

## ‘Choose Conflicting Goals’ - Unreasonable Hospitality (2022)

“Hospitality and excellence. Those two concepts? They’re not friends.

It’s easy to have a sweet **culture** of hospitality if you’re not going to be maniacal about precision and detail. Who cares if the waitress at the diner forgot to bring your Coke? What’s a little sloppiness between friends?

And it’s pretty easy to scare your staff so they almost never, ever make a technical misstep in the dining room. But, all ethical objections aside, if they’re living in constant fear of being caught in a mistake, you’re not going to get their most realized, relaxed selves interacting with your guests.

In fact, I could hear the **tension** between these two concepts when I was walking around that first strategic planning meeting. Some people were arguing passionately about the importance of welcome and warmth and connection, while others were convinced nothing should take precedence over an impeccably trained staff and spit-polishing every formal aspect of the restaurant to a perfect shine.

*Putting both hospitality and excellence on our list was a way of recognising that success was going to come from approaching the problem of hospitality vs. excellence in the most difficult way possible: in order to succeed, we needed to be good at both. This wasn’t an either/or-it was an and. Later, I would learn that the management guru **Roger Martin** calls this “**integrative thinking**.” In *When More Is Not Better*, he argues that leaders should actually go out of their way to **choose conflicting goals**.*

Southwest Airlines, for instance, set out to be both the lowest-cost airline in America and number one in both customer and employee satisfaction. Those goals would seem to be in opposition, and perhaps they are. But much of the time, they’ve succeeded at all three. Certainly, the efforts they’ve made toward those contradictory goals have done wonders for their bottom line: for the last half century, Southwest has been the most profitable airline in the country.

As Martin says, **multiple conflicting goals force you to innovate**. We’d seen it ourselves. When I’d arrived at Eleven Madison Park (EMP), one faction had been sacrificing hospitality in the name of precision and excellence, while the other had been delivering warmer service with less finesse. Those who survived and thrived with us had been able to **see the merit in the other group’s priorities**.

By putting both words on our list, we were acknowledging that we would need to **recognise the inherent friction** between hospitality and excellence. We would need to explore that contradiction and embrace it - integrating two opposing ideas and embodying both simultaneously.”

- Will Guidara, ‘Unreasonable Hospitality’, (2022)

## 10 lessons cont...

4. “We can use our feelings (anger, guilt, depression and shame) to make us conscious that at that moment we’re not **connected to our needs**, we’re up in our heads, analysing in a judgemental way. So what we need to learn to do is quickly identify those judgements that are causing us to feel (anger, guilt, depression and shame) and to be conscious that behind those judgements, **at the root of them, are always our needs**. Unfortunately we haven’t been trained to go directly to the root – we’ve been trained to go up to the head. The root is always our needs.”

5. “Judgements and criticisms are alienated expressions of our needs.”

6. When we express our needs indirectly, others are likely to hear **criticism** – and when anyone hears anything that sounds like criticism, they are likely to invest their energies in self-defence or counterattack. If we want a **compassionate** response from others, the more directly we can connect our feelings to our own needs, the more easy it is for others to feel compassion for us.

7. Needs are always a more truthful expression of what’s alive in people than these judgements of others that we are trained to make...

8. **Conflicts** are resolved easily once both sides are able to articulate the needs that the other party has that aren’t being met.

9. **Needs are universal**. All human beings have the same needs. For example:

Basic sustenance needs – food, shelter, protection from the elements, clothing etc; Safety; Empathy (understanding); Honesty and trust; Celebration; Play; Rest; Creativity; Love (the need, not the feeling); Community and belonging; Autonomy and self-direction; Meaning and purpose in our lives; (a need to contribute to life)

10. We need to (validate) our needs, and see them as a gift to others, not as a burden to others. They give other people an opportunity to see what’s alive in us and contribute to our well-being. When people hear our **requests**, and see it solely as an opportunity to contribute to our wellbeing, it gives them this opportunity to do what we human beings love more than anything else: to use our power in the service of life.