

Christopher Goodwin
Rel 101
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Terry Shoemaker

In the early hours of morning, the public's fear set in. I watched from a window as the sun came up, streets once full were a barren landscape, devoid of life. As the hour approached 8, business had stopped for the time, and partners were chatting about their families' plans to stay at home and how to ration toilet paper. The normal chaos of work was still as icy pond water that fateful day in March. My coworkers were busy discussing hypothesis as to how long a shelter at home order was going to last, and the point of how long the corona virus had been stateside. Those conversations were conspiracy theories at best. They were coming from a place of uncertainty and speculative justification.

That day would become the new normal. Starbucks, my place of work, offered partners the option to take time off during the initial panic of the pandemic, some of those partners would get six weeks off, paid. Those of us who chose to stay received three dollars an hour more as compensation. We were unaware of how much we would be doing for those extra three dollars. As the media kept reporting, people kept getting coffee. I was working close to 40 hours those weeks, and it was a chaotic hellscape. We were only serving food and drinks through the drive thru window, and for limited hours. The only reason we didn't do more business was that we couldn't physically produce fast enough. After a month of work during the pandemic, I took time off. It was a well-earned, blissful two weeks off. I went to bed early, slept late, and drank the stockpile of coffee I had amassed from weeks of hoarding that ever so precious nectar of the gods.

Upon returning to work, we had a small discussion as to how partners feel about those who took time off and those who didn't. Apparently, there was some bad blood and jealousy, but Starbucks being the awesome company they are, smoothed everything over and brought people back together. Two weeks later the company offered a buy out for those partners who were still fearful of the virus. It was a voluntary culling in my opinion, but thankfully we got rid of some bad apples. The people that remained were happy to return to work and glad to get acclimated with the new normal that was a "grab-n-go" model. More foot traffic has built steadily over the last few months, and hopes to reopen seating are in the works, thankfully I have been able to stay in my little bubble of happiness that is my job, school, and dog.

For now, thank you Starbucks, for being that rock I shelter under. Without you I wouldn't be able to improve myself.