

Customer Service Touchpoints for Your Next Conference

Meeting planners spend our lives managing meticulous requirements to produce a flawless end product. When we focus solely on the deliverable, it's easy to overlook critical interaction points, "touchpoints", throughout the planning process when a little extra customer service goes a long way.

Special attention to these touchpoints elevates the attendee experience from average to extraordinary. Although there are dozens, below are three areas when extra care really makes attendees feel valued.

First, setting deadline dates when you have staff resources to answer the higher-than-usual volume of inquiries is good customer service. Ensure that everyone in your office is aware of critical deadlines, such as housing or registration cutoff dates, and has the information to answer questions. These are times that attendees need help urgently, so have the time and staff available to assist them. Not setting deadlines on Mondays demonstrates sensitivity to international delegates, whose workday is over by the time you return from your weekend.

Special requests are another touchpoint where extra effort really impacts the attendee experience. Most registration forms have a place to collect dietary allergies or physical disabilities, which planners take into account when developing menus and activities. Going the extra step of notifying the attendee what you're doing to accommodate their needs makes them feel important.

Finally, timely post-meeting follow-up leaves attendees with a positive final impression. Conventions are physically and mentally grueling, and it's overwhelming when mountains of email have piled up while you've been away. Although post-meeting requests may seem like a nuisance, providing a prompt and courteous reply reinforces a positive conference experience.

The attendee experience is more than just onsite, it begins the moment that an attendee decides to come to your conference. This mindset will help identify touchpoints when superb customer service will enhance the attendee experience, and increase the likelihood that they will return year after year. •

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The All Important Annual Meeting Customer Service Delivery Experience!

Once a year, it's "all hands on deck" to serve your association members at the annual meeting, where you pull folks from ALL department to "man the front lines" at registration! Often working out of their comfort zone and now entrusted with "member satisfaction," these newly appointed "goodwill ambassadors" can make or break a member's meeting experience through even the smallest gesture or comment. Are you properly preparing this "volunteer army" to deliver a rewarding member service experience?

While one simple letter differentiates the words *altitude* and *attitude*, they both conjure up extremes in demeanor; a person with *altitude* is always upbeat and enthusiastic, while a person with *attitude* projects a negative and uncaring persona. As in first impressions or simple member encounters, it can be the simplest things that define whether your members are feeling "rejected and repulsed" or "recognized and rewarded!"

To help assure your membership is greeted with nothing short of an INCREDIBLE service experience, consider the following to share with your staff!

1. Host your members like you would welcome them to your home for dinner!
2. Offer help, suggestions and solutions as a second nature habit!
3. Smile and greet people as though reunited at a family reunion!
4. Personalize your communication with names of "people" vs. "numbers!"
5. Initiate the "5 Foot Rule" via establishing eye contact & greeting with a smile!
6. Team up with associates to maximize your service potential and spirit of mutual support!
7. Assist members at every turn; remember you are their host and they're the guest!
8. Behave in a professional, courteous and exemplary manner!
9. Listen with genuine interest to problems and take ownership to get them resolved!
10. Empathize with people's emotions; let them know someone understands and cares! •

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