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“Thank You” for Reading This Column

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“Thank You” for Reading This Column

By Gene Kruckemyer
UCF Forum columnist
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There’s a virus going around that many people likely will think is not a problem – but unfortunately it is something that seems to be more and more irritatingly commonplace.

And when I say “irritating,” I need to be mindful of how I put this, because even many of my close acquaintances are part of the issue.

When I thank someone for a favor or service rendered, what I’ve often noticed creeping into our daily conversation is the use – make that *the overuse* – of the response “No problem.”

Just when was the appropriate “You’re welcome” put out to pasture by so many people?

Picture yourself after being served dinner at a cozy restaurant, or purchasing movie tickets, or checking out at the grocery store, and you courteously say “Thank you.” Why does the other person say the grating “No problem.”? Or, after paying your car mechanic or dentist \$400 for some work, you don’t expect them to say “No problem.”

The all-too-common response of “No problem” seems to imply in an impersonal way that what the person just did was potentially a burden for them, never mind that it was something they were expected to do.

The phrase seems to be more of the person’s way of responding to how *they* feel about the interaction, not how the person thanking them feels. I’ve even heard the saying take on its own variations of “No problemo” and “No prob,” which are not any less irritating.

I often want to say: “Did you think there was a chance that it would be a problem?”

What makes the person think the task was viewed as a problem in the first place? Who gave it that connotation? The giver of the service? The recipient? Was it somehow implied?

The people who say “No problem” either: 1. Consider it the best response; 2. Don’t realize they’re using an ill-fitting phrase; or 3. Have just habitually fallen into using the automatic response without thinking about what it implies. (Maybe they just need someone to point it out to them?)

Of course, there are other acceptable responses that could be used under the appropriate casual or serious circumstances: *My pleasure*, *Certainly*, *Of course* and a number of others.

But it is the “No Problem” response that is tinged with an ungracious tone, as if they really don’t want to say “You’re welcome” for something they are supposed to do anyway.

This isn’t to say that the phrase is always out of place. There are situations in which the response is acceptable – such as if you thanked a helpful passerby for stopping to replace a flat tire or if a co-worker helped pick up an armful of your dropped books. “No problem” could be acceptable because they were not obligated to help and they did something that was not expected of them. But still, a sincere “You’re welcome” is much more cordial.

Maybe it comes down to this: Some people just don’t want to invest any more personal contact in a conversational relationship than they have to, so they use the aloof “No problem” instead of the more personal response of “You’re welcome.”

I did think of one way to eliminate the “No problem” response – just don’t say “Thank you.”

But then a doctor would say that is a case where the treatment is worse than the illness.

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