



In my opinion...

DEAN SAYS:

Competent Enough to Stand the Trial

Did you see the movie, *When Harry Met Sally*? Whether you accept the premise of that movie or not, one scene plays over and over in my mind. It's a scene early in the movie where Sally goes through an excruciatingly long effort at ordering a meal in a restaurant. After issuing extremely detailed instructions to the waiter, Harry remarks, "You're high maintenance, aren't you?"

That's me. I'm high maintenance. In fact, I may well be the "king of high maintenance." Let me illustrate.

Just last week I stopped for breakfast at McDonalds. Years of high maintenance has led me to develop a carefully-written script to help assure I get exactly what I want.

"May I take your order, please?"

"Yes, I would like to give you a grill order." (Pause)

"Okay. What do you want?"

"I would like one Egg McMuffin with extra cheese and no Canadian bacon." (Pause)

"Would you like anything else?"

"Yes, I would like two hash browns and a large Diet Coke."

"Okay. That's an Egg McMuffin with extra cheese and no ham, two hash browns and a large Diet Coke. Please pay at the second window."

Now without meaning one moment of offense to our Canadian readers, and with absolutely no apology to the Dairy Council for my wish for extra cheese, you can see that I am, indeed, high maintenance. The really frustrating part of the story comes when I have paid for my meal, ramped onto the Interstate, opened the bag, unwrapped my McMuffin, taken a bite, and—you guessed it—bitten into the dreaded Canadian bacon.

Closer inspection discloses that they also did not slap on the extra slice of cheese. And, worst of all, they made the sandwich wrong. That's right. They made the sandwich wrong.

Now you may not realize that there is a right way and a wrong way to make an Egg McMuffin. Having enjoyed this delicacy for years, I have consciously learned proper McMuffin fabrication technique.

The next time you see a McDonalds' breakfast spot on TV, notice that the Egg McMuffin is made: bottom of an English muffin, Canadian bacon, egg, cheese slice and top of an English muffin. It's a precise order: muffin, bacon, egg, cheese, muffin.

Lately, almost seven out of ten Egg McMuffins I buy are made: muffin, egg, bacon, cheese, muffin. Yeah, out of order. So what? I'll tell you "what:" you

can't pry the bacon off the cheese. When the order is muffin, bacon, egg, cheese, muffin, you can easily slip the bacon out of the sandwich and into the trash—where it belongs.

Okay. I'm a fussy guy. But remember, I told you I was high maintenance. I have a very low tolerance for incompetence, and I suffer fools not at all.

We live in a day of relativism that seems to say there are many "right ways" of doing a task. My life experience says, "No." I have found that if you really study a task, there is usually only one really good way of doing it. Just as the cook at McDonalds—dare I call her a chef—should always make an Egg McMuffin: muffin, bacon, egg, cheese, muffin, an installer should always mount smoke detectors on a properly secured back box. If the installer must make some splices, he or she should solder the connections using the proper rosin core solder.

When installing a sprinkler control valve tamper switch on an Outside Stem & Yoke valve, grind the tamper switch groove deep enough so you can adjust the switch to prevent it from resetting on the stem's threads.

When you discover that the system you're installing must use nonpower-limited wiring, go out and buy the proper UL-Listed cable.

When testing for audibility of fire alarm notification appliances, the installer should use a sound pressure level meter. No matter how well the AHJ has trained her ear, she, too, should rely on the sound pressure level meter to determine signal audibility.

My point: competency takes a real and significant effort. But doing the task correctly brings its own reward. Approach every task with the attitude, "I'm going to find the best way to do this. Then, I'm going to stick with success."

"But what if I want my Egg McMuffin made: muffin, egg, bacon, cheese, muffin, so the Canadian bacon won't slip out of the sandwich when I take a bite?"

Listen. Trust me. Read my lips: the bacon to egg tension is just as good as the bacon to cheese tension. I know. I've measured it. □

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