

SUMMARY:

How do you build a great corporate culture in an industry with constant turnover and awash in criticism? That's exactly what New York restaurateur Danny Meyer faces every day at Union Square Hospitality Group. In this episode, recorded backstage at the 2018 GLS, Danny continues the conversation he started onstage with Elaine Lin Hering—discussing critics, culture-building and how to practice “enlightened hospitality.”

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- In the restaurant business, with the rise of social media, we hear from professional and non-professional critics every day.
- Here's how we help people respond to criticism:
 1. Respond with humility and learn. If you learn something from a critic, thank the critic.
 2. Don't lose heart. Help people see that it's a long game.
 3. Let it go. If you disagree with a critic, let it go and move on.
- As a leader, you will ultimately be defined by how you solve problems.
- The best leaders solve problems based on some combination of innovation and bedrock values.
- We have an expression, “Whoever wrote the rule ...?”
- The Chief Executive Officer should really be called the Chief Storyteller.
- Telling stories is the best way to scale behaviors you want.
- We have been gifted with a platform to do our best work for the benefit of an ongoing great story.
- Our bedrock values do not change. The way we do things changes over time.
- Instead of asking, “How can we prevent our growth from hurting our culture,” we ask, “How can we use our growth to advance our culture?”
- We use technology to create essential life experiences via the power of hospitality.
- Enlightened Hospitality: 1) Employees, 2) Customers, 3) Community, 4) Suppliers, 5) Investors
- If you took the exact same recipe, and cooked it in a restaurant with terrible morale versus in a restaurant that's alive with human energy, I promise the customer will taste the difference.
- Hospitality is replicable.
- When you encourage community service among your staff, you attract people with the hospitality heart that makes your business successful.
- Investing in your community is essential. A thriving community is a rising tide that lifts all boats.
- I'm endlessly curious about travel and cultures, and the way I begin to learn about people is to understand what they eat.
- In the same way that musicians experiment with notes on an octave, I experiment with food.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. According to Danny Meyer, “enlightened hospitality” begins with building great relationships with his employees then customers then community then suppliers then investors. What do you see as the advantages to this philosophy? Do you think this kind of prioritization would lead to success?
2. What potential roadblocks do you think Danny faces in implementing this philosophy? How do you think he would overcome the roadblocks in his context?
3. What would it look like to implement enlightened hospitality in your context? What would need to change in your day-to-day operations?

RESOURCES MENTIONED:

[NCR Cash Register](#)

[Sous Chef](#)

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