

Your Kindle Notes For:



Unreasonable Hospitality: The Remarkable Power of Giving People More Than They Expect

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150 Highlight(s) | 0 Note(s)

Location: 131

Fads fade and cycle, but the human desire to be taken care of never goes away.

Location: 169

Which means addressing questions I've spent my career asking: How do you make the people who work for you and the people you serve feel seen and valued? How do you give them a sense of belonging? How do you make them feel part of something bigger than themselves? How do you make them feel welcome?

Location: 185

hospitality is a selfish pleasure. It feels great to make other people feel good.

Location: 203

When I dropped my napkin on the floor, he replaced it with a totally new one and called me "sir." "People will forget what you do; they'll forget what you said. But they'll never forget how you made them feel." This quote, often (but probably incorrectly) attributed to the great American writer Maya Angelou, may be the wisest statement about hospitality ever made. Because thirty years later, I still haven't forgotten how the Four Seasons made me feel.

Location: 227

My mom finished college by putting herself through night school, and she even earned her pilot's license, though she was never a very good driver, which makes me wonder who thought it was a good idea for her to fly a plane.

Location: 240

One night, she fell coming down the stairs. My dad was working restaurant hours, as he did for most of his professional life; when he got home around eleven, he found my mom and me sleeping on the bottom step. I was too little to help her up, but not too little to fetch us pillows and a blanket so we could make a comfy nest.

Location: 301

So there was Daniel Boulud in my busted kitchen, drinking Milwaukee's Best from a red Solo cup and whipping up scrambled eggs with truffles for a bunch of wasted college kids. Did one of the most celebrated chefs in the world do a keg stand on my pool table? I'll never tell. The party reluctantly broke up around three in the morning. We parted with hugs all around.

Location: 347

I had already happily chosen a life in restaurants, but that night, I learned how important, how noble, working in service can be.

Location: 351

When you work in hospitality—and I believe that whatever you do for a living, you can choose to be in the hospitality business—you have the privilege of joining people as they celebrate the most joyful moments in their lives and the chance to offer them a brief moment of consolation and relief in the midst of their most difficult ones. Most important, we have an opportunity—a responsibility—to make magic in a world that desperately needs more of it.

Location: 373

Intention means every decision, from the most obviously significant to the seemingly mundane, matters.

Location: 389

Tribeca, stopping for a snack or a glass of wine at some of the best restaurants in the city: Nobu, Montrachet, Chanterelle, Zoë, Gotham Bar and Grill, Gramercy Tavern, Union Pacific, Tabla, and Eleven Madison Park. We kept going, up to Alain Ducasse, Café des Artistes, and more.

Location: 391

Tabla and Eleven Madison Park, both owned by the restaurateur Danny Meyer—stood out to me.

Location: 409

“It’s easier to learn the right way to do things at the high end than it is to break bad habits. You can always take it down a notch later, but it’s harder to go the other way.” A month later, I was a manager at Tabla, running the front-door team. My education had begun.

Location: 431

In *Setting the Table*, Danny Meyer’s groundbreaking book about enlightened hospitality, he tells a story about a couple celebrating their anniversary at one of his restaurants.

Location: 441

If they told him they were by a meter on the street, he asked which car was theirs so one of us could run out and drop a couple of quarters into the box while they were dining. This gesture was the definition of a grace note, a sweet but nonessential addition to your experience. It was an act of hospitality that didn’t even take place within the walls of the restaurant! But this simple gift—worth fifty cents—blew people’s minds.

Location: 447

Enthusiasm Is Contagious

Location: 450

Danny’s partner Richard Coraine would often tell us, “All it takes for something extraordinary to happen is one person with enthusiasm.”

Location: 456

It was from him I learned: Let your energy impact the people you’re talking to, as opposed to the other way around.

Location: 466

Language Creates Culture Danny has always understood how language can build culture by making essential concepts easy to understand and to teach. He is brilliant at coining phrases around common experiences, potential pitfalls, and favorable outcomes.

