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Elbert Hubbard

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COURTESY

As an Asset



By
Esbert Hubbard

I HAVE ridden on Railroad-Trains nearly one-third of the time for twenty-five years, and during all that time I have never once been off the rust; neither have I ever been robbed of a dollar on a train. Also, I have never lost a hat, grip, umbrella or my temper, on a railroad-train.—*Fra Elbertus*

COURTESY AS AN ASSET

BY
ELBERT HUBBARD



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By
Elbert Hubbard

Courtesy As An Asset



O this, then, is an essay on Life's Lubricant, or Kindness and Courtesy as Business Assets. I am writing in a day-coach on the Buffalo, Rochester and Pittsburgh Railway, on a Little Journey from Buffalo to Pittsburgh. ¶ When the conductor took up my ticket he smiled and thanked me. ¶ And that started me thinking, and when I begin thinking, I reach for my trusty pad and pencil. Such a little push does it take to start one's mental accelerator!

This particular conductor will probably never know that he gave me a cosmic hunch—a psychic vibe. Why should he? His manner toward me was not different from that toward the old woman across the aisle, who asked him what time it was, and on being told, asked another question thus: "Say, Mister, are you sure your watch is right?"

Like Master—Like Man

WELL, it is good to know that there is at least one railroad in the United States where courtesy in dealing with passengers and

patrons is the universal rule. ¶ In fact, it seems to have become a habit on this particular line, upon which I am now riding. Of course, all railroad officials now advise their trainmen to be courteous. One road I know has expressed the matter negatively, thus: "Never be discourteous!"

But to abstain from discourtesy is not enough. Good manners spring naturally from the kindly heart. A good railroadman is proud of his business, and his desire to assist and benefit is a genuine, positive quality.

A printed notice from the Head Offices is hardly sufficient—something more is required.

On the Buffalo, Rochester and Pittsburgh, courtesy as a business asset is fully realized. The word has gone forth and every trainman and agent has got the germ in his system. Good things are catching as well as bad, and while in this instance I do not know the actual facts, I make the hazard that the big men in the Buffalo, Rochester and Pittsburgh General Offices are setting their helpers an example. ¶ Not only that, but this fine spirit of good-

The railroads of today build for the future.

cheer and industry which all passengers on this road must realize, I believe originally had its source in one particular man. ¶ Emerson says, "A great institution is the lengthened shadow of one man."

That is, one man's spirit runs thru and pervades every successful institution. He keys the symphony. ¶ Is the store a jumble of rush, push, grab, graft and disorder? That is the soul of the manager you see. He is not big enough to make an atmosphere.

On the other hand, there are places of business where things are organized, systematized, and where the universal rule is prompt, respectful and intelligent service.

Such is the B. R. & P. Railway Company. The next time you take a trip over this road, please take especial pains to see whether I am right in this.

What Constitutes a Good Railroadman?

A GOOD railroadman will never guy passengers; give short or flippant answers to questions; nor will he laugh at the mistakes of the rustic and the "rube." ¶ He will look especially after the comfort of elderly people, "country folks" and women traveling alone

or with children. ¶ He will answer the needless questions of all these in such a manner as to make them feel at ease; and in various ways, which right intent dictates, he will supply an air of courtesy which is contagious.

No doubt, passengers are often very trying, but it is the business of a good railroadman to meet discourtesy with unfailing patience.

If the man you are dealing with is foolish, vain, overbearing or impudent, do not imitate him.

¶ Everybody is really decent in spots; and I have seen the gentle answer completely disarm a grouch who was bent on chewing the red rag of wordy warfare. ¶ Yes, courtesy is catching. A good railroadman can make a whole coach of passengers feel good. ¶ The boys who run the B. R. & P. trains seem to me to be men who are well treated, so they just "pass it along."

They are not overworked, underpaid and irritable, with nerves outside of their clothes.

¶ Strong men can always afford to be gentle. Only the weak are intent on "giving as good as they get."

The railroad stands for human service

In the Old Days

WE can all remember a day when passengers who asked for tickets apologized, and when you got on a train you assumed a meek and becoming modesty, for fear of having your head snapped off.

"Is this the train for Chicago?" I heard a man ask a trainman not long ago.

"Well, say, can't you read that sign? Pile in the coach and stay there; I guess it will hold you all right!" was the answer.

It took me back twenty-five years, when this was the universal language of railroad employees.

¶ I am glad that things have changed.

Of course it is not railroadmen alone who see how kindness lubricates life—courtesy in every line of life is now the growing rule.

Business is human service. He that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

No strong man lowers himself by giving somebody a lift—no matter who that "somebody" is. It may be an ignorant foreigner, unversed in our ways and language, but there is a right way and a wrong way, even in pantomime. Of course I do not know how much this courtesy counts in actual dollars in a year, on this par-

ticular line, but surely it is a tidy sum. It increases revenues in both passenger and freight departments, because it means friends, and friends mean patrons.

When you divert a patron from your road thru discourtesy you lose his business. Conversely, when you increase the number of your friends you increase your business. Thus, out of kind thoughts, crystallized into courteous acts, are dollars coined.

Charm of Manner

TO the clerk who would succeed, I say, Cultivate Charm of Manner.

Courteous manners in little things are an asset worth acquiring. When a customer approaches, rise and offer a chair. Step aside and let the store's guest pass first into the elevator. These are little things, but they make you and your work finer.

To gibe visitors, or to give fresh and flippant answers, even to stupid or impudent people, is a great mistake. Meet rudeness with unfailing politeness and see how much better you feel.

The schoolhouse and the railroad go hand in hand.

