reservations at my next stop. No offer to suggest places to eat, what to do. No thank you for the stay, not even a goodbye or even the classic "you'll come back and see us!" Nothing. Worst of all perhaps, was the appalling lack of interest I found.

Surely, we can do better, much better than this. Seems to me we have no choice.

Aren't we supposed to be the role models for hospitality?  
Aren't owners and managers aware of the terrible impact on hotels and tourism, the billions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of jobs lost or reduced since September 11th?  
Hello, is anyone home? Have I missed something here?

## **Where is management?**

Where is management? Where is the owner, the franchisee? Why isn't the general manager teaching the front desk staff how to be hospitable?

Front desk staffs represent the first, last and possibly only opportunity for limited service hotels, in particular, to connect with guests thereby laying the foundation for invaluable repeat business and referrals.

This is basic "Hotel 101" but a reminder is in order for hotel management today:

- Show GENUINE INTEREST!!!
- All guests need to be greeted with a smile, eye contact, and a "I'll be with you in just a minute" should the guest be waiting in line
- All guests need to be thanked for traveling - - not just because of 911 but because the hotel industry is dependent upon our guests to travel. If guests do not travel, we are out of business
- All guests need to be asked if they need directions, recommendations on where to eat and what to do
- All guests need to be asked, "may I make a reservation for your next stop?"

## **Lessons from Silverton's residents**

What was the lasting impression of my travels since 911? Clearly, it was the people of Silverton, CO and how they greeted the passengers on Durango's Historic Steam Train. What a sight. Everyone out, waving flags, so happy to see us, so thankful we made the trip. Oh, how I wished the front desk staffs (and their managers and owners) could have shared that experience.

---



*David M. Brudney, ISHC is a veteran sales and marketing professional with four decades of service to the hospitality industry. He is the principal of David Brudney & Associates of Rancho Palos Verdes, CA, a hospitality marketing consulting firm in business since 1979 and a charter member of International Society of Hospitality Consultants. Previously, Brudney held sales and marketing positions with Hyatt and Westin.*

Contact:

David M. Brudney, ISHC, Principal  
David Brudney & Associates  
Carlsbad, CA 92009  
760-476-0830 Fax 760-476-0860  
EMail: [David@DavidBrudney.com](mailto:David@DavidBrudney.com)  
Web Site: [www.DavidBrudney.com](http://www.DavidBrudney.com)

Also See

[A Very Good Time For That Sales Audit](#) / David Brudney ISHC / Sept 2001

[More Theater, Less Zombies](#) / David Brudney ISHC / Dec 2000

[It's The Experience, Stupid!](#) / David Brudney ISHC / Nov 2000

---

Return to David Brudney & Associates [\*\*Special Reports and Articles\*\*](#)

Return to Hotel.Online [\*\*Ideas and Trends\*\*](#)

[\*\*Search Hotel Online\*\*](#)