



April 11, 2025

## A Note From the Editor

**Good Morning Bill,**

### **First of All ...**

18 years ago, following Issue #1000 of my first e-letter, I retired the old Electronic House Call and it morphed into the Hospitality Journal. It seemed an appropriate point in time and the right way to shift gears for a fresh approach.

The idea was to broaden the weekly message from what had been essentially the Restaurant Doctor show into a format that would allow more contributions from like-minded colleagues. [For those keeping score, this is Issue#420 of the Journal.]

For better or worse, my traveling days are behind me, I have no interest in chasing dollars, and I'm faced with the question of what to do with the tremendous amount of material I've produced in this lifetime: 1400+ e-letters, 15 books, plus seminars, recordings, interviews, magazine articles, and so forth. There's a lot.

I'm also 80 years old and increasingly aware of my own mortality, so there's a certain time pressure to tie up loose ends while I can. I'm not the only industry pundit in this position.

All too often, the ideas and insights that built our industry die with their creators, forcing those who follow to make the same mistakes and figure it all out again. It seemed like a waste.

My plan is to collect resources from the more prolific minds of our generation while we still have access to their work and offer these policies and practices in an online archive as our legacy to the future.

### **Secondly ...**

The Journal has always been a work in progress -- another example of commitment to the idea of Ready, Fire, Aim. The online repository -- the Archives if you will -- is the next step. The Journal will continue for as long as I find joy in tiptoe-ing through all the old stuff ... but I need to park the material somewhere.

[FWIW, as a current subscriber, you'll become a Patron of the new site. You'll not only continue to receive the Journal, but you'll gain unlimited access to the Archives for you and your team ... for less than your present subscription! Fair enough?]

The structure of the site is finally completed, and now begins the task of uploading the massive amount of material we've compiled. It'll easily take the rest of the year to get it all in there, but I'm hoping to have enough loaded to at least launch the site in another six weeks or so. Stay tuned.

Once we go live, I hope you'll share your thoughts on this new resource, tell me what you like and don't like; what you want to see more of ... and less of; what you find uplifting and certainly anything that strikes you as out of character.

Ready, Fire, Aim.

### **While I'm Thinking About It ...**

Might these unsettling times be the perfect opportunity to re-think what you've been doing and how you've been doing it? Could evolving a fresh approach provide the energy boost you ... and your guests ... really need right now? Just askin' ...

## Before We Move On ...

Here's some interesting reading you may have missed. The opinions expressed are those of the articles' authors.

### The Top 15 US Restaurants, According to the Experts

From a deep dive on bluefin tuna in Portland, Maine, to a wild new steakhouse in Miami, here are Food & Wine's top dining destinations across America.

### This Unique Dining Experience is a 1920a-Themed Supper Club

The restaurant is run by young San Franciscans considered at risk; in foster care, formerly incarcerated, or on probation, among other challenging life situations.

### Higher Prices Are Likely for These 10 Grocery Items

Groceries and liquor are about to become even more expensive following the latest round of import tariffs.

*Found something good online? Share the link and I'll pass it along. All of us read more than any of us.*

Bill

## Quote Without Comment

*"If I had six hours to chop down a tree, I'd spend the first four hours sharpening the axe."*  
- Abraham Lincoln

## Attitude Adjustment

### Use It or Lose It

**by Bill Marvin, The Restaurant Doctor**

I hope you're starting to realize the principles that allow businesses to work more easily and better convey the feeling of heart-felt caring are relevant to more than just those enterprises generally included under the "hospitality industry" umbrella.

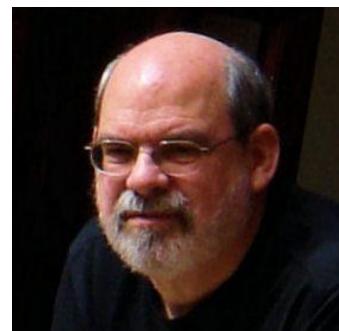
These simple secrets make all relationships -- personal and professional -- richer and more fulfilling. As the awareness of the power of hospitality in business grows, so will the voices who carry the message. The real question is what you'll do with the information.

An article below mentions a subscriber who increased sales in his pizzeria by \$95K by applying the notions we talk about every week.

That's a decent bump for anyone, but considering pizzerias generally have a much lower sales volume than full service restaurants, it represented a 15-20% boost in his top line revenue. What would an increase like that do for YOUR business?

The truth is you have exactly the volume you deserve ... and continuing to operate the way you are right now will likely get you LESS of what you already have. It's your business and your choice, of course, but to see a different outcome, you'll need to take a slightly different approach.

If you want results your competitors are not going to get, you must **Do the Work** your competitors are not willing to do ... but you know that ... right?



# Ask the Doc

## Less is More

### Dear Doc:

You keep saying that less is more. One of my mentors, Greg Condon, had an analogy for this principle I'd like to share with you.

In lecturing some newbies on how to craft the skill of connecting with guests, he gave only three steps: "make eye contact, smile, and nod." Repetition leads to mastery.



He said, "You all know who Bruce Lee was right? The most famous martial arts guy of the twentieth century. Why was he the most famous?"

"Because he was the best."

"Right! But why was he the best? Because he knew the most moves? No! Because he practiced a few moves so many times he could do them better than anyone ever had before! Be like Bruce Lee, focus on a few of the right moves and master them."

The message was memorable! What I got from it is that one needs to master one step at a time or the result is simply more mediocrity and less true mastery.

My experience with your work is that I often see material taken from your books (or do your books evolve from the newsletter?) It doesn't matter. Anyway, it just reminds me that repetition is useful and necessary ... and a tool I sometimes neglect when teaching others.

