3510 The Guest Conflict

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Operator's Playbook | People arc — Conflict Audit cluster

Status: DRAFT

The Guest who is rude, unreasonable, or abusive to a cast member is not a hospitality problem. They are a leadership problem — and how the operator responds tells the entire cast everything about whose side they are on.

The operator who sides with the Guest at the cast member's expense does not have a hospitality culture. They have a compliance culture. The cast has learned that no matter what a Guest does, the cast member is responsible for absorbing it. They will absorb it — until they do not come back.

The Guest is not always right. That is not a radical position. It is the only honest one. The Guest who demeans a cast member is wrong. The Guest who is unreasonable is wrong. The Guest who uses the power differential between paying Guest and service worker to treat a person without dignity is wrong. And the operator who protects that Guest's experience at the cost of the cast member's experience has made a choice about whose humanity matters more in this building.

The cast member is watching. Every time you make that choice, they file it. They are building a picture of whether this is a place that sees them as a person or as a function. When the picture is complete enough, they decide accordingly.

This does not mean the operator defends cast members who are wrong. A cast member who handles a difficult Guest poorly needs to be coached — in private, after the shift, with honesty. The distinction is between coaching a cast member for their behavior and sacrificing a cast member to manage a Guest's reaction.

[A Day In Their Life] applies to the cast member as much as it applies to the Guest. The cast member who has been on their feet for six hours, handled three difficult tables, and is being spoken to without basic respect by a fourth Guest is not failing to provide hospitality. They are a human being under pressure. The operator who has not built a culture where that person knows they are protected is not running a hospitality operation. They are running a transaction.

Protect your cast. The Guests worth keeping will respect you for it. The ones who do not are not the Guests you are building this for.