

**"I never criticize a player until they are first convinced of my unconditional confidence in their abilities."**

**»John Robinson**

## Don't Fizz Out



I was reminded last weekend that great employees are shock absorbers for their companies.

When things don't go according to plans, they are often the difference

between relationships being damaged and relationships being saved.

In this particular instance, the self-service technology in a location was not working.

We weren't in a bank branch. We were in a restaurant.

Before sending our oldest son back to school for his finals week, we gave him his choice of dining establishments.

He chose his favorite place, which wouldn't have made my Top 5 list. But, hey, his call.

## Avoid a Stall



A friend recently asked me to speak to his team about leading in times of change.

Their bank is tweaking delivery strategies to meet evolving demands, and his people are dealing with increased distractions and feelings of uncertainty.

He is concerned that these distractions are pulling attention away from the fundamentals of success.

In particular, he fears his team feels they cannot grow their business during these changes.

During our discussion, the phrase "turbulent times" came up.

It stayed with me and reminded me of a time long ago when my job had me often flying on a twin prop, 7-passenger plane.

After we placed our orders and were given our glasses, the counter clerk informed us that the self-service drink fountains were out of order. Our server would have to fill them for us in the kitchen.

That doesn't sound like a big deal, but this place is obviously staffed with the intention that customers fill their own drinks.

When you look around a crowded restaurant and consider how many people have glasses to be filled, it's significant.

One or two people could likely do nothing but bring glasses to and from the kitchen and remain busy. That is not what this place was staffed for, meaning the servers were being run ragged.

This also slowed the pace of service. People were hustling, but the additional workload slowed everything.

I sat there reflecting on how one basic, taken-for-granted piece of technology failing created a situation ripe for disgruntled customers.

Our server, Linda, rushed to our table soon after we sat down and apologized for our wait. She looked fatigued and disheveled, but behind a smile.

Instead of complaining about the situation that she and her peers found themselves in, she sincerely apologized for our increased wait times and told us she'd keep checking on us.

She sure did.

I don't know that we've ever had a server as attentive in that place before. In a situation ripe for frustration, we found

The only times I felt remotely (and I do mean remotely) safe was when a young man named Carl was the pilot.

He was a former military pilot, and I figured that if he could fly planes that were being shot at...he could handle the updrafts of the North Georgia and Tennessee mountains.

During flights when I was the only passenger, I sat in the co-pilot seat. Heaven knows I would be no help, but it felt rude to sit in the back.

On one trip, Carl and I were getting thrown around in that small plane in a turbulent cloud bank.

For a stretch, I literally did not know which way was up. He looked over and gave a thumbs-up.

When the turbulence finally let up, he smiled and said, "Don't worry, man. We were good. If we keep altitude and speed...all good, brother."

When I inquired, he told me that some rookie pilots, when in disorienting situations, too often forget that "speed is life."

Whatever you do, do not make yourself stall.

He added, "You're okay. It doesn't feel that way because we all prefer smooth air and to have a clear visual of what's in front of us. But as long as you maintain speed, you're fine."

He said big problems come when you lose speed and stall.

ourselves commenting on how hard Linda was working, and with a great attitude.

She even found time to pitch gift cards from the restaurant to us for holiday gifts.

I smiled with respect for a person working hard enough to turn what looked to be a negative visit into a prime cross-sale opportunity.

Good people can turn potentially negative situations into positive interactions.

When your team needs it, strive to be that kind of person.

A stall in turbulent and/or disorienting situations can turn dangerous quickly.

Switch the word “sales” (or “growth”) for “speed” and Carl’s advice still rings true.

Times of change can be a little disorienting and turbulent.

In the end, however, if we keep our focus on customers, and maintaining our speed (i.e. sales/growth), we’ll get safely where we want to be.

Yes, times of change can be temporarily disorienting.

Strive not to allow your team’s sales and service focus to stall.

Clear skies are ahead.

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**"I've always felt it was not up to anyone else to make me give my best."**

**»Akeem Olajuwon**



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