

Shoe Shine to Remember

I like to think of myself as an industrious person with a lot of discipline. But there’s one thing I just can’t bring myself to do. It seems so simple and yet I will not do it. You see, *I hate shining my shoes*. So, when I want my shoes shined, I take them somewhere to get it done. It’s simple enough if I’m in New York City where there are plenty of stands to get your shoes shined for a few dollars.

When I’m home on Long Island, though, it’s a little more difficult. Here’s what I’ve been doing for years. I drive to a shopping mall that’s around 12 miles from my home. There’s a store in the mall that has a shoe shine stand. While I’m at the store, I buy a few things that I need and get my shoes shined. Usually, I bring in a few pair of shoes at a time.

Well, I was about to go out of town for several days and needed to have some shoes shined. The shoe shine stand in the store opens at 10:30 a.m., so I arrived at 10:40 a.m. The stand was still closed. So, I went to buy some belts and a shirt in the same store. I came back to the stand at 11:00 a.m. – still closed. I asked one of the store employees, “Is the shoe shine stand open today?”

“Yes,” he replied. “The person who shines the shoes is here, and he’ll be coming out in a minute to open the stand.” So, I waited...for about 10 minutes. No one showed up. So, I asked another employee nearby. He told me the stand would be open in just a minute. So, I waited another ten minutes. No one showed up. I walked up to the counter and spoke to someone who said he was the manager of this department. I told him what had happened and that I had waited 20 minutes for the stand to open.

He told me, “The person who does the shoe shines hasn’t shown up today. I’m sorry some other people told you he was here.” The manager was busy and went back to another customer. I had “the look” – you know, the look you get when you feel you’ve been treated unfairly and your business is not appreciated.

My thoughts immediately went to: “I’ve waited here for more than 20 minutes and I’m not going to stand for this kind of treatment.” Who can I report this to?” My mind was running wild. *I’ll register my complaint with the store...then I’ll follow up with a letter...and, if that doesn’t work, I could petition the Supreme Court!* My blood pressure was rising, and I was really focused on the negative. Then 20 years of mental training by reading and listening to motivational materials kicked in.

I called an immediate “time out” and calmed down. Was it really worth ruining my day and spending the next 48 hours figuring out ways to register my dissatisfaction with the way I was treated at a shoe shine stand? No way. After all, what’s the best that could happen? The store would say “I’m sorry” and maybe they’d give me a \$10 gift certificate. Was it worth ruining two days of my life? So, I came to my senses and quietly left the store, without reporting the incident to anyone.

As I drove home, I just let it go. I was feeling better already. But, as I was getting off the parkway near my home, a thought popped into my head: “Stop at the shoe store near the exit.” This is a store where I go to buy shoes on occasion. Then, logic took over and I said to myself, “Why on earth would I go to that shoe store now? How are they going to help me get my shoes shined?” But, since it was only a few blocks out of my way, I drove to that store.

I saw a salesman I knew there and told him I was having trouble finding someone who could shine a particular pair of leather shoes I had bought there. I asked if he had any suggestions. He told me that just up the road there was a shoe repair shop where the owner could help me. So, I drove to the shop. The door to the store was locked. There was a sign that said, “Be back in five minutes.” Another obstacle. Should I leave or wait? I was really tempted to leave, but I decided to stay put.

About ten minutes later, the owner returned. I told him I needed to get some shoes shined right away. He told me to leave the shoes with him and to come back in one hour. All the shoes would be shined, he said. I came back in an hour and not only were the shoes shined, they were glistening! The cost of the shine was the same as the shine I’d been getting at the store in the mall, but this shine was about five times better.

The bottom line: I found a new place to get my shoes shined...at the same price...with far better quality...and much closer to my home.

Reference: Jeff Keller at <http://www.attitudeiseverything.com/success0406.cfm>