



Mark's up to it again... reading yet ANOTHER book...

I heard this author speak near the start of the year at a conference at which I presented. He was, amongst the conference speakers, the highlight for me. His name is Will Guidara. For years, he was a partner in a New York City restaurant called Eleven Madison Park (EMP), which at one point was honored as “the world’s best restaurant.” Will has since moved on and shares his wisdom regarding creating unforgettable customer (in the case of his restaurant, diner) experiences. People told him that it was UNREASONABLE to offer the kind of HOSPITALITY EMP offered... Maybe it was unreasonable, but people told story after story of their experience in his restaurant. Will has written a bestselling book entitled, *Unreasonable – The Remarkable Power of Giving People More than They Expect*. The following is an excerpt that I thought was worth sharing. In this part of his book, he shares how he handled an employee who “crossed the line.” I believe there is at least one take-away here for all of us who serve as leader, manager, employer, parent, or coach.

pp.141-2 **Hire Slow, Fire Fast – But Not Too Fast**

One night, a manager reported that he'd caught one of our best captains – I'll call him Ben – drinking during service. If a restaurant doesn't allow drinking on the job (and we did not; some do), this is grounds for immediate dismissal. But instead of immediately telling him to pack his bags, I asked him to sit down and talk to me.

“I'm going to ask you not to lie to me: Were you drinking last night during your shift?”

He hung his head. “Yes. I'm sorry, and I completely understand if you fire me over it.”

I said, “I'm not firing you yet, but I'm not happy. You didn't let me down – or, rather, you didn't JUST let me down; you disappointed your entire team. You're supposed to be a leader, but instead of leading, you got drunk.

“So, we can do this one of two ways. You can leave right now – we'll shake hands, I'll thank you for all the time you've given us and all the people you've made happy, and how much you've done to make this restaurant a better place. Then you can clean out your locker and go home.

“But if you want to stay, then take tomorrow off, come back the day after, and apologize to everybody you were working with last night. Tell them what you did, why you realize it's a mistake, and why you're sorry. Promise you'll never do it again – and know that if you do, I'm going to fire you on the spot.”

It wasn't easy for Ben to have those conversations with his colleagues. He was a tough captain to work for because his standards were high; if you were in his station, he held you accountable. But there is tremendous power in vulnerability. Because Ben took responsibility, everyone who'd been furious with him forgave him.

A couple of month later, Ben drank again during a shift, and I fired him, as I'd said I would. (I'm happy to report it served as a wake-up call; he's in recovery now and has made a notable career for himself in hospitality.) But I have no regrets about giving him a second chance.

*The people you work with will never be your actual family. That doesn't mean you can't work harder to treat them like family, which may mean tweaking one of the great management sayings out there, which is, “**Hire slow and fire fast.**”*

I do believe, as I've already said, in hiring slow. You need to be acutely aware in the first few months if someone joining the team is not the right fit, or if they're simply going to need a little extra support to succeed. And you can't drag your feet unnecessarily on firing someone who's toxic; you need to get them out before they poison the balance of the team.

*At the same time, you would never kick a member of your family out of the house for making a single mistake, would you? So maybe we should amend that saying to, “**HIRE SLOW, FIRE FAST – BUT NOT TOO FAST.**”*

So, two take-away's for me:

- I like it when I am given a second chance. Can I extend the same grace to others as I desire myself?
- I too often put off the tough conversations, which, if I had them early on, would benefit not only me, but the other person – maybe even the “team.”

How about you? What are your take-away's?