

Traveling Companion: Complaint Department

Fr. Michael Tracey

I checked into my hotel in Boston recently. It was part of a well known national upscale hotel chain. I did my usual reconnoitering mission, checking out the bed, television, bathroom, coffee making machine, hotel information folder. Informed, I relaxed knowing times of meals, checkout times, and television channels.

I discovered, on reading, that one would be charged \$9.95 for internet services. On further detective work, I discovered that if I took my laptop to the lobby of the hotel, I could receive free internet access for twenty-four hours. I opted for the later.

Perusing through the black folder that contained all the pertinent information, I discovered an interesting “Do Tell” comment sheet on the hotel that was already filled out. In fact, it was dated two weeks prior to my visit to the hotel. I began to read the comment sheet. Overall satisfaction with the hotel was low. The likelihood of recommending the hotel was very low. Overall price paid for value was very low. The primary purpose of the visit was “pleasure” (wedding)” “Did you have a problem during your stay?” “Yes” was marked. “Was the problem resolved?” “No.”

The client then went on to state “the nature of the problem.” “Food and beverage at wedding was poor. Bar was not stocked. They offered us drinks with Sprite; ran out of beer, had very cheap wine. Server at bar was not happy to be there. However, servers at wedding were very good and friendly.”

The comments continued overleaf. “On our floor, had a very loud after hours party around 4:00 a.m. Loud, drunk guests banging on doors, yelling, etc. In morning, starting very early, we were woken up by guests departing – hotel has very poor noise ‘insulation.’ We were very disappointed with the wedding and hotel in general. We were forced to have our drinks in the lobby. The place was so inadequate and was a waste of money.”

The top of the comment card had suggested that “upon completion, you’re welcome to leave this card in the room, drop it at the front desk or email your comments to...”

As I read the comments, I thought about my own experience in the hotel. Obviously, I had no blank comment card to fill in. I wondered why room service did not bother to pick up the comments of a previous occupant. Maybe, during my stay at the hotel, I was too tired to be disturbed by any drunken sprees that might have taken place while I slept.

I purchase many items through the internet on line. I always read the “comments” that people leave about not only the products they purchased but also their comments on the web site experience in question. Such comments and insights can be very helpful in evaluating a purchase or service.

I realize that one of the most important departments in a store is the “Complaint Department,” although it is often referred to in a more diplomatic way. Complaints, if headed and analyzed, become the building blocks for better service and relationships.

Now, as we come to the end of our church year, we are asked to ponder the kind of evaluation sheet that God will share with us. We realize that the number of talents we receive – five, two or one – doesn’t really matter. What really matters is how we have used them. We will be evaluated on the kind of service we provided to others, God and our world. We will be graded on the level of difference we made in other people’s lives; by how much richer they are because of our impact on them and their journey through life.

In the interim, I need to mail a comment card to a certain hotel in Boston. After all, one’s “feedback is greatly encouraged and appreciated.”