

Second Assurances

The funny and scary thing about first impressions is that you only get one. One chance to nail that perfect handshake at the start of a job interview. One chance to flash that smile at a girl you're attracted to. One chance to set the mood for an outstanding hospitality experience upon guest arrival.

Back in October of 2012, I penned an article called [‘First Assurances’](#) whereby I equated an excellent first impression of a hotel to that of a subconscious assurance for the guests that they are in good hands – that they will be safe within the confines of the property, that their needs will be tended to and that they are about to experience something great. There are many aspects involved in a first impression, from cleanliness and striking décor to fast check-in and attentive staff. They all must be honed and flawless because, again, you only get one.



But is it possible to recover from a first impression fumble? Furthermore, once you've impressed on the first pass, is your work done, or must you continue to uphold your end of the bargain at each and every point of interaction?

Glass half full, my belief is that, yes, you can recuperate from a mediocre first impression. The initial point of interaction between guest and hotel is not the sole determinant of one's judgment. It's better to think of it as establishing a baseline for what to expect. And if the bar is set a tad lower than you'd want it, then doubling your efforts for the second impression will come as a highly positive shock to the system, quelling doubts and reassuring the guest that your hotel is full of surprises.

The key with second impressions and second assurances is that you have to try extra hard to elevate the guest's feelings above the pre-established baseline. To draw upon another golden oldie, in June of 2012, I wrote on the topic of [‘Double Deviations’](#), where I argued that guests are willing to let one light to

moderate mistake go by – we're all human after all! But, when the second error occurs, that's when guests turn against you because as a repeat offender it's proof that you are not acting as genuine hospitality professionals.

Therefore, if we account for the theory behind double deviations, then it should be readily clear that in a hotel capacity second impressions may be even more important than their predecessors. And I can think of no better way to assure guests that the first time around was not an example of ordinary service at your property than through exceptional guest service. Singular grievances should be flagged and any associated guests marked for special treatment, lest said customers suffer through another pratfall and become irreversibly infuriated.

In other words, it's okay to screw up...once! But when you do, it's all hands on deck to steer the ship back on course. In terms of ameliorative actions beyond the work of a very helpful staff member, my first thoughts run to F&B. Maybe you find out that the guest is dining at your restaurant that night and you decide to surprise them with a complimentary dessert. Or, they arrive back in their room and a bottle of sparkling wine with sliced fruit accompaniment is waiting for them. Sometimes even a, earnest handwritten from the manager can do wonders, especially when parallel actions are taken to mitigate the cause of the error in the first place.

My hope for you in this article is to realize that guests who feel wronged or slighted are not your enemies. They can be won over through subsequent actions you and your staff take. I look forward to hearing some stories in the comments along these lines.

(Article by Larry Mogelonsky, published in [HOTELS Magazine](#) on October 6, 2015)