Location: 519

I listened, as I always did, because my dad didn’t just give advice; he always took the time to explain why, a leadership skill I’ve always tried to emulate.

Location: 533

Restaurant-smart companies can be great businesses, and corporate-smart companies can deliver great hospitality. But their priorities are different, in ways that fundamentally affect the guests’ experience.

Location: 544

Control Doesn't Have to Stifle Creativity

Location: 551

It's impossible to overestimate how important it was that I was doing both jobs simultaneously.

Location: 584

In my accounting classes at Cornell, they'd told us everything starts and stops with the profit and loss statement.

Location: 597

Hani hadn't been doing me a disservice by making me wait; he had been forcing me to strengthen my foundation, a solid base I relied on for years afterward. Waiting didn't dim my ambition or hamper my progress; it taught me to trust the process—a lesson I would see the wisdom of when I was showing my own staff that the right way to do things starts with how you polish a wineglass.

Blue highlight | Location: 600

There's no replacement for learning a system from the ground up.

Location: 628

Just because a few regulars love an employee doesn't mean they should be allowed to erode the foundation of everything you're trying to build.

Location: 645

Former navy captain David Marquet says that in too many organizations, the people at the top have all the authority and none of the information, while the people on the front line have all the information and none of the authority. I was learning that, taken too far, corporate-smart could be restaurant-dumb.

Location: 650

Danny Meyer's enlightened hospitality. When he said, "Take care of each other first," he didn't mean it was only a manager's job to take care of the hourly employees; it was everyone's job to take care of everyone.

Location: 678

Find the Balance Between Control and Creativity

Location: 726

This is what I would later call the Rule of 95/5: Manage 95 percent of your business down to the penny; spend the last 5 percent “foolishly.”

Location: 727

sounds irresponsible; in fact, it’s anything but. Because that last 5 percent has an outsize impact on the guest experience, it’s some of the smartest money you’ll ever spend.

Location: 828

My dad has always said: Run toward what you want, as opposed to away from what you don’t want. So he asked me straight-out: “What’s your dream job?”

Blue highlight | Location: 865

Eleven Madison Park,

Blue highlight | Location: 869

Jean-Georges

Blue highlight | Location: 869

Daniel

Blue highlight | Location: 869

Per Se

Blue highlight | Location: 869

Le Bernardin, were

Blue highlight | Location: 872

Babbo’s pasta

Blue highlight | Location: 873

Ssäm Bar,

Blue highlight | Location: 875

Prune’s

Blue highlight | Location: 878

Kung Pao Pastrami at Mission Chinese and the Cheezus Christ pie at Roberta's,

Blue highlight | Location: 882

Momofuku

Location: 892

You should never waste an opportunity to gather intel before your first day on the job.

Location: 936

There's a fascinating and possibly overlooked advantage that businesses with strong cultures have: when an employee comes up in the organization, any other way of doing things just feels wrong.

Location: 954

Leaders Listen

Location: 956

He said: "I am so excited to be here; I believe in and love this restaurant with all my heart. I'm also clear about what my job is, which is to do what's best for the restaurant, not to do what's best for any of you. More often than not, what's best for the restaurant will include doing what's best for you. But the only way I can take care of all of you as individuals is by always putting the restaurant first."

Location: 964

Some of the best advice I ever got about starting in a new organization is: Don't cannonball. Ease into the pool. I've passed this advice on to those joining my own: no matter how talented you are, or how much you have to add, give yourself time to understand the organization before you try to impact it.

Location: 971

You're not always going to agree with everything you hear, but you've got to start by listening.

Location: 979

Those meetings also taught me that time spent goes a long way. Sitting down with people shows them you care about what they think and how they feel and makes it that much easier for them to trust that you have their best interests in mind.

Location: 998

A leader's responsibility is to identify the strengths of the people on their team, no matter how buried those strengths might be.

Location: 1,016

Keep Emotions Out of Criticism

Location: 1,023

I still give The One Minute Manager to every person I promote. It's an amazing resource, in particular on how to give feedback. My biggest takeaways were: Criticize the behavior, not the person. Praise in public; criticize in private. Praise with emotion, criticize without emotion.

