

**"If you want something you've never had, then you have to do something you've never done." »Eric Thomas**

## Building a Solid Foundation



Someone once (jokingly but accurately) described the Houston climate as extended periods of heatwaves and drought occasionally interrupted by flooding.

Nevertheless, we love the place.

After having...oh, about five feet of rain fall on my home in a 72-hour period in August, I suspected that even those fortunate enough to not be flooded might have a few smaller problems down the road.

I walked outside last week to find a crack running up the bricks on the back of our home.

It was one of those, "Ugh" moments when you figure you're looking at a high-four to low five-figure repair.

To make matters worse, the area with the foundation shift and cracking is where I

## Compliments Before Critiques



A recent experience with a restaurant owner reinforced to me an important element of giving anyone feedback you hope they accept.

Show you see what is good when pointing out what is not.

In this instance, we joined another family for dinner at a new restaurant. The open layout, high-end fixtures, and glass-walled kitchen were striking.

After 20 minutes of waiting for a large table, I asked if it would be easier to break our party of nine into two smaller parties, but kept on one check.

That request apparently portended a Black Swan event for the inexperienced crew. Suddenly, a team of people was discussing if/how they could do that.

spent a small fortune on an outdoor living room not long ago.

With a big decision to make about whom to trust in a stressful situation, I picked up my smartphone. However, I didn't use a Google search.

Instead, I texted a friend who had similar work done before and asked his advice.

Within a few minutes, he suggested a company he had used and thought highly of.

He also told me about friends of his who also had great experiences and had recommended that company to him.

I'm going to bet that Houston has more foundation repair companies than most places in America. And with numerous options to call upon, I went with the one I trusted through word-of-mouth.

The field inspector, Ali, showed up a few minutes earlier than our appointment. (That, in itself, makes a great first impression.)

He was professional, polite, thorough, and most of all, knowledgeable.

It is one thing to Google a billion articles on a subject and hope to learn something.

It is another to have an experienced professional personally assess your situation and give relevant advice. (That should ring a bell with branch bankers.)

As it turned out, Ali told me that our situation was not severe enough to require major work. He gave advice on

We said, "No problem. We'll wait for one table."

We later sat and watched confusion play out from the kitchen to the bar. Twenty-five minutes after placing it, our drink order had not arrived.

A more-blunt-than-I-would-have-made comment to the manager from someone at our table soon produced the owner.

(I swear it wasn't me.)

The owner, Paul, was there to apologize, but was defensive and wanted to make sure we knew that they had "just opened" one month before.

For a second, I wished the comment wouldn't have been made and we would have quietly left, never to return.

Yet, out of habit, I found myself pulled into a consulting session.

I first told him how beautiful his place was and that I could tell a lot of thought and serious investment went into creating it.

The smile that grew on Paul's face and the change in his body language were stark. He leaned in to talk more.

As I made comments about how impressive his bar was and why I thought that high-profit margin area was likely improperly staffed, he shook his head and said, "You're right."

He began asking questions and sharing several changes he was contemplating.

Our conversation went from borderline confrontational to collaborative.

inexpensive remedies and told me to call him if anything changed significantly.

Ali could have easily convinced us to have work done for a quick sale.

He did not.

There is now no other foundation company we would ever call or recommend. His helpfulness and honesty made an impression that no marketing campaign could.

Word-of-mouth advertising is powerful precisely because it is earned.

How will you earn yours today?

He shared stories from places he worked before, and we chatted about the challenges of building great service cultures.

I learned a few new things about restaurants, as well.

Paul invited me to come back soon to see their changes, and I will take him up on the offer.

Whether your next coaching session is scheduled or impromptu, remember to show you see a person's strengths.

When they know you also notice good things, your teams are more likely to see you as a sincere coach and not just faultfinding critic.

---

**"The dream is free, but the hustle is sold separately."**

**»Steve Harvey**



*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.*

*For more info about having Dave or an FSI Consultant speak to your group, email Tina Coleman, [tcoleman@SupermarketBank.com](mailto:tcoleman@SupermarketBank.com) or call 800-992-4978.*