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"If you could choose one characteristic that would get you through life, choose a sense of humor." » Jennifer Jones



Smiles Amid the Debris

It wasn't until five days after Hurricane Ida came onshore that I was able to get to south Louisiana.

Most roads were impassable for the first few days and authorities wanted to limit who and how many people were coming in.

By the time my brother-in-law and I got there, I knew there had been a tremendous amount of work already done.

It was obvious that hundreds of trees, utility poles, and buildings had been (mostly) cleared in the area we were in. We saw only a small portion of the damage and not nearly the very worst of it.

And, still, what we saw were incredibly depressing scenes. Each home with severe damage represented some family's world.

Each business with blown-off roofs or structural damage represented places where folks earned their livings.

In many cases, those businesses represented someone's dream and life's work.

The neighborhood we stayed in looked better than some. And yet, some homes in it that



Few Contacts, Great Impacts

I received a text alert from my business credit card provider a few weeks ago about a very large purchase.

It was news to me because I had not made it.

I jumped on their app but found it more difficult to navigate than I remembered. The process of challenging a fraudulent charge wasn't clear.

No worries. I'd call the customer service line as I've had to do a half dozen times or so in the 10+ years I've had this card.

I almost never have to interact with anyone there, but when I have, they've always been competent and impressive.

In the past, it has been a pretty easy process of reporting, getting the issue resolved, and having a new card issued when necessary. I once woke the next day to an overnight package with a new card in it.

I thought, "Maybe I'm using this card too much. They don't want me to miss a day."

It had been a couple of years since I had an issue, so I'm not sure at what point the wheels may have come off the train with their customer support.

looked relatively intact at first glance had catastrophic damage on the inside.

No one had electricity. Some areas didn't have running water. (Two weeks later, many still don't.)

Mold is everywhere.

And over the course of two days of manual labor in brutal heat, there was one trait I noticed in most of the dozens of folks I observed and interacted with. Their spirit and even humor were intact.

Folks working in extreme conditions smiled at each other. I saw it on roofers, people salvaging their homes, and folks clearing debris from yards and streets.

There were smiles on the faces of folks distributing supplies at various drop spots, and even on the faces of most folks needing the supplies.

Most were weary smiles, to be sure. But they smiled.

Everyone there had more valid reasons to complain than most at that point. And no doubt, there were complaints expressed and no shortage of despair just below the surface.

But humor and goodwill have energy in them that complaints do not.

I thought of something a mentor shared many years ago. He said, "Some situations are just too difficult not to laugh."

His point was that a sense of humor is a shock absorber.

People who can find ways to laugh can usually find ways to endure.

Some days, the most valuable things you can bring to those around you are a smile and spirit of goodwill. What are you bringing to others today?

The phone menu was exasperating. It is painfully obvious when a company moves heaven and earth to keep you from speaking to a human.

Then, my credit card number "wasn't found." After entering more identification data than I did for my first mortgage, I was put on hold for a few minutes.

When the person answered, she asked for all that information again. Because...of course.

After I explained things, she cancelled the card and said she'd send a new one. Five days later, I called back to see what happened.

I was then told the order had not been put in. But this guy would fix it.

Three days later I still had no card. I called back and navigated the same maze.

This third person told me nothing had been processed.

He then said, "I shouldn't say this, but try to only call this number between certain hours and on weekdays. You'll get the support center where I'm at. We know what we're doing." Okie dokie, then.

I appreciated the inside info, but he had basically reaffirmed to me that service was not what it once was there. I'm now exploring other providers.

It's true that our personal interactions with customers may be fewer than in years past.

Each individual interaction, however, matters more than ever. Whether it is problem resolution or detailed transactions, those moments of truth define us.

How will you and your team define yourselves this week?

"Even your most loyal customers always have a choice about where to take their business." » Marilyn Suttle

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Dave Martin, author of The In-Store Advantage, has become one of the most prolific writers in the banking industry. His keynote presentations, seminars, and podcasts have an authenticity and humor that brings teams of all sizes and seniority levels together.

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