Location: 1,050

Every manager lives with the fantasy that their team can read their mind. But in reality, you have to make your expectations clear.

Location: 1,069

Thirty Minutes a Day Can Transform a Culture

Location: 1,075

A daily thirty-minute meeting is where a collection of individuals becomes a team.

Location: 1,090

That was unreasonable, but the way you do one thing is the way you do everything, and I wanted those notes to be as thoughtful, as beautifully presented, as the lavender honey-glazed dry-aged duck we brought to our guests.

Location: 1,120

How connected we were as a team was more important to me than anything.

Location: 1,125

Employees who aren't succeeding tend to fall into two camps: the ones who aren't trying, and the ones who are. The end result may be similar, but the two need to be handled differently: you've got to move heaven and earth to help the people who are trying.

Location: 1,129

We needed to slow down to speed up.

Location: 1,147

make sure people who are trying and working hard have what they need to succeed.

Location: 1,149

finally delivered my rousing, Christopher Russell–style speech. It wasn't at my first pre-meal, or even my thirtieth, but the one I gave after I'd finally started to feel confident that everyone was talking to one another and to me and knew what was expected of them. "We're going to make this restaurant one of the best restaurants in New York," I told the assembled team. "It's not going to be easy, because being the best is never easy, but we are going to try to make it fun. If that's not right for you, I totally get it; we'll help you find a better fit. But if the idea of working at one of the most exciting restaurants in New York gets you fired up, then I hope you stick around, because we're about to take off. "I promise I'll try to be consistent, to do what's fair and what's right." Then I did quote Christopher: "I'm also clear about what my job is, which is to do what's best for the restaurant, not to do what's best for any of you. More often than not, what's best for the restaurant will include doing what's best for you. But the only way I can take care of all of you as individuals is by always putting the restaurant first." I finished with my own words: "We're going to make the kind of place we want to eat at; we're going to create the four-star restaurant for the next generation. That's where we're going. Will you come?"

Blue highlight | Location: 1,171

Modern,

Location: 1,176

Over the years, though, I came to see my four-star inexperience not as a weakness but as a superpower. My inexperience enabled me to look critically at every step of service and to interrogate the only thing that mattered: the guests' experience. Did a rule bring us closer to our ultimate goal, which was connecting with people? Or did it take us further from it?

Location: 1,184

When you ask, "Why do we do it this way?" and the only answer is "Because that's how it's always been done," that rule deserves another look. Knowing less is often an opportunity to do more.

Blue highlight | Location: 1,200

Le Pavillon.

Location: 1,220

Hire the Person, Not the Résumé

Location: 1,240

It's a cliché that culture can't be taught; it has to be caught. And what better way to appreciate the exquisite nature of Daniel's food than to spend six months ferrying plates from the kitchen to the table?

Location: 1,253

Because when you're hiring, you're hiring not only the people who are going to represent and support you, but the people who are going to represent and support the team already working for you.

Location: 1,257

At the end of the day, the best way to respect and reward the A players on your team is to surround them with other A players. This is how you attract more A players.

Location: 1,258

And it means you must invest as much energy into hiring as you expect the team to invest in their jobs.

Location: 1,260

You need to be as unreasonable in how you build your team as you are in how you build your product or experience.

Location: 1,266

Someone wise once told me, "When you hire, you should ask yourself: Could this person become one of the top two or three on the team? They don't necessarily have to be all the way there yet, but they should have the potential to be." We were gearing up for a big push. I needed to be confident that anyone could shout, "Cover me," knowing that the rest of the team would have their back.

Blue highlight | Location: 1,300

Canlis,

Blue highlight | Location: 1,301

"Seattle's fanciest, finest restaurant for more than 60 years." His dad, Chris Canlis, ran the restaurant for thirty years before eventually turning it over to Brian and his brother Mark.

