



IN FRONT OF THE GUEST · SEASON 1 · MODULE 12: THE DIFFICULT GUEST · LESSON 42

Recover Without Giving Away

*When there's nothing to give,
you give your word — and you keep it.*

In five lines

The myth of recovery is that it can be bought: the drink on the house, the discount, the upgrade. And it helps — when it's available. But real recovery, the kind that creates ambassadors, is made of a different material: heightened attention, a promise kept and visible follow-up. A guest with a breakdown that can't be fixed right away, in a full hotel with nothing material to offer, can still leave composing the best review of your month — if, during the problem, they felt like the most important person in the hotel. This lesson teaches you to recover when the gift drawer is empty: which is, moreover, when professionals stand out.

The script, step by step

- 1. Raise the attention, not the spending.** From the moment there's a problem, that guest has visible priority: they are greeted first, asked first, kept informed without having to ask. The most powerful compensation is no longer being just one more guest — and it doesn't cost a cent.
- 2. Your word, with a date and a name.** "The part arrives tomorrow at 9 a.m.; at 10 I'll confirm with you personally" — and at 10, the confirmation arrives, whatever happens with the part. A small promise kept with religious punctuality rebuilds more trust than a big gift.
- 3. Update them even when there's no news.** Silence during a problem reads as abandonment: "no news yet; I'm still on it and I'll let you know at five" is extremely valuable information even though it contains nothing. The guest doesn't demand that the problem not exist: they demand not to be left alone with it.
- 4. The closing people remember.** Once the problem is solved, the human finishing touch: the written note of apology, the "is everything really all right now?" in person, the thank-you for their patience, with their name. The kind ending is what memory takes home — and what gets written in the review.

With limited resources: how to hold the standard

If you don't have...	How to hold the standard
Nothing material to offer	That is the scenario of this entire lesson: attention, your word, information and closing. And one more resource, free and extremely powerful: involving the guest in the solution ("would you prefer we try X, or would Y suit you better?") — whoever chooses stops being a victim and becomes part of the solution.
Time for personal follow-up	You delegate the task, never the face: another colleague can carry out the follow-up, but the confirmation to the guest comes from the person who made the commitment — or from someone who names them ("[name] asked me to confirm with you..."). A promise carries a full name.

In front of the guest

DO	DON'T	NEVER
Visibly prioritize whoever is suffering the problem. Keep every time you committed to. Close in person.	Hide from the guest while the problem lasts — it's the natural temptation and the fatal mistake. Make flat promises ("this will definitely get fixed") about things you don't control.	Buy silence ("it's on the house if you don't post a review"): it shows, it offends and it turns a breakdown into a story worth telling. Recovery repairs the experience; it never bargains with it.

Common mistakes

- ◆ Measuring recovery in euros: the guest doesn't keep count of what was given away — they keep count of how they felt.
- ◆ Immediate compensation as a shortcut to avoid handling it: a discount that replaces attention confirms that the hotel would rather pay than take care of things.
- ◆ Disappearing after the first step: recovery is a movie, not a snapshot — and it's scored on the ending.
- ◆ Not telling the rest of the team: the guest in recovery must receive the same reinforced treatment at breakfast, at the pool and at the front desk — or one person's recovery is undone by another's carelessness.

THE GOLDEN RULE

**“When there's nothing to give,
you give your word — and you keep it.”**

This lesson's exercise

A room with a breakdown that can't be fixed until tomorrow, a full hotel (no room change possible), nothing material to offer. Design the complete recovery for the next 24 hours: what you say now, what contacts you make and when, and how you close tomorrow. In the answer that follows, I share my version.