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Timeliness

"Timeliness is best in all matters." - Hesiod

Juan, a junior at San Sebastian High School, was starting to plan his summer. With a few months of downtime in front of him, and his last summer before heading off to college, he hoped to spend his free time working and saving as much he could for the year ahead. He had applied at several local restaurants and for a position at the local hardware store, but wasn't holding his breath. Those jobs didn't excite him, anyway. While scrolling through Facebook, he saw an ad that said, "Now Hiring! Several positions available." It was an ad from Arlington Heights Golf & Country Club, a high end private club not far from where Juan and his family lived.

The ad mentioned several different positions including a hostess, dishwasher, line cook and a few other front of house positions. Juan didn't have a lot of experience, but figured he'd submit an application anyway. He didn't know what the position would pay, but the ad did mention free meals and access to the club's swimming pool and championship golf course. On his days off, Juan envisioned himself lounging poolside rubbing elbows with the who's who of Arlington.

A few days after Juan submitted his application, Theo, the club's Clubhouse Manager, called to schedule an interview. They agreed to meet that Saturday morning at 9:30 am. Juan spent a few days researching the club and was impressed by what he saw online, and was excited for the chance to work here.

On Saturday morning, Juan woke up early, ate breakfast, and got dressed. On his way to the club, he stopped by Starbucks for Green Tea Crème Frappuccino Blended Crème, his favorite drink. When he pulled into the parking lot, the line was long, but he still had 20 minutes before he needed to meet Mr. Arthur.

As Juan pulled up to the front gate, he was blown away by the size of the campus. He could begin to see the size of the clubhouse as the gate agent approached his car. "Good morning, sir. How can I help you?" The agent was friendly and was eager to help him reach his final destination.

"I am here to meet with Mr. Theo Arthur. I have an interview with him at 9:30."

"Yes, of course. We've been expecting you. Please proceed to the roundabout, take the second exit and park anywhere on your left hand side." Juan could tell that wasn't the first time the agent had said that. He began to wonder how many men and women drove through this gate every day. "From there, please enter the clubhouse where you'll find Ms. Dana West behind the front desk. She will be able to help you from there."

"Thank you." Juan proceeded to the roundabout, parked his car and began the short walk to the main entrance of the clubhouse. He pulled out his phone making sure it was on silent. It was

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9:27 am and Juan let out a sigh of relief. Maybe he would have time to use the restroom before the interview. He did just polish off a Venti Green Tea after all.

“Good morning, sir, and welcome to Arlington Heights Golf & country Club. How can I assist you?” Ms. West, the club’s concierge, was smiling from ear to ear. Juan thought to himself, “Wow, everyone here is so nice. This must be a fun place to work!”

“Hello. I am here for an interview. But I was hoping I could use the restroom first.”

“Yes, of course. Please, follow me.” Dana showed Juan where the men’s restroom was and went back to her desk. By the time Juan had finished using the restroom, washed his hands, and straightened his tie bar, it was 9:37 am. When he went back to the front desk, Dana asked him to have a seat.

As Juan sat there he waited patiently for Mr. Arthur. After 15 minutes, Juan approached Dana. “Do you know how long I’ll have to wait? I was supposed to meet Mr. Arthur at 9:30 and now it’s almost 10:00 am.”

“Please have a seat. I am sure Mr. Arthur will be with you shortly.”

As Juan sat back down, a tall skinny man with trimmed blonde hair came out of his office, alongside a young lady dressed in her Sunday best. Juan couldn’t help but overhear the conversation. “Samantha, thank you for coming in today. It was such a pleasure meeting you and I know you will be a great fit here at Arlington. Please see Ms. West on your way out and she will provide you with some additional resources before your first day. See you on Wednesday!” They shook hands and parted ways.

Juan looked at his watch. It was 10:02 am now and he was getting anxious. “Mr. Angelo, it is a pleasure to meet you. My name is Theo Aurthur, the Clubhouse Manager here at Arlington. Please, follow me.” Juan jumped up and followed Mr. Arthur into his office. “Please, have a seat.”

Mr. Arthur sat down, organized some papers on his desk, and leaned forward. “Juan, thank you for your interest in employment here at Arlington.”

“Yes, thank you. Excited for the chance to work here.”

“Juan, remind me, what time were we scheduled to meet this morning? 9:30 am, if I recall correctly.”

