

Case Study 1 - A Night Out

This particular week had been a nightmare for Mary. The kids had come down with the flu and had been home from school since Tuesday. So, rather than having her usual few quiet hours each day, she found herself stuck at home all week. By Thursday night she was well and truly at her wits-end and needed a night out. She chatted to her husband John about how she felt, so they decided they would go out on Friday night.

On Friday morning Mary telephoned a local hotel. The receptionist who answered was very friendly. She wasn't sure of the opening times of the restaurant, as she was only new, but she offered to connect Mary to her colleague in The Sunflower Restaurant, so she could make a booking with her.

Following the call transfer, a young lady answered the phone:

"Is this the Sunflower?" asked Mary.

"Yes, it is, what can I do for you?" answered the girl.

"Ehm, I'd like to make a booking for two people for tonight, if possible?"

"That's fine, hang on and I'll check for you," came the reply and the girl went off to find out.

As she did so, in the background, Mary could hear her calling out to someone to help her find the diary. Mary waited and eventually the girl came back:

"Now, how many people was that for?" the girl asked.

"It's for two, at 9.00pm," said Mary.

"And your name is?"

"You can book it in the name of John Roche."

"Ok. That's great so, see you tonight then. Thanks, bye,"

"Ehm, could we have a quiet table by the..."

Mary was just asking this question when the phone went dead. Oh, she said to herself, she's in a bit of a hurry, but, sure, we can sort it out tonight.

For the rest of the day, Mary was looking forward to her night out. She even thought of buying herself a new outfit as a treat, but she knew John would hit the roof, so she just picked out one of the outfits she liked. John arrived home about six and started to get ready. Mary could tell he'd had a bad day as he was miles away. As soon as the baby-sitter arrived they left. As they drove up towards the hotel, John started to relax a little and they chatted away; Mary mentioned the news about her sister getting married. John made some smart comment about love being blind which made them both laugh. As they drove into the car park they could tell it was quite busy. A security guard was on duty directing traffic. John couldn't find a space for ages and eventually

squeezed into a space at the end of a row of cars. They were just getting out of the car when the guard came over:

“Hey, you can’t park there.”

“But, this is the only place I could find,” replied John.

“Look, you’ll have to move it anyway,”

Normally John would have argued the point, but he could tell by looking at Mary that it was the last thing she needed.

“You go on ahead, Mary, and I’ll find a space and follow you in shortly.”

As Mary walked into the hotel, she noticed how clean the front looked. They obviously keep it nice she felt. As she waited in the lobby, she noticed that they held weddings at the hotel. I must tell sis about this place - it would be nice for her wedding, she thought. She also noticed they had a brochure stand and made a mental note to collect one on the way out. When John arrived into the lobby, she could tell he was on a short fuse. “We’re a bit early, let’s go for a drink first,” said Mary calming him down and they headed towards the bar. Once inside, they were glad to see that there were some tables free. None of them were clean, but at least they had somewhere to sit.

They waited for a while for lounge service but finally John went to the bar. On his way back with the drinks, he asked one of the floor staff if they would come over and wipe the table. “As soon as I get this order,” was the reply. The lounge boy did come over shortly thereafter. Mary smiled to herself as she saw him coming because he had his shirt sticking out at the back.

“Good evening,” said the lounge boy, and he nodded towards their drinks.

John lifted both drinks and he wiped the table.

“You’re busy tonight,” said Mary.

“No, not really, it’s just that there’s never enough staff on here, so we’re run off our feet as usual. Can I get you anything else while I’m here?”

“No thanks,” they both replied and off he went.

When they had finished their drinks, they moved towards the restaurant. As they entered, a girl at a little desk inside the door looked up briefly and asked them if they had a reservation. Mary said they had; in the name of Roche for two at nine o’clock. The girl looked through the diary but didn’t seem to be able to find the booking:

“I telephoned today and made the booking with one of the staff,” said Mary.

“Did you get her name?” asked the receptionist.

“No, I didn’t actually,” replied Mary.

“Well, there’s no booking here, so you’ll have to take a seat; we are very busy at the moment.

Mary was more than a little annoyed, but she tried to remain calm as she knew it wouldn't take much to set John off. "Oh well, these things happen," she said as they sat down.

After a few minutes, a gentleman approached them. He introduced himself as the Head Waiter and apologized for the mix up. He explained that they were preparing a table and that they could look through the menus while they were waiting. Mary asked if they could have a quiet table and he said it would be fine as the one being prepared was next to the window. He handed them the menus and left, returning a short time later to escort them to their table. After they were seated, he took the order and headed to the kitchen. A young girl brought them some bread and iced water. "Good evening," she said, "my name is Sarah and I'll be looking after you tonight."

John and Mary now started to relax and as the evening progressed the food was excellent. Sarah was very good too and looked after them extremely well. When the meal was over, they went back to the bar for a quick drink before they headed for home. John saw the barman checking his watch as they came in. "Yes?" he asked them as they reached the bar. They ordered their drinks and sat down. "That was a lovely meal," said Mary. John quickly agreed. They chatted away for a while, but got the impression that the staff were looking to finish up:

"They've only just served last orders," said John.

"I know," said Mary "but let's go anyway, I'm tired."

On the way home in the car, Mary remembered that she had forgotten to take one of the wedding brochures. Then she thought about it for a while and decided that maybe that wasn't such a bad thing as her sister might be better off trying somewhere else . . .

Questions

1. What were the guests' expectations, expectations and evaluation for this night out?
2. Identify the factors that negatively and positively impacted the service outcome?
3. How would you address the issues as the customer service manager for the organization to not have a repeat of this?
4. Develop a customer service policy for the restaurant to assist the daily operations.