



IN FRONT OF THE GUEST · SEASON 1 · MODULE 8: MAINTENANCE IN FRONT OF THE GUEST · LESSON 32

The Breakdown With the Guest Watching

*Neither alarm nor promise:
the truth, with a plan.*

In five lines

Diagnosing a breakdown is technique; diagnosing it with the guest watching is craft. The technician who blurts out “this is in terrible shape” has just ruined the trust of an entire stay, and the one who promises an “it’ll be fixed tomorrow” they don’t control has just manufactured the complaint of the day after tomorrow. Between alarmism and the empty promise there is a professional path: the truth, with a plan — what is happening, what can be done right now, what will happen next and who will confirm it to them. The guest doesn’t need the breakdown not to exist: they need to feel they are in good hands.

The script, step by step

- 1. Diagnose inward, communicate outward.** The technical analysis happens in your head; what you say out loud is chosen. No frightening jargon and no mechanic’s sighs: “I can see what it is” reassures more than any explanation of compressors.
- 2. The truth about timing, without heroics.** If it can be fixed now, you fix it and say so. If not: “I can’t leave it perfect for you today — let me explain what I can do.” An honest timeframe with an alternative is worth twice as much as optimism that doesn’t deliver.
- 3. There is always a meanwhile.** The safe temporary solution, the fan while the part arrives, the room move if appropriate — but you don’t promise that last one: the Front Office triggers it. Your job is to hand over the complete case: breakdown, status, temporary fix applied and need identified.
- 4. Close the loop before you leave.** A breakdown in front of the guest doesn’t end in the room: it ends when the Front Office or Guest Relations know what happened, what was done and what is still missing — so that the two-hour follow-up (lesson 17) has something to work with — and so that the incident goes into the quality report with the guest’s name, not just the room number: from that moment on, that guest is under personalized follow-up by Guest Relations until the end of their stay. The technician who reports turns their repair into a hotel experience.

With limited resources: how to hold the standard

If you don’t have...	How to hold the standard
The part or the permanent fix	The temporary plan is explained with the same dignity as the permanent one: what has been left working, how long it will hold and when it will be finished. A limitation explained with a plan is professionalism; explained with a shrug, it is abandonment.
Authority to offer compensation or a change of room	You don’t promise what isn’t yours: you hand the case to whoever decides, in front of the guest if necessary — “I’m letting the front desk know right now so they can give you the best solution.” That sentence delivers, because you are the one who delivers on it.

In front of the guest

DO	DON'T	NEVER
Explain in plain words what is happening and what is going to happen. Give honest timeframes. Leave a decent temporary solution and the case reported.	Diagnose disasters out loud. Blame the hotel, the budget or another department ("the thing is, this hasn't been replaced since...").	Promise deadlines or compensation that don't depend on you. Play down what is serious for the guest ("it's not that big a deal"): their discomfort is theirs to measure, not yours.

Common mistakes

- ◆ The theatrical diagnosis: the technician's huff and "ugh" count as three breakdowns in the guest's head.
- ◆ Fixing it and disappearing: without an explanation or a close, the best repair leaves the feeling of a botched job.
- ◆ Optimism to look good: every broken "tomorrow for sure" is paid back with interest in the review.
- ◆ Forgetting that the room is still theirs during the repair: you ask to get past, you thank them for their patience, you respect their space even while you are working.

THE GOLDEN RULE

**"Neither alarm nor promise:
the truth, with a plan."**

This lesson's exercise

The air conditioning in 214 can't be fixed today and the hotel is full. The guest, standing in front of you, asks: "But is this going to work or not?" Write your exact reply — what you say, what you do before leaving the room and what handover the Front Office receives from you. In the answer that follows, I share my version.