“Yes, that is correct,” Juan confirmed.

“That’s what I thought. Thank you. When I came out of my office to meet you, Dana said you hadn’t arrived yet. When you came in, you might remember seeing Samantha sitting near where

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you were sitting. While you were in the restroom, you missed our appointment. Samantha wasn't scheduled until 9:45 this morning, but she was here early, she was prepared and ready when you were missing. Since she was eager to get started, I did her interview first. She is a nice young lady, will be headed off to school next semester and is excited to get to work. She impressed me with her experience and I am happy to offer her a hostess position this summer."

"That's great. I am sorry I was late. I was in the restroom. Had a large Green Tea on my way here this morning and needed to freshen up." Juan said this with confidence, but Mr. Arthur stopped him.

"That's fine, but you were late. Green Tea or not, we were scheduled to meet at 9:30, not 9:37, was it, when you were finally ready to connect. That is why I was able to interview Samantha first."

"Again, I am sorry for being late." Juan was worried he wouldn't even get the interview now.

"It's fine. We will still do the interview. But when you leave my office this morning, I need you to understand the importance of timeliness. Imagine you had a bus ticket for a bus that leaves at 7:43 pm. If you showed up late, even a few minutes late, the bus won't be there, Juan. There is a reason your ticket has a timestamp on it. There is a reason we had an appointment on our calendars at 9:30 am. If we planned to meet at 9:37, that is what your calendar would have read." Mr. Arthur wasn't mad, but Juan was embarrassed. He was late. But only 7 minutes late. He was in the building. Just not exactly where he needed to be exactly when he needed to be there.

Mr. Arthur went on. "Juan, we have a dishwasher position open this summer that I think you would be great for. But if your schedule says you need to clock in at 3:00 pm, that doesn't mean you can clock in at 3:04 or 3:18 or 2:47 and not have consequences. While 3 minutes might not seem like a big deal, try telling that to the person holding that bus ticket or the NBA player that missed the winning jumper due to a shot clock violation. It might not seem like a big deal to you now, but when you leave this office, and hopefully for the rest of your career, I hope you understand timeliness is best in all matters."

Juan sat there speechless. He was only late a few minutes. Was it really this big of a deal? He took a few deep breaths, looked up at Mr. Arthur, and said, "Thank you, sir. That is good insight and I will make note of that going forward."

Mr. Arthur asked Juan several questions about his past, what he was studying in school and his future plans. Juan had never worked in clubs before, but was up to the challenge. After answering 4 or 5 additional questions, Mr. Arthur paused for a moment. "Thank you for your time today, Juan, and your willingness to listen, to learn. I know you won't be late for your first shift on Wednesday afternoon. If you learn anything from me this summer, remember, 15 minutes early is on time, on time is late, and late is unacceptable."

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“Does that mean I got the job?” Juan was now smiling excited for the chance to work alongside such an upfront and honest professional that sat before him.

“Yes, you got the job. Congratulations!”

“Thank you, sir. I can’t wait to get started and thank you for giving me the opportunity.”

“Thank you, Juan. Now, your shift on Wednesday starts at 3:00 pm. What time shall we be expecting you?”

“I will see you on Wednesday at 2:45, sir.” Juan knew that is what Theo wanted to hear and it felt good knowing that he would always be on time if he were 15 minutes early.

Mr. Arthur smiled, reached out his hand, and said, “Juan, welcome to the team. Please see Dawn on your way out, and I will see you on Wednesday afternoon.”

On his way home Juan couldn’t stop thinking about what Mr. Arthur had said. 15 minutes early is on time... What am I going to do with those extra 15 minutes, Juan thought. I guess it doesn’t really matter. If I am 15 minutes early, I am on time and the rest will take care of itself.

That Wednesday, Juan’s first day of work, he approached the front gate at 2:42 pm. When he rolled his window down, the gate agent looked at Juan, smiled, and said, “Welcome to your first day at Arlington Golf & Country Club. Nice to see that you are on time today, son. Have a great shift!”

Juan walked into the clubhouse, 15 minutes early for his first shift, knowing that if the gate agent knew he was on time, Mr. Arthur would know. And that was enough for Juan to justify being 15 minutes early and never have to worry about being late again.

Ricky L. Potts, Jr. is the Membership Director at The Fountaingrove Club in Santa Rosa, California and can be reached at 707 308 1188 or via email: rpotts@troon.com.