

**"The purpose of human life is to serve, and to show compassion and the will to help others." »Albert Schweitzerl**

## High Tech, Low Effort



The easiest columns any writer could pen “back in the day” were stories about bad service at a DMV... or a bank branch.

“I-cannot-believe-how-I-was-ignored” stories were not very difficult to find. To bankers’ credit, those stories are much harder to come by today.

As branches have moved away from the “transaction factory” model, improved levels of service have followed.

A few years ago, I made similar comments about the DMV near my town. They implemented impressive online tools that let you “get in line” from home.

Text messages tell you where you are in the queue before arriving. The technology is cool and an improvement to years past.

## The Rains Came



I’ll apologize from the start for this particular column being more stream of consciousness than most. (That is a high bar, I know.)

As some know, my family and I live in the Houston suburb of Sugar Land, TX.

Anyone with a television or an internet connection has seen the slow-rolling tragedies to the Texas gulf coast that began on August 25th and continue as I write this.

We received about 45 inches of rain at our home during a 72-hour period.

The fact that my neighborhood was unsubmerged and I have power and an internet connection to work with (rather poorly and sporadically, I admit) are blessings for which I feel both grateful and a little guilty to have.

The same, sadly, cannot be said about the “customer experience” once you get to deal with an actual person.

Yes, I’m a fool for thinking a DMV visit would be a “customer service” experience.

But, hey, the website sure looks like they are “customer”-focused.

On a recent visit with my younger son, the employee we dealt with seemed primarily focused on telling us (rather dismissively) what was incorrect on the form my son filled out.

She wasn’t as interested in explaining exactly what was wrong.

Then, I was told my insurance card was “too recent”. (Huh?)

The kicker was when we were unable to prove our residence. My driver’s license, my son’s state-issued ID card, and a bill I brought with my name on it were not enough.

The second bill I brought had only my wife’s name on it. It was the same address... but it didn’t include my name.

She seemed quite pleased with informing me that the website clearly stated I needed two documents to prove residence.

My wife’s name under the same address simply was not enough.

Well, she was on to our ruse! My 16-year-old partner-in-crime and I left bewildered.

Like almost every home in our neighborhood, we have had at least one evacuated family staying with us.

The flashbacks to a similar situation during Hurricane Katrina are a little surreal. My family has personally been on both sides of the evacuation equation before.

We have housed folks during evacuations, as well as been evacuees ourselves.

The mental, physical, and emotional toll of these events is hard to explain. I will not try here.

With time, I may have more-formed thoughts about what we witnessed in the past few days and what I believe it reveals about the human condition.

I can attest that the absolute worst of situations brings out the absolute best in most people.

I cannot begin to list, nor could I do justice here to the ongoing courageous efforts of police, fire departments, medical personnel and multitudes of first responders.

They are heroes living amongst us.

As moving and motivating are the thousands of citizens stepping up to bring others to safety, giving them comfort now, and trying to instill hope for the future.

It is the human being at his/her most noble. You cannot see it and help but be moved to tears several times each day.

The truly annoying thing was not just that she wouldn't or couldn't help us, but she gave absolutely no signs of caring about it.

We walked out realizing why they have armed security guards in the place.

Technology and improved systems are great tools to enhance a customer's experiences with you.

However, the aspects of experiences that resonate most are driven by the empathy and helpfulness of the actual humans with whom they interact.

How helpful will you and your team be today?

I'd respectfully suggest that the biggest problems most of us have to deal with today would be a highlight reel for millions of our neighbors.

They would happily swap problems with us in a heartbeat.

Keep Houston and the overwhelmed cities along the Texas coast in your prayers.

If you have the ability and heart to do so, help as you can.

Most of all, remember that the most important things in our lives are not things. They are our family, friends, and neighbors.

Houston Strong.

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**"There is no exercise better for the heart than reaching down and lifting people up." »J.A. Holmes**



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