

# Territorialism Versus Teamwork

*How language and business structure can  
destroy business*

BY NATE-TRA DHEVABANCHACHAI



**F**rom my experiences with airlines and hotels, I have met employees and associates – even my colleagues – with the symptoms of “I-me-my-mine.”

For example: “Before you come and take anything from my galley, you need to let me know first,” one senior purser told me when I was a junior flight attendant.

Since then, I have seen this symptom until today. I am still hearing similar things all the time.

For example: “You know Miss Nate-tra, I really dislike the chief accountant. She wants to terminate my staff. This staff is mine, I will fight for this employee,” said one very committed HR manager during a training session in a good hotel chain here in Thailand.

When I was very junior economy-class flight attendant, I was taught to be most humble. That time, I was so scared to go to the business class to borrow any equipment there. On one flight, I was asked by my flight purser to borrow a box of orange juice from the business class.

The rush hour on the airplane really means walking and serving against time. I walked towards the business class and saw a box of orange juice in the galley. To meet the rush, I quickly reached for the box but a loud voice behind me said: “Before you come and take anything from my galley, you need to ask me first.” It was the senior purser.

I truly thought for a second that the galley did belong to her. And then I thought: how she can own the galley on the plane? No matter, I was scared. I kept saying “sorry, sorry and sorry.”

Later on, with time and experience, I started to understand what people mean when they say “I-me-my-mine.” To be very honest, however, I just don’t like it. I can never adopt that speaking habit. It’s like playing cards or smoking; no matter how much I practice and no matter how many times I am in such environments, I just have no gift for it.

I do understand the “I-me-my-mine” words are needed to iden-

tify certain things in life. But I think many people are overusing and abusing those words in business. Why? I don’t know.

I only know that it does create territory and it is a most obvious thing that can destroy and prevent teamwork. How can we be a team if we have territory?

Look at the hotel industry, with all the departments’ names such as front office, housekeeping, kitchen, food and beverage, human resources, accounting and so on and so forth. With these different names, different uniforms, different department heads, these are enough reasons to keep a hotel team apart. This is why a human resource department is paid to create “teamwork” training sessions. Isn’t this funny? We create the problems and then we try and create the solutions.

As I mentioned at the start of this story, the HR person shared her disappointments with me that someone wanted to fire her staff. I found out she was the one who hired this particular staff and he worked for the accounting department.

Think about it: if it was her HR staff, and the chief accountant wanted to fire her HR staff – what a story! Chief accountant will kick out HR staff – confusing isn’t it? I realized that this HR manager was having the “I-me-my-mine” symptom.

The person who can change the “I-me-my-mine” symptom to “we-us-our-ours” can be anyone with enough leadership skills. The best of the best scenario is when the General Manager starts and enforces it because everyone will tend to follow.

Next issue, I will tell you more about the “I-me-my-mine” symptom, which resulted in loss of business to one hotel owner I met.

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