

From the floor by James
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June 1, 2023 will mark my 27th year in the AV industry. Hard for me to believe that, but it has been that long and of course, as with everything many things have changed but yet many things remain the same.

When I got into the business my goal was to offer superior customer service. I felt like that would be the key to being successful in this industry, which was not entirely wrong, but of course, there was more to the path to success in this industry than just that.

And so on June 1, 1996, I showed up on my first day and waited outside the AV office at the Koury Convention Center where I was supposed to start work. And I waited. I was told that the senior A/V technician, and one of the only tech's that worked there full-time would meet me at 8 AM and begin training me. Well 8AM came and went, and 9am, but around 10 AM the technician finally comes back to the office and tells me that he knew that I had been waiting for him. He was just busy. He then proceeded to tell me that he didn't see any job security in training me-how is he going to make sure he was still needed after I was trained?. Mind you this is a time when the company was growing by leaps and bounds 15-20% or more every year so I would think that was his job security. I figured that obviously this gentleman had some issues but, over the next month or so he did begrudgingly train me and then something happened.

Just a few weeks later, this technician who was being groomed for a management job said the wrong thing to the wrong person at the hotel, which was reported to the general manager, which got him immediately fired.

In retrospect I suppose he sensed his employment was in jeopardy, but he mistakenly thought my hiring was the reason for that, when the reason for his termination would actually be his own actions.

So now the most experienced tech at the hotel was gone and there I was finding myself in a position of opportunity, perhaps, but as inexperienced as I could possibly be, or would need to be to take advantage of it.

I was unofficially promoted to property manager. Which meant that I was never paid one dime more for my efforts, ever, but I was in effect running the AV department at a very large hotel with very little experience.

But I stepped up to the plate. I took care of business and I made it happen. I had positive compliments from almost every group, and it was at that point many of my repeat customers became to feel more like cousins than customers.

And if you can get to that point with your customers then everything just gets a lot easier, obviously.

In the end I never got any recognition or pay but the education I received made it well worth it.

And a few months later I was unfairly removed from that position, but that's a tale for another time. It didn't really hurt my feelings, but at least I didn't let it affect my progress. I eventually found a position as a Director of AV at the convention center in Savannah.

But it was all an interesting introduction to the industry that I have now worked in for 27 years, to say the least.