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How A 17-Year Old Hostess Can Help Us Manage Stress and Expectations

by Andy Masters

Have you ever committed to an unreasonable time frame, project, or special request for someone?

“Suuuurrrreee, I can get that done by Wednesday.”

“Suuuurrrreee, I can serve on another committee”

“Suuuurrrreee, I can write an article for our Newsletter this month.”

Unfortunately, we often tell bosses, co-workers, or customers what they want to hear to make them happy at that given moment, and deal with the dilemma of actually providing it later. This can create unrealistic expectations, and put undue stress on ourselves, and everyone in the organization.

So, why do we do this? Why do we cave in and tell people what they want to hear, instead of what they need to hear?

It’s called conflict avoidance.

It should be called conflict procrastination.

Consider these two scenarios:

Let’s say you were so busy on a given Friday, you were forced to skip lunch, and are starving by dinner. You meet three friends at a restaurant at 6:30, and the parking lot is full—with a crowd hovering outside the door.

“GREAT...this place is packed. I’m NEVER going to eat!”

You rush in and approach a 17-year old hostess, and ask in a frustrated voice: *“How long is the wait?”*

In scenario one, a poorly trained hostess doesn’t want to upset you, so she nervously responds *“About 10 minutes.”*

In scenario two, a well-trained hostess responds *“Just to be up front, we are quite busy this evening, so it could be up to a 30 minute wait.”*

In either scenario, you consider that by the time you went somewhere else, parked, and waited, you might as well stick it out here.

So, you wait.

After 20 minutes, your buzzer buzzes, and your table is ready.

In scenario one, when the hostess told you 10 minutes, your response is *“It’s about time. She told me TEN MINUTES. I hate this place!”*

In scenario two, when the hostess told you 30 minutes, your response is *“Awesome...my buzzer is buzzing already. Food, here I come! I love this place!”*

Don’t paint yourself into a corner by over-committing to promises you may not be able to fulfill. Put yourself and team members in position to succeed, not fail. Put yourself and team members in position to be a hero to others, not a goat.

Exercise the customer satisfaction and stress relief principle: *“Under-promise and over-deliver.”*

*******FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*******

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When we're placed under pressure from co-workers, clients, friends, or even strangers, each day we should be armed with managing expectation phrases such as:

"Just to be up front..."

"Just to give you a heads-up..."

"Just to be realistic based on my schedule right now..."

Besides, as the other person, don't we just want to *know*? Don't we just want someone to provide us with realistic expectations? Don't we just want someone to be up front with us from the start?

Sure we do.

Importantly, I've also emphasized a concept in my programs that we must manage expectations with *ourselves*. Yep. We need to "*under-promise and over-deliver*" in our own lives.

Too often we are victims of taking on too much, and "spreading ourselves too thin." Coaching that third team. Serving on that fourth committee. Unrealistically trying to jam 17 things onto our "To-Do" list. Rushing to our pedicure appointment right before it closes.

We try too hard to be superheroes in every phase of our lives, every day. I term this "*Superhero Syndrome*."

The vast majority of stress in life is completely self-inflicted.

Life is complicated enough. We should slow down. We should simplify. We should prioritize and focus our valuable time on our most important responsibilities, clients, and loved ones. This will create improvement in these areas, and create more time to enjoy life.

About the Author: Andy Masters is an international Author/Speaker who has written 4 books, earned 4 degrees, and presents programs on a variety of professional development and work-life balance topics. Visit www.andy-masters.com or email andy@andy-masters.com for book information and speaking availability.

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