



Dear Friends and Clients,

My husband and I love dining out, and we enjoy the experience as much as the food. Of course we want to try new places. But we also love having a few special restaurants that not only serve great food but also make us feel like we are insiders, coming home.

The restaurant most likely to make us feel like we belong to a special club is It's About Thyme, a bistro in Culpeper, Virginia. Owner John Yarnall came to this small town after building and moving on from a successful group of restaurants in Philadelphia. The way he set about opening a restaurant, established It's About Thyme, and then expanded it into a series of businesses, helped set the stage for the rebirth of a charming old town that was fading away in the wake of nearby Big Box Store development.

John has built his business in a way that has supported the surrounding community, revitalized downtown Culpeper, and bolstered nearby stores and even other restaurants. What is so fascinating about watching a master of the hospitality business, like John, is that everything is out there. We can see what works. But when things aren't going well, when orders are confused or diners are annoyed about waiting for their reservations, that's also there for all to see.

What is always evident is John's unwavering focus on his customers. He understands that they want to be recognized, remembered and valued. John can be brusque, ordering his clientele around, even making firm suggestions about what they should order, or seating them with people he thinks they should meet.

But there is never a doubt that John cares deeply about the people who choose to dine with him. His enthusiasm is so buoyant that on the rare nights that he isn't in the restaurant things can feel a little flat.

We have learned much about service businesses, and not just restaurants, by watching and talking with John over the last 15 years. So I had a sense of déjà vu this week while reading words of Danny Meyer, the brilliant CEO of a premier New York City restaurant company. The next best thing to taking you to dinner at It's About Thyme is telling you about Meyer's enjoyable and insightful book, and that is what I will do in this ezine.

Warm wishes, Bev

Go Beyond Excellent Service & Learn From a Guru of Hospitality

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Since he opened the Union Square Café at age 27, Danny Meyer has been putting his stamp on the competitive New York City restaurant business. Today his company owns 11 of the City's most beloved restaurants, and Danny and the group have won an unprecedented 19 James Beard awards.

Meyer is known not just for those fine establishments, however. Business students and aspiring entrepreneurs look to him as the author of "**Setting the Table – The Transforming Power of Hospitality in Business.**"

His 2006 book is not only a fascinating autobiography, rich in accounts of wonderful meals in Europe and across the U.S. It also is a useful guide for people running service businesses, or anyone who wants to provide stellar service and effective leadership within an organization. Here are a few tips from Meyer:

- **Provide hospitality, not just service.** Meyer says that nothing is as important as how one is made to *feel* in any business transaction. Customers experience "hospitality" when they believe the other person is on their side – when something happens *for* them, and not just *to* them. "Service" describes how well things are done, and what is delivered to a customer. But "hospitality" goes further, to reflect the way that delivery of a product makes the recipient *feel*.
- **Turn mistakes around.** Even in first class operations like Meyer's, mistakes happen and customers sometimes are disappointed. The trick is to "write a great last chapter," so that customers remember not only what went wrong but also the great way that the episode was handled. For example, if a waiter spills wine on a customer's jacket, Meyer's team might send it out for one-hour cleaning, while entertaining the customer with extra -- and complimentary – courses. You cannot change what happened, but you can create a new ending so that the story finishes in a way that works for you. Here are Meyer's five "As" for addressing mistakes:
 - **Awareness** – Notice what happened.
 - **Acknowledgement** – Confess the truth, such as with, "Our server had an accident and we'll bring a new plate as soon as possible."
 - **Apologize** -- Say you are sorry (but don't make excuses).
 - **Action** – Say what you will do to make amends, and follow through.

- **Additional generosity** – Offer something complimentary to show that your apology is sincere.
- **Hire 51 percenters.** Meyer attributes much of his success to careful hiring. He says that the only way a company can grow, while “staying true to its soul,” is to hire and keep great people. In selecting staff, he looks for people whose skills are divided about 51:49 “between emotional hospitality and technical excellence.” He seeks people “who naturally radiate warmth, friendliness, happiness and kindness.”

Want to explore more workplace issues? In addition to providing executive coaching and consulting, Bev and her colleagues are available to create workshops and speak about a broad range of issues related to your career. Visit her website at **www.ClearWaysConsulting.com** or email to **Bev** directly. Bev is associated with **Executive Coaching & Consulting Associates.**