Your promise to a customer is your employer's promise. A broken promise always hurts; and it shows weakness in the character of a business organization, just as unreliability does in an individual ☞ ☞

Most inaccuracies come from not really listening to what is said, or not really seeing what you put down. The chewing of gum, tobacco or paper as a jaw-exerciser should be eliminated. The world is now pronouncing them vulgar, unbusinesslike, useless and silly. Keep ahead of your employer and of the Board of Health in this.

Having promised to obtain goods or information, or to deliver goods by a certain time, do not start the thing a-going and trust to luck for the rest. Do your own part in full, and then follow up to know that the rest is moving on schedule time. Remember that the thing specially promised and of special importance needs watching ☞ "Accidents" and life's various "hindrances"



Railroadmen stand for industry and economy. They are filled with an eternal discontent. They want things better. They are men with the builder's itch.


get after just those things with a keen scent. ¶ If your business is to wait on customers, be careful of your dress and appearance. Do your manicuring before you reach the store. A toothbrush is a good investment. A salesman with a bad breath is dear at any price. Let your dress be quiet, neat and not too fashionable. To have a prosperous appearance helps you inwardly and helps the business.

Give each customer your whole attention, and give just as considerate attention to a little buyer as to a big one. ¶ If asked for information, be sure you have it before you give it. Do not assume that the location or fact is so now because you once thought it so.

Don't misdirect. Make your directions so clear that they will be a real help.

Keep Sane and Sweet

THERE are houses known by courteous telephoning. Telephone courtesy is a big thing, as courtesy always is. Loss of temper gains nothing  

The less you require looking after, the more able you are to stand alone and complete your tasks, the greater the reward  Then if you can not only do your work, but also intelligently

and effectively direct the efforts of others, your reward is in exact ratio.

And the more people you direct, and the higher the intelligence you can rightly lend, the more valuable is your life.

The most precious possession in life is good health. Eat moderately, breathe deeply, exercise outdoors and get eight hours' sleep. And cultivate Charm of

Manner as a Business

P r o p o s i t i o n



Worth Remembering

Written with a sincere and kindly desire to help the young who do not know and the older ones who sometimes forget.

Charles Lamb said that when he reached his office fifteen minutes late he always went away half an hour earlier so to make the matter right. This was a joke. The chronic late is always marked on the time-book for a lay-off when times get "scarce." Your interests are the interests of the company that employs you, and theirs are yours—BE ON TIME.



Give each customer your whole attention—and just as considerate attention to a little buyer as to a big one.



Employees should be dignified in deportment, and not wrestle, hug, trip, jostle or monkey in business hours. These things all make an impression on customers, and a bad impression.



Keep away from gambling-rooms, poolrooms, and all places where you would not care for your employer to see you—or have you see him.

There are valuable positions always opening up in any progressive concern. Be ready to be promoted. Promotions go straight to the cheery, intelligent worker.



Don't throw waste paper and refuse on the floor—baskets are provided for rubbish. Be very careful never to leave oily waste in rubbish-baskets or on the floor—put such in metal cans, and see that the cover is on. Spontaneous combustion is a common cause of fire.



Above all, in writing letters never show resentment or anger. The letter lives long after the cause of the offense is forgotten. To write to a distant friend a give-away on the house—a grand call-down—is an error that is paid for every day in tears. The number of such letters posted in company envelopes, that are misdirected and come back for the proprietor to read, is enormous. No one knows why these scandalous letters are usually directed to Chicago when the writer meant they should go to San Francisco. If you are going to defame your employer, never do it on his time or on his stationery.

And for the same good reason keep your personal callers, personal letters, personal matters, thoughts and states of mind away from the post of duty.



Never conceal unfinished work under blotters, in pigeonholes or drawers, depending on memory to find it. If necessary to leave unfinished work, it should be placed on the desk in sight, under a weight, so if you do not come back in the morning the other man will know just where things are and what to do.




Responsibilities gravitate to the person who can shoulder them, and power flows to the man who knows how. Don't worry!



Enthusiasm is a lubricant that makes the wheels of trade go round; a grouch is sand in the bearings. Enthusiasm, like factory melancholia, is catching





Next to farming, which is the primal need, transportation holds first place in economics.

Always be circumspect and courteous  Bear the faults of some, the impoliteness of others, and pardon everybody sooner than yourself.



Shed no tears over your lack of early advantages. No really great man ever had any advantages that he himself did not create.





Conversation about things not connected with the business should not be indulged in on "company time." The house can stand it, but you can't  



Never carry matches loose in your pockets—have a metal match-box.



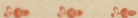
Thoughtless, unnecessary defacing of walls, damage of furniture and fixtures or posted signs and notices, or reckless use of supplies, creates a waste in serious amount and strays pretty close to that disregard of the other man's property-rights which the world reckons as dishonest  

The boys in blue who are not on the dead level are back on the dray tomorrow.

If you dislike a fellow-employee or are disliked by him, do not make a parade of the matter. Quarreling and backbiting are not compatible with good work, and if persisted in, will lead to the discovery of the blue envelope on your desk



Avoid cliques, and do not gossip nor listen to gossip about your fellow-workers.



Learn from your mistakes, but don't cry over them. We best redeem the past by forgetting it.



Do not join the Knockers' Klub; and avoid all fellowship with the folks who are trying to wear the face off the clock.



The habit of borrowing small sums of money—anticipating pay-day—is a pernicious practise and breaks many a friendship. It is no kindness to loan money to a professional borrower

In order to have value, things must be at a certain place at a certain time. It is the business of the Railroad to get them there



The man who indul-
ges in either grouch
or graft is a goner,
and all good railroad
men know it ❧ ❧ ❧





The Railroad
brings the
World and
the Market
to your door

