



IN FRONT OF THE GUEST · SEASON 1 · MODULE 12: THE DIFFICULT GUEST · LESSON 43

The Red Line and Your Own Mistake

A mistake you own up to works in your favor.

A mistake you cover up defines you.

In five lines

Two uncomfortable lessons that no manual puts together, but reality does. The first: withstanding pressure is part of the craft; withstanding humiliation is not — and knowing where that line is, and how to defend it professionally, protects your dignity and your team's. The second: you are going to make mistakes — wrong charges, mixed-up reservations, forgotten promises — and at that moment your career is decided more by your reaction than by the mistake: whoever owns up, corrects it and reports it comes out stronger; whoever covers it up, plays it down or lets it be discovered is marked. Both lessons share a root: the calm of knowing who you are professionally.

The script, step by step

- 1. The red line in how you are treated.** The guest can be angry, unfair and even rude about the situation — all of that is handled with lesson 41. What is not handled: the personal insult, degrading treatment, the threat. There the script changes: with complete calm, “I want to help you, and for that I need us to speak respectfully.” Once. If it persists, you withdraw with dignity and inform your supervisor — withdrawing in time is professionalism, not defeat.
- 2. Defend your colleague too.** If you witness a colleague being humiliated — especially a new one — you step in: you join calmly (“can I help you?”), shift the focus and take over the handling. Nobody holds out alone in front of a guest: that is the under-pressure version of lesson 3's “we are one.”
- 3. Your own mistake: the owning-up sequence.** Once you detect the failure: first, you correct or contain what can be corrected; second, you inform your supervisor BEFORE they hear it from others — with the mistake, the cause and your proposed solution in the same sentence; third, if it affects the guest, the professional apology: eye contact, “It was my mistake, and this is how I'm fixing it,” without groveling and without embellishment.
- 4. The apology without theatrics.** Neither drama (“I don't know how this could have happened to me”) nor minimizing (“well, it's not that big a deal”): the professional middle ground is responsibility + solution + gratitude for their patience. Guests forgive mistakes with astonishing ease — what they don't forgive is the feeling that someone tried to slip one past them.

With limited resources: how to hold the standard

If you don't have...	How to hold the standard
A supervisor on hand to escalate to	The red line is defended the same way, and you report to the first person in charge you can reach — or it is recorded and communicated as soon as possible. What never changes: you neither endure degrading treatment alone nor cover up the mistake until you “find the right moment.”

In front of the guest

DO	DON'T	NEVER
Keep exactly the calm the other person lost. Own up to your mistake with the solution included. Protect your colleague under fire.	Answer an insult with an insult or with sarcasm — the guest will record only your half. Hide the mistake hoping no one will notice: it always gets noticed, and late.	Humiliate yourself to placate them: professional dignity is not negotiable, and a hotel that lets its people be humiliated teaches its guests to do it. And never let a colleague take the fall for a mistake of yours — that can never be recovered.

Common mistakes

- ◆ Confusing pressure with humiliation: anger about the problem is attended to; an attack on the person is stopped.
- ◆ Putting up with too much “so as not to make a scene”: they already made the scene — you only decide whether it ends with your dignity intact.
- ◆ Reporting the mistake halfway (“there’s been a little hiccup”): the supervisor who later discovers its real size won’t believe you the next time.
- ◆ Beating yourself up in public: endless self-criticism makes the guest uncomfortable and devalues your solution — correct, learn and keep serving with your head held high.

THE GOLDEN RULE

**“A mistake you own up to works in your favor.
A mistake you cover up defines you.”**

This lesson’s exercise

This morning you charged a bill incorrectly — 40 too much — and you discover it on your own at midday. The guest is still in the hotel and hasn’t noticed. Write your complete sequence: what you do first, what you say to your supervisor (word for word) and what you say to the guest. In the answer that follows, I share my version — and we begin Module 13: The Team, the Shift and Quality.