

## Opinions

# How good are you at keeping your promises?

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With each communication a company makes, an expectation is created in the mind of the customer, but so many of these promises are broken. This is the best way to keep them.



By Robyn Pratt

Undoubtedly like you, I read through the papers over the weekend. I flipped through a few magazines and scrolled through social media. Over those two days, I absorbed more than 500 promises made to me through marketing messages and advertisements.

Just imagine how many promises are being made globally every day to billions of people through many forms of communication in many, many languages. With every promise comes an expectation, and with every expectation comes an opportunity to exceed, meet or disappoint based on that expectation.

We all know promises are meant to be kept. However, too often I read words that indicate a promise of efficient service, of quality, luxurious appointments or of personal and bespoke experiences, and I really wonder how many of these are truly being delivered. When the marketing campaigns are created and the promises determined, how much time is considered in how we can deliver on that expectation?

How many billions of dollars are being spent making well-wished promises to potential customers? Based on the number of promises that have been broken 25-plus international trips from my Malta base this year, I believe the cost of broken promises is more than substantial.

Employees are not to blame here. Many times, the employee tries their best to do the right thing. What is missing is the employee's absolute understanding and engagement in the promise made to the customer and in what is his/her role in the delivery of this promise.

Leaders must never take for granted or make assumptions that others know exactly what they are thinking/talking about when you ask something of a team member. This is especially true when it relates to delivering on a promise made. In the hospitality industry, this is crucial. The importance of creating a solid framework, an aligned understanding, training, and development can never be underestimated and planned for.

### Realizing a brand vision

When developing a brand vision and establishing what you would like to become renowned for, I urge you to carefully consider how this vision will be brought to life by your people. How does the human touch impact the final reality? Consider the opportunity and what is needed to firmly establish and live the promise within your organization. If not, you risk the connection between your internal culture and the face of your brand.

When your brand promise doesn't live up to your audience's expectations, you won't just disappoint, you'll lose trust. Business will be lost. In the worst case, customers will tell friends and family of their negative experience as well.

How is this avoided? For one thing, it is critical to understand that culture creation is not a one-time training but a program of ongoing training and reinforcement in a language that makes it easy for your team members to understand their role in bringing your promise to life. This means all employees—most importantly the leadership team members. Leading a culture based upon keeping our promise is a critical part of the success.

Being aware of the brand promise is not enough. Team members must appreciate and value the importance and meaning behind it. They need to understand their role in delivering on this promise. It is important that they know what is expected of them and for them to be equipped with the tools necessary to do exactly that. The bottom line? Translate your brand—your promise, your values and your vision into a clear set of expected behaviors for your leaders and your people.

What was very clear to me this year is that many brands with a global presence are failing to appreciate the differences between cultures. They blunder in understanding how this impacts the way their brand promise is delivered. We see brands examining the difference between cultures and how this externally

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impacts the way their message is delivered or perceived. But in many cases, businesses side-step how differences in culture internally, amongst their own team members, impact the way the brand promise is expressed.

To ensure that your brand promise translates to success, assess your internal culture along with your brand and strategy periodically. Be prepared to modify when it's the best for your brand message. Continually communicate with and train your team to ensure they know their role in bringing the brand to life every day. Make 110% sure they feel confident in taking on their role in delivering your promise at each and every touchpoint to both colleagues and guests.

**Bring your brand to life from the inside out! Your return? Loyal employees and guests which leads to success for all!**

Robyn Pratt is the Managing Director of Impact Consulting, an international hospitality consulting firm providing Brand Strategy & Culture, Innovation & Change Management, and Leadership and Development services. Her passion is in leading individuals and teams to achieve their full potential.

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