Location: 1,347

If your business involves making people happy, then you can't be good at it if you don't care what people think. The day you stop reading your criticism is the day you grow complacent, and irrelevance won't be far behind.

Location: 1,374

We needed language. Language is how you give intention to your intuition and how you share your vision with others. Language is how you create a culture.

Location: 1,453

This wasn't an either/or—it was an and. Later, I would learn that the management guru Roger Martin calls this “integrative thinking.” In *When More Is Not Better*, he argues that leaders should actually go out of their way to choose conflicting goals.

Location: 1,470

I wrapped up that first strategic planning meeting by telling the team, “The moment you start to pursue service through the lens of hospitality, you understand there's nobility in it. We may not be saving people's lives, but we do have the ability to make their lives better by creating a magical world they can escape to—and I see that not as an opportunity, but as a responsibility, and a reason for pride.”

Blue highlight | Location: 1,508

Per Se

Blue highlight | Location: 1,509

French Laundry

Location: 1,639

But refusing to delegate because it might take too long to train someone will only get in the way of your own growth.

Location: 1,644

And while it does take more time to fix someone else's mistake than to do it yourself in the first place, these are short-term investments of time with long-term gains.

Location: 1,647

Often, the perfect moment to give someone more responsibility is before they're ready. Take a chance, and that person will almost always work extra hard to prove you right.

Location: 1,656

My dad says that the best way to learn is to teach, and he taught me to study for tests as if I were going in to deliver a presentation. I found that if I studied the material as if I was going to have to turn around and teach it, I learned it much more thoroughly than I would have otherwise.

Blue highlight | Location: 1,672

Le Pavillon,

Location: 1,678

Let Them Lead Those Happy Hours had an important side benefit. Normally, classes in a restaurant are led by the managers, not the staff, but as more and more members of the hourly team led classes, they acted more like leaders.

Location: 1,689

As long as the experience had taught you a lesson about making people feel seen and welcomed and appreciated, it was fair game.

Location: 1,696

The other important takeaway from that class was that public speaking is a leadership skill. Being able to communicate your own excitement is a powerful way to engage the people who work for and with you, and to infect them with energy and a sense of purpose.

Location: 1,749

in my eyes, collaboration is the foundation upon which Unreasonable Hospitality was built. Every single program improved by leaps and bounds, in ways that surprised us. The ideas we were fielding were newer and fresher; in fact, many of the ideas we would be most celebrated for were born in those programs. And there were more of them because it wasn't only me and Daniel and a few managers coming up with a plan.

Location: 1,771

Excellence Is the Culmination of Thousands of Details Executed Perfectly

Location: 1,787

Sir David Brailsford was a coach hired to revitalize British cycling. He did so by committing to what he called "the aggregation of marginal gains," or a small improvement in a lot of areas. In his words: "The whole principle came from the idea that if you broke down everything you could think of that goes into riding a bike, and then improve it by 1 percent, you will get a significant increase when you put them all together."

Location: 1,851

The way you do one thing is the way you do everything, and we found, over and over, that precision in the smallest of details translated to precision in bigger ones.

Location: 1,860

To which Disney responded, “People can feel perfection.” Maybe people don’t notice every single individual detail, but in aggregate, they’re powerful.

Location: 1,911

If you’ve corrected a guest because you don’t want them to think you’ve made a mistake, you’ve made a much bigger mistake.

Location: 1,914

In pursuing excellence, we were trying to do as many things right as we possibly could. At the same time, we had to let go of the concept of being right, because it meant going against the very essence of what we were trying to do, which was to make people feel great about eating and drinking in our restaurant.

Location: 1,919

It was then that a new mantra at EMP was born: “Their perception is our reality.”

Location: 1,944

RELATIONSHIPS ARE SIMPLE. SIMPLE IS HARD.

Location: 1,991

In my experience, people usually want to be heard more than they want to be agreed with.

Location: 2,020

Sometimes, the only way to proceed in pursuit of a good partnership is to decide that whoever cares more about the issue can have their way. It wasn’t that I didn’t care about how many desserts we served—when you’re intense and detail-oriented, everything matters. But it was more important to Daniel than it was to me.

