

That's Karma, Vincent

By Cindy Campbell



ONE OF THE RUNNING JOKES I HAVE WITH FRIENDS centers on the theory that I have good parking karma—or is it CARma? (I digress.)

Let's focus on the concept of karma for a minute. It's been said that there is no such thing as luck and that we make our own luck. I believe the same can be said about having good karma.

To illustrate, let's consider a recent travel experience I had: One of my flights was delayed, causing me to miss connections. The end result was a two-hour Uber ride to arrive at my final destination. Fully anticipating a long, unpleasant ride, I dreaded requesting the car. But rather than creating a self-fulfilling prophecy, I did a little self-talk, changed my attitude and outlook, and decided it actually had the potential of being an interesting journey.

Meeting Vincent

Driver "Vincent" called me in advance of his arrival. He knew the curb designated for transportation network companies would be chaotic and wanted to coordinate with me in advance of the pick-up. Once at the curb, he exited his car and greeted me with a warm smile and a handshake: "Welcome! Let's get you settled in for a comfortable ride." He knew this was going to be a long

trip and made the effort to put my mind at ease. With his congenial approach, Vincent had already conveyed that this trip would likely be a pleasant experience.

As he drove, we chatted about the challenges with air travel and about our respective families. Vincent had served as a pilot in the Air Force. After his military service, he worked as a special assistant to a now-retired airline CEO. Vincent saw this executive as a mentor who projected a professional passion for always putting the customer first.

That revelation led to a conversation on the topic of how badly people sometimes treat customer service representatives. I told him stories about the parking and mobility industry and the disrespectful attitudes and behaviors our frontline professionals encounter. "You know, I'd never really considered what you folks have to deal with. That's gotta be a tough job!"

Vincent was right. It can be tough. As service professionals, we understand that people can be downright mean and disrespectful. They can be intolerant, dismissive, and unwilling to take personal responsibility.

The Good Stuff

I told him, “While that’s true, I also have to say that on a daily basis, we encounter plenty of good people. Kind people. People who recognize and appreciate what we do to keep everything circulating and safe. The problem is when we fail to recognize this, when we only remember and recognize the unpleasant contacts, it can make our work life so much less fulfilling.” For the rest of the drive, we shared positive, sometimes funny, stories about people we had each encountered over the years. Time flew.

Two hours later, we arrived at my destination. Vincent got out of the car and placed my bags on the curb. He shook my hand again. “Ms. Campbell, this trip has been the highlight of my week. I can’t entirely put my finger on why, but I feel happier—and that was a long drive! Thanks for that.”

That’s karma, Vincent.

A chance encounter presented the opportunity to extend a positive attitude, or karma, toward another person in hopes that he would return the favor. On this day, my effort was not in vain.

The reality is that I could have missed out on an amazing human encounter had I not caught myself and adjusted my attitude. We can be our own worst enemy when it comes to dealing with the bad attitudes hurled our way. When we choose to extend the proverbial olive branch to others—even when they don’t seem to deserve it—we sometimes have the ability to turn a negative encounter into something special. ♦



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