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On Making a Difference

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By Mike Taigman

Have you ever been to a Denny's at 2 AM? If you've been in this industry more than a week, chances are you've experienced this late night/early morning dining adventure.

And what an adventure it is, with folks whose blood alcohol levels exceed their IQ by a factor of four surrounding you and a waitperson who probably chose the night shift so that her probation officer wouldn't stop by the workplace and give her a whiz quiz.

Before all you Denny's fans jump down my throat, let me share the rest of my story. After a late night flight into Salt Lake City last week, my companion and I found ourselves foraging for food at the Denny's closest to the airport. As usual, my expectations were low. The guy who showed us to our seats seemed nice enough. I asked him how his night was going. He stopped, made direct eye contact and said, "Awesome, this is an awesome night and having you two join me makes it even better. You're my only two customers, so you'll get the best service you can imagine."

As we sat down, I looked at my friend and asked, "Are we actually in a Denny's, or is there some kind of time warp that's transported us to a five-star restaurant?" She replied, "He really seems to mean it."

Dave blew us away with his service, sense of humor and genuine caring for his job. He made most five-star restaurant waiters look like greenhorns. We called the manager over to pass along our appreciation for Dave. He said, "Yeah, I hear that all the time about him, everyone loves him, he's always in an upbeat mood."

A few days later, while waiting in the security line at the San Francisco Airport, I heard James – a large gregarious TSA employee – booming instructions to the Sunday travelers. He had the tone and cadence of a Baptist minister preaching the gospel. Everyone was smiling, laughing and relaxed as they emptied the coins and metallic gum wrappers out of their pockets and took off their shoes to be X-rayed.

I got to thinking how much fun it would be to have Dave and James show up as my ambulance crew if, God forbid, I should ever need one again. I bet they would help me smile, relax and even have a little fun in spite of the pain. I bet that any student who would ride with them would learn something besides how to start an IV and take a 12-lead. I bet that the first responders with whom they would work would greet them with cheerful smiles. My guess is that their medical skills would match their people skills.

Then I wondered, how am I doing in this realm? Am I lifting people's spirits when I work with them? I'm grateful to Dave and James for the inspirational reminder that no matter what your job, it's possible to really make a difference in the lives of other people.

Uplift your spirit with Mike online at www.miketaigman.com.

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