Location: 2,076

It’s important to note that even this kind of reproach needs to be delivered, per Ken Blanchard, privately and without emotion. When I dragged Daniel into the office, my voice may have been loud, but my words were measured; I was emotional about the situation, but that didn’t come through in my delivery. You’re still criticizing the behavior, not the person, and a raised voice doesn’t mean losing control and raging. (In fact, you absolutely cannot lose control and rage.) It’s simply a different tough-love language, one that’s louder and sterner than the one you naturally prefer.

Location: 2,087

That's why I say there is no better way to show someone you care than by being willing to offer them a correction; it's the purest expression of putting someone else's needs above your own, which is what hospitality is all about. Praise is affirmation, but criticism is investment.

Location: 2,111

The people you work with will never be your actual family. That doesn't mean that 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."

Location: 2,129

Danny's willingness to reevaluate that holiday policy was a reminder to me that no aspect of your business should be off-limits to reevaluation.

Location: 2,165

If you don't create room for the people who work for you to feel seen and heard in a team setting, they'll never be fully known by the people around them.

Location: 2,167

"The secret to happiness is always having something to look forward to."

Location: 2,180

Founded in 1954, Relais & Châteaux is an association of some of the best independent restaurants and hotels in the world.

Blue highlight | Location: 2,183

American restaurants on the list included the French Laundry, Daniel, Le Bernardin, the Inn at Little Washington, Jean-Georges, and Per Se.

Location: 2,246

When someone out there catches your company doing something right, leverage it, and when that external affirmation comes, direct it to the people responsible.

Location: 2,257

As a leader, you have to use every single tool in your kit to build morale and keep it high. This is a constant quest for a manager, a daily pursuit—and it's hard to do.

Location: 2,280

Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.

Location: 2,310

Slow Down to Speed Up

Location: 2,333

Do less, and do it well.

Blue highlight | Location: 2,416

Le Bernardin had three stars. Jean-Georges had three stars. Masa had three stars. Even the Spotted Pig, April Bloomfield and Ken Friedman's celebrity-filled gastropub,

Location: 2,495

When you're working as a server, that's the only view of the world you have. And while you may think you'll hang on to that point of view forever, the truth is that once you've been promoted to manager, you'll eventually find your priorities replaced by a new set. As my dad would say, "Perspective has an expiration date, no matter how hard you try to hold on to it."

Location: 2,503

Keeping track of them would make it easier to hold on to the best of them, and this season of adversity would ultimately make us more profitable in the future.

Location: 2,607

In short, it was good that we'd figured out how to put our own oxygen masks on, because there wasn't a lot of relaxation that year.

Location: 2,639

"A magnitude of enchantment"! We had done it. We had four stars. And we'd earned them through our focus on excellence, but even more so because of our focus on hospitality . . . by being unapologetically us.

Location: 2,680

Informality is something you earn.

Location: 2,698

The first group was attentive; the second paid attention. I often describe “being present” as caring so much about what you’re doing that you stop caring about everything you need to do next. That second group of servers embodied that beautifully. When they were talking to guests, they were fully present with them. They were being rewarded for their hospitality, not their excellence.

Location: 2,703

We had trained for years to provide all the starch that people expected from a restaurant of our caliber. Now our focus was on giving those same people more warmth and connection than they expected from a restaurant of our caliber.

Pink highlight | Location: 2,705

We were no longer in the business of running an extraordinary restaurant; we were now in the business of human connection.

Location: 2,716

“What would you attempt to do if you knew you could not fail?” After a setback, it’s a leader’s job to take their team through their own emotional reckoning—from disappointment to motivation—and to chart the course ahead, because everyone has to be aligned on what you’re going to do next.

Location: 2,727

When you’ve surrounded yourself with talented people, there’s nothing more powerful than a collective decision.

Location: 2,733

Behavioral science expert Rory Sutherland says the opposite of a good idea should also be a good idea. That’s why the idea of Unreasonable Hospitality was so compelling. The opposite of Unreasonable Hospitality isn’t treating people poorly, it’s reasonable hospitality—a perfectly fine way of doing business.

