

THE LEADERSHIP LENS Newsletter

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A monthly resource providing insight, opinion & practical information on creativity, balance, leadership & personal development

Stepping Up to Responsibility

As the plane touched down at Orlando International Airport, I was greeted by beautiful blue skies. My mood further improved when the captain reported temperatures in the high 60's. It was over 35 degrees warmer than the dreary weather we had left in Washington, DC. Each year I take my family on a warm weather break for a few days during the month of January. One year I felt the effects of the gray skies and the cold rain more than usual, because we hadn't made getting away a priority. Knowing this, we'll never miss our concentrated sunshine prescription again. When you find out what happened to my family and me on our most recent trip, you might say, 'I told you so,' but would you have pressed on for the same result?

I had answered an offer for a 4-night, 5-day, \$199 vacation opportunity to experience a timeshare at a well-known resort. Our end of the bargain was to listen to a 90-minute 'sales pitch.' Since it rained every day last year, my wife was luke-warm to the idea of going back to Orlando; however, she was more interested when she read about the opportunity to relax 'in a stunning villa complete with an extra-large Jacuzzi tub and a screened-in-porch overlooking a luscious garden and pool. Before she had a chance to change her mind, I promptly booked the trip. A few days later, the resort company informed us that the property was completely sold out. We were to be placed in a 'sister' property with the same accommodations. I didn't think too much of this switch since we were to receive the same kind of 'stunning' villa.

Was I ever wrong! At check in, I waited behind a dozen people with badges around their necks. When I finally got to the desk clerk, the only room available was on the seventh floor of Tower One, and this property had four towers. The badges and crowds came courtesy of Orlando's largest convention in its' history, the International Homebuilder's Association. According to the Orlando Convention and Visitors Bureau, Orlando has seen a 25% rise in organizations wanting to hold large meetings from 2003 to 2004. In January alone, the increase was over 88% during the same time period. A similar rise in timeshare purchases and new construction has also been reported too. No wonder it was so crowded! As we navigated through the overflow parking lot and began to unload our luggage and supplies from the local organic health food store. It didn't hit me until I pressed '7' on the elevator panel. Villas aren't supposed to have elevators unless your name is Bill Gates.

As we opened the door, I collided with a stale dry air probably serving as a breeding ground for the next outbreak of Legionnaire's disease. Our one-bedroom suite came without a balcony, a full-service kitchen, or an extra large Jacuzzi. Instead, the room had a plastic couch, peeling wallpaper and random carpet stains. As I opened the door to our mini refrigerator, the freezer door section slid off of its' hinges and revealed a complimentary frozen snack, an appetizingly long black hair. Our son was getting so hungry that I was forced to make spaghetti in the coffee pot. I don't think he could tell that the spaghetti sauce had basil, garlic and hints of coffee grounds either. It was at this point that I decided we weren't going to spend a second night there. How many people would have stayed put feeling that this was the price of their mostly free timeshare experience in Orlando?

I was feeling cramped in our 'stunning' room especially after the introduction of our son's crib. According to an article in the *Wall Street Journal* on wealth and happiness, "The more choices people have, economists assume, the happier they are." I knew that feeling happier about our vacation was directly related to having more choices in our accommodations. The front desk clerk was sympathetic about our plight, but said that the hotel and its' small collection of villas at the back of the property were full. Next, the manager of the property demonstrated an increasing level of incompetence when he informed me that a suite and a villa are the same thing in Orlando! I called the toll-free number of the company where I had booked the trip and was told that they only help new customers. These responses were the antithesis of excellent customer service. I was astounded that nobody would take responsibility for misleading us.

As we went on a sightseeing venture that next day, I was determined not to give up on rectifying our situation. I drove right to the property where we should have been staying. It was quiet, family-oriented and much newer. The property's time-share representative smiled at us in a reassuring way as he listened to our predicament. Immediately he promised to rectify the situation to the best of his ability. He took ownership of the problem, did his best to find a solution, and exceed our expectations by booking us into a larger two-bedroom villa for the rest of our vacation. He even waived the fee for staying an extra night. It's unfortunate that some people won't take responsibility for their actions. You might get what you pay for, but when you focus on getting treated with respect and honesty, you may find that you will get a whole lot more!

About Mark Sincevich:

Mark Sincevich taps into the creative power of the individual to enhance people and organizations. This allows organizations to develop passionate and balanced employees, generate new ideas and increase profitability. Through his photography expertise, he brings a unique angle to his professional speaking programs on creativity, balance, leadership and personal development. In addition, Mark works to recharge and strengthen his customer's focus and direction through his facilitation services, offsite teambuilding events and presentations skills programs. He is an active member of the National Speaker's Association and brings over 17 years of experience in high technology sales and marketing and public accounting into his programs. Mark has also been practicing photography for over 21 years and continues to sharpen his skills as an instructor at the Washington School of Photography. He is the author of two books and numerous articles. When he isn't speaking professionally or taking photographs, he can be found writing in some of the finest coffee shops. For more information on Mark's professional speaking programs, photography, books and CDs contact Staash Press at (301) 654-3010, info@staashpress.com or www.staashpress.com.

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