

100% SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

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After a particularly frustrating business trip, Sales Representative Dan O'Brien sent the following letter to the president and CEO of El Primo Inns, Inc.

Dear Mr. Simmons,

As a long-time El Primo customer, I am very disappointed with the way I was treated on my most recent visit. You advertise a 100% Satisfaction Guarantee. However, I left your hotel nothing close to 100% satisfied.

I made a reservation through your reservation system for the airport location because my flight was not scheduled to arrive until 10:30 P.M. Your reservation clerk assured me that the hotel had airport shuttle service available at that time. I gave the airport location to my boss as he was to meet me the morning after my arrival.

Due to weather, my flight was over an hour late. After collecting my luggage, I called the hotel to request the shuttle. The clerk at the hotel could not find my reservation and asked for my confirmation number. Upon receiving it, he informed me that my reservation was at another El Primo property about 6 miles away. I called that property for shuttle service and was told that the service stopped running at 10 P.M. Therefore, I was forced to pay \$16 for a cab to take me to the hotel.

Upon checking in, I asked the clerk to call the airport hotel location and leave a message so that my boss could find me at this other location. Her response? "It's not my problem."

The next morning, I tried to explain the problems I had to the general manager. His only reaction? "I'm sorry." Is this all your managers are authorized to do when confronted with a dissatisfied customer?

When I checked in, the rate I was given was \$69, the rate I was quoted by your reservation clerk. When I checked out the next morning, the rate had increased to \$79. When I brought this discrepancy to the clerk's attention, he said that the night audit system automatically posts the rate of \$79 unless the night auditors override the system. He then corrected the amount. Again, I talked with the general manager and his response again was simply, "I am sorry."

These are the facts. Your 100% Satisfaction Guaranteed slogan doesn't really seem to mean very much. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,
Dan O'Brien

Based on the above information,

1. What should a "100% Satisfaction Guarantee" mean in the case of a hotel? What did it appear to mean in the case of El Primo Inns?
2. How many breaks from the service script occurred according to Mr. O'Brien's letter?
3. What service recovery measures should have been taken?
4. If you were Mr. Simmons, what would your response(s) be in this situation?
5. Should Mr. Simmons follow up on his letter to Mr. O'Brien? If so, what kind of follow-up? What should he say?

This critical incident was prepared by Roy A. Cook, Laura J. Yale, and John E. Cave of Fort Lewis College and is intended to be used as a basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of the situation. The names of the organization, the individuals, and locations have been disguised to preserve the organization's desire for anonymity. Copyright © 2001 by Roy A. Cook, Laura J. Yale, and John E. Cave.