I always remember Greg, and Bruce Lee. Step by step, repeat, master. Then appreciation returns. The content of a newsletter like yours has to be useful to the masses, and it is. As I said to you once, I don't think enough people really apply the material or the insights you offer each week. Hopefully I am an exception.

Each step you present in your writing leads me to recognize my "automatic" [mindless] behaviors and entertain a new approach to doing the essential things. Eventually I discovered there are many more available choices of how to unfold my personal realities than were possible in the way I'd always viewed things. For me, this is the shift of perspective to which your ever-sharp arrow points.

Those who don't know they're on a mindless path, or that freedom from attachment to unwanted thoughts and feelings is even possible, can benefit from your step by step approach and "just the right amount of medicine" which you've learned to dose out with a certain style.

So yes, less is more. Step by step leads to permanent change for those willing to follow the path.

**Chef Nic in Nanaimo, BC**

### Yes, Chef:

Thanks for taking the time to write, Nic.

Hopefully you're coming to realize what I'm attempting to convey isn't something you learn like the multiplication tables, but rather principles you come to understand at deeper and deeper levels.

So while long-time subscribers may occasionally find some of my words repetitive, what those words mean to them should evolve over time, hopefully leading to the occasional "aha moment" where they suddenly think, "Wow, I never looked at it that way before."

I feel the same way about many of my books. The first time through you'll get the content, but if you take time to re-read them with an open mind, each pass through the pages will be at a deeper level and you'll see more of what I'm pointing toward. The fresh insights will surprise and delight you. THAT will make all the difference!

# Everything Old Is New Again

## Sharpen Your Axe!

You've surely heard a variation of this story:

*A young man approached the foreman of a logging crew and asked for a job. "That depends," replied the foreman. "Let's see you fell this tree." The young man stepped forward, and skillfully felled a great tree. Impressed, the foreman exclaimed, "You can start Monday."*



*Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday rolled by -- and Thursday afternoon the foreman approached the young man and said, "You can pick up your paycheck on the way out today."*

*Startled, the young man replied, "I thought you paid on Friday." "Normally we do," said the foreman. "But we're letting you go today because you've fallen behind. Our daily charts show that you've dropped from first place on Monday to last place today."*

*"But I'm a hard worker," the young man objected. "I arrive first, leave last, and even work through my coffee breaks!"*

*The foreman, sensing the young man's integrity, thought for a minute and then asked, "Have you been sharpening your axe?"*

*The young man replied, "No sir, I've been working too hard to take time for that!"*

Our lives are like that. We often get so busy we don't take time to "sharpen the axe." In today's world, it seems that everyone is busier than ever, but less happy than ever. Why is that? Could it be we've forgotten how to stay sharp?

There's nothing wrong with activity and hard work. But when you're so busy you neglect to keep your axe sharp -- to re-energize yourself with those fresh ideas that help keep you from becoming dull and losing your effectiveness -- life becomes a slog, energy wanes and productivity drops.

This story came to mind 18 years ago when I got a call from one of my pizzeria subscribers, [yes, Wes, I'm talking about you!] He was proud to report his 2016 sales were up \$95,000 from the previous year! That's like \$125K today.

Over that period he'd applied the ideas from the e-letter, become certified as A Place of Hospitality, did more reading, asked good questions, became a better listener, brought me in to talk with his team and generally got very serious about doing the work that needed to be done.

He tried to give me credit for his increased sales, but it was really his willingness to keep his axe sharp that led to the sales bump. I'm thrilled by his success and frankly surprised more readers haven't taken advantage of the resources available ... or maybe they have and just never told me about it.

Has it been awhile since you've sharpened your professional axe? Pay attention to what you're reading. Attend seminars. Talk shop with your peers. Use the Journal for inspiration ... then, most importantly, DO SOMETHING with what you learn.

The Universe rewards action, not intention. **Do the Work!**

## You Already Know This, But ...

Your staff are people too ... with hopes and fears and a desire to succeed. Anything new can be traumatic, even change for the better. To assure your success when implementing new ideas, make your staff part of the process and really try to understand what they feel about

## Points To Ponder

### Always Replace Yourself

by **Daniel Whittington**

You should always be replacing yourself.

There will be milestones you achieve in work or in a community. Sometimes it's a promotion, a new level of prestige, or a new title. It's a great moment to celebrate and take a beat for a job well done.

Now what?

I believe your thoughts should immediately be focused on finding the person to replace you. Someone who can do it better or take it farther.



If you are doing something important, then its survival and long term success depend on your ability to get out of the way. If something dies the moment you stop touching it, you don't have a functioning company. You have a micro-management hell-hole that will burn you down along with all the people around you.

There's also the fundamental truth that you learn more by teaching than by just doing. You gain a better understanding of your role the moment you start attempting to teach it to someone else and they ask questions you never have. It makes you take a new look at your own processes and habits.

So what happens when you work your butt off teaching people, and they leave?

My rule with staff is, "You won't be here forever. So what is it you're trying to accomplish? How do we help you get there?" I'm in charge of job titles. I'm in charge of job roles. We can work you towards the thing that you want while you help build the company we need.

I always hire with the immediate assumption that this person won't be here forever. If I'm training them for my job, I need to be ready for the reality that they're not cut out for it, or that they learn it's not what they want.

I need to be willing to invest and grow people regardless of what direction that knowledge and growth takes them.

What you gain in the long run by living life with an open hand is far more powerful than the small micro gains you cling to with grasping fingers.

Live life with an open hand. Become a launching point for magical human beings.

## The Fine Print

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