

Tradeshow Tips ~ Turn Unhappy Visitors into Advocates

Tradeshow attendees see your tradeshow display as the 'face' of your company. Some will be happy to see you with smiling faces or hugs as old friends reunite on the tradeshow floor. Sometimes, you will find that you and your tradeshow staff are the subject of an upset attendee. The cause may not be immediately apparent and may have nothing to do with either you or your staff. How do you handle the situation?

The important thing to keep in mind is that this unhappy visitor will let you know what the rest of the organization is doing wrong. Perhaps they are a customer and their order was screwed up. Perhaps much needed repairs weren't done in a timely fashion, costing this customer lots of money. Perhaps the sales man was rude to the receptionist. There are ways to handle this. Pick the wrong one, and you'll be the talk of the tradeshow circuit for years to come.

The wrong way: Let the customer rant and rave, getting all of their pent-up frustration out while your staffers stare wide-eyes and open-mouthed, blindsided by this unexpected turn of events. Loud voices, waving arms, angry, red faces: sure to attract attention and create negative buzz surrounding your display.

The right way: Prepare your staffers ahead of time to deal with upset attendees. It's knowledge they may never need, but this is one case where it's far better to be safe than sorry.

They will need the Three R's: **Remain, Relocate and Reschedule**

Remain cool and focused on the attendee. You want to remain in control of the conversation.

Relocate the attendee out of the main area of your exhibit. It's better to have these conversations away from the mass of prying eyes and ears, either in a secluded corner of your exhibit, off to the side, or preferably, out of the booth entirely.

Reschedule. Once the attendee has vented their anger, it's time for your staffer to say something like, "I hear your concerns. These are obviously important issues, and need to be resolved. Thank you for sharing them with me. There's a limit to what I can do to resolve these issues here. So, let's set up a time, after the show, where we can talk, and correct the problem."



This way, you've minimized the impact of the upset attendee, listened to their concerns, offered a plan of action, and taken positive steps to repair a damaged relationship.