Location: 2,801

Isn’t that what differentiates the good from the great? Being so committed to an idea that you’re willing to try harder, to go to unreasonable lengths in order to bring it to life?

Location: 2,817

Hospitality Is a Dialogue, Not a Monologue

Location: 2,829

Danny Meyer says that hospitality is a dialogue, not a monologue. He meant it metaphorically, but I wanted to make the dialogue literal.

Location: 2,919

This is a hospitality solution: a problem that we solved not by sneakily chipping away at the service we were offering but by blowing it out in the opposite direction—by giving more, not less.

Location: 2,974

All we had to do was pay attention.

Location: 3,088

It isn't the lavishness of the gift that counts, but its priceless.

Location: 3,103

you can also be proactive about improvisational hospitality. This is simple pattern recognition: identify moments that recur in your business, and build a tool kit your team can deploy without too much effort.

Location: 3,147

Without hesitation, I can say no, because the value of a gift isn't about what went into giving it, but how the person receiving it feels.

Location: 3,165

Luxury means just giving more; hospitality means being more thoughtful.

Location: 3,169

A yoga mat doesn't take any more time, energy, or resources to secure than a bottle of Prosecco, just a bit more thoughtfulness.

Location: 3,209

Gifts, to me, are deeply meaningful, which is why I get so mad when a business gives me a cheap tote with a branded USB drive. Try harder! Do better! Gifts are a way to tell people you saw, heard, and recognized them—that you cared enough to listen, and to do something with what you heard. A gift transforms an interaction, taking it from transactional to relational; there is

no better way than a gift to demonstrate that someone is more than a customer or a line item on a spreadsheet.

Location: 3,245

I say this whenever someone shares their fears with me about taking a leap forward: Nobody knows what they're doing before they do it. When you're trying to level up, it's easy to psych yourself out by focusing on everything you don't know.

Location: 3,309

but it's time we dispel the myth that creativity must be spontaneous and is limited to geniuses. Creativity is an active process, not a passive one.

Location: 3,329

As Walt Disney said, people can feel perfection.

Location: 3,338

As you grow, you can't lose the very thing that gave you the opportunity to grow.

Location: 3,399

However, even the most flawless and collaborative organization needs a boss.

Location: 3,420

My dad says, "Keep your eyes peeled," which means: listen, look, notice, learn; make sure you're not tumbling through life. Most important: Be aware when an item of real import is put in front of you.

Location: 3,433

There is such power when a leader can admit to their mistakes and apologize for them.

Location: 3,440

Sometimes the best time to promote people is before they are ready. So long as they are hungry, they will work even harder to prove that you made the right decision.

Location: 3,510

Too many people approach creative brainstorming by taking what's practical into consideration way too early in the process. Working with Jonathan and Dan reinforced what I'd always believed: Start with what you want to achieve, instead of limiting yourself to what's realistic or sustainable.

Location: 3,512

Or, as I like to say, don't ruin a story with the facts. Eventually, you'll reverse engineer your great idea and figure out what's possible and cost-effective and all the other boring grown-up stuff. But you should start with what you want to achieve.

Location: 3,582

And yet, by sticking to the principles of Unreasonable Hospitality, we'd left him with no choice but to acknowledge that he loved the way we made people feel.

Location: 3,622

Return to First Principles A mission statement's role, in any organization, is to articulate the nonnegotiables.

Location: 3,635

As my dad says: "Don't run away from what you don't want; run toward what you do." We didn't make the changes we made over that year because we were running away from complexity or difficulty or ambition, but because we were running toward a purer experience.

Location: 3,710

"This next year is going to be one of the most challenging of your life. You're going to be faced with countless difficult decisions. Every time you find yourself at a crossroads, I want you to ask yourself what 'right' looks like, then do that." Then he told me that this advice wasn't always going to be easy to follow because often doing what's "right" isn't always best for you in the short term.