

APRIL 2024

## Smart Perspective: "The Moment of Truth"

**"Until the Moment of Truth arises, you have never really shown your trustworthiness."**

- **Allen Samuels**, my late client, and legendary car dealer who passed away on April 24, 2020

Allen Samuels loved sharing this story frequently with his management team; I trust you will find it valuable.

At 10:00 on a Sunday evening, Allen received a panicked call from **Karl May**, his customer who was driving home from the [Waco Regional Airport](#). His new Chevy Suburban had died and he was stranded on the side of the road.

Without hesitation, Allen leaped up, saying, "I'm leaving home right now in my Suburban and I'll trade with you. You can drive my Suburban as long as yours is in the shop. I'll catch a ride home and we'll bring your Suburban to the dealership tonight."

### **Please notice, that Allen did NONE of the following:**

- Avoid the call - Allen answered at a late and **inconvenient** time
- Push the issue off to the next day - he could have told his customer that he would simply have to wait for AAA to rescue him in the morning
- Call General Motors' service line and let the issue become theirs, not his

### **Allen Samuels' reasoning was brilliant:**

- If Karl had a trouble-free ownership experience, all he would know is that **Chevrolet made a dependable SUV** and he would have no reason to be a loyal customer of Allen Samuels.
- This incident allowed Allen Samuels to **earn his customer's trust** and show that the customer comes **first** even at the most inconvenient time.
- Karl May **became intensely loyal** to Allen Samuels and **shared this story frequently** throughout his personal and professional network.

### **Takeaways:**

- Allen ensured that his customers had his cell phone number so they could always reach him in a time of need (**Do YOU make yourself that accessible?**)
- Determine how far you would go when pushed to the wall - and then go there **immediately** and gladly
- Create the reputation you want by earning it every day.

Legendary car dealer Carl Sewell wrote a book, "Customers for Life, which detailed the value of a lifelong customer. Even without writing a book, Allen Samuels knew precisely how to respond and how to earn a customer's loyalty.

**Are you and your team prepared for your Moment of Truth? If you don't have a plan already in place, you're not very loyal to your customers. And if you don't have that plan, we need to talk!**



## Smart Focus: Positive, Employee-Focused Culture

Relationships drive future relationships. I'm indebted to my good friend, LinkedIn guru **Terry Sullivan**, for introducing me to **Chili's founder Larry Lavine**.

Through that connection, I persuaded Larry to keynote the **Northeast Leadership Forum Award Luncheon** this past Wednesday, April 24, at the Hurst Conference Center.

Larry wowed the sold-out crowd of 300 with his secrets to success. **Hint** – they relate to non-restaurant businesses as well as food enterprises. Among his keen observations were:

- **Two of the worst reasons** to start a restaurant are: "I love food" and "My wife makes a good lasagna"
- Your **culture** will drive your success or failure – make it fun and rewarding for employees to work there and they will dazzle and impress your customers
- Your **brand** promise represents the soul of your brand – If you simply hang it on a piece of paper on the wall and fail to live and breathe that brand promise, you are doomed to fail
- There are easily **100 ways to show love** to your employees and to thank them for their performance, from giving them movie passes or Amazon gift cards, to a ticket to Six Flags (Six Flags used to be a LOT LESS EXPENSIVE!)
- **You honor and show value to your employees** when you listen to and respond to their suggestions
- **Innovation may look ugly at first glance** until you see it in action – **Raising Cane's** drives over \$1.5 billion in sales with a menu focused primarily on chicken fingers and fries
- All that Americans want in their food are **sugar, grease, and salt** – give it to them in a fun and creative way they will crave!



And my favorite of his quotes: **“Sinners repent; stupid is forever!”** Translation: **We can learn from our mistakes if we are smart enough to recognize the mistakes we made.**

Larry’s **“Aha Moment”** occurred when the first Chili’s had been open a few months. He stepped out the back door of his office and saw the customer line was wrapped around the building. ‘That’s when I knew the concept was taking off!’

And the “secret sauce” of Chili’s: “We were the first casual restaurant to serve a **half-pound hamburger and we invested extra in the meat quality.** We created a proprietary blend of meat in our burgers that was significantly superior to what anyone else served. We created a craving before that term ‘craving’ was even talked about!”

Here are my observations of a few new areas – some driven by AI, some by innovation, and some simply by pure genius.

## **IBM’s Watson AI at The Masters Golf Tournament**

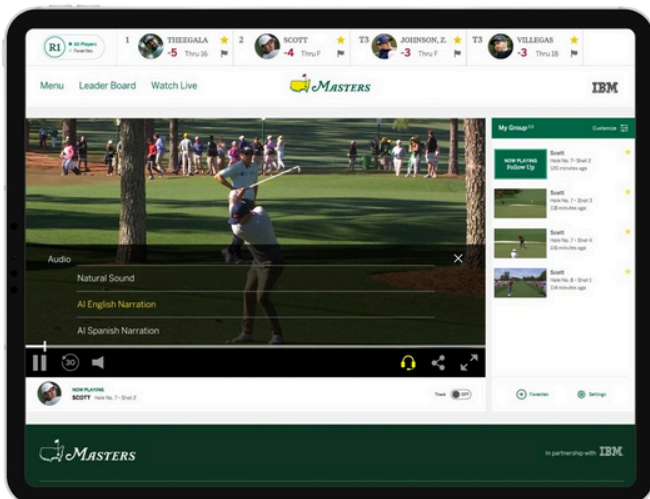
Earlier this month, you could follow your favorite player shot by shot and review the analytics of his next shot before he even **hit** it, based on his past performance on that hole and how the course was playing that day.

[Content-technology.com](https://www.content-technology.com) reports that IBM’s Watson AI provided at **The Masters** included:

**Data-driven recaps** of how each hole has played daily and throughout the 2024 Tournament (e.g., “The 14th hole has played difficult today, with 25% of shots resulting in bogeys.”)

**Projections of how each hole might play**, based on past and current performance data (e.g., “The 9th hole is projected to be the third most difficult hole today.”)

**Historical insights into how each hole has played, based on eight years of Tournament data** – including more than 170,000 shots – and ball position on course (e.g., “Shots historically hit in this location have an 82% chance of resulting in a birdie.”)



## AI Update: Ultimate Home Security System

A Slovenian company, **PaintCam**, is shaking up the home security business, according to [Fox News](#).

The article shows how the PaintCam Eve takes security to an entirely more serious level. When Eve detects an intruder, it issues a stern warning. If not heeded, Eve gives the homeowner the option of whether or not to “take the shot.”

With authorization, Eve then launches miniature paintballs and tear gas. Of course, cleaning up can be a costly mess, and clearly Eve technology would certainly put a damper on any true surprise birthday parties!

## Tiebreaker: Doughnut Wars

And my favorite: Krispy **Kreme Doughnuts**. Not only has the brand created its own innovation, but it has also driven its competitors (**Dunkin'** with its Super Bowl ad) and **ShIPLEY'S** (now with its own new product innovations) to step up to the mega-marketing plate.

While Dunkin' focuses on celebs such as Ben Affleck, J-Lo, Tom Brady, and Matt Damon to produce a fun TV commercial, Krispy Kreme created its own doughnut **for the Total Solar Eclipse** (with an Oreo cookie on top) to partnerships with **KitKat Bar** and **Hershey's**.

Even now, ShipleY's has launched its response with the “**Cookies N' Dream**” Do-Nuts that are available in iced or filled varieties.

We are seeing “Experiential” become the operative word with customer engagement across many industries. When companies can create an experience that leverages the customer's involvement, they are becoming more relevant and relatable to their core customer base.

I recall my years managing marketing for my Wendy's client in Central Texas, where the focus was constantly on the 18-34-year-old-male target. We're seeing the very same age group with funky doughnuts, oversized burgers, and over-the-top flavor combinations in our dining experiences. **GAME ON!**

