



Don't Judge a Visitor by Their Appearance

Can you determine if someone's likely to be a good customer before they ever set foot in your booth? Does the cut of one's suit, choice of hairstyle, or jewelry preferences indicate a likelihood to do business with your organization? Does a nervous twitch or a clammy handshake say anything about a person's honesty?

Despite the fact that we're taught since childhood not to judge people by their appearance, that real value is on the inside, business decisions are made on the show floor all the time based on personal appearance.

Don't believe me? Consider the following scenarios:

Two women approach a booth. One...Ann is vivacious and outgoing, while the other, Betty, hangs back. Ann chatters easily with the sales person while Betty silently picks up brochures and technical specifications. Your booth staffer engages with Ann, but ignores the quiet Betty. Big mistake: Betty's the senior buyer, Ann's her over excited assistant attending her very first trade show.

Further down the aisle, two men arrive at a booth separately. The first is handsome and charming. The second well, let's be charitable and say he's not. He's poorly dressed, and what he is wearing is wrinkled. Personal hygiene is not his strong suit. Who do your staffers talk to? Chances are they concentrate on attendee #1 which is too bad, because attendee #2 is a representative of your largest customer.

On the corner, a woman walks by a booth displaying high tech merchandise. She's a little dowdy, older than most of the other attendees, perhaps someone brought Grandma along to see the show for an exciting change away from the nursing home. The staffer looks up briefly from his laptop, sees her, decides instantly that she doesn't fit his target audience, and goes back to checking his email. Whoops! He just blew off one of the hottest software designers in the market, who'd been considering jumping ship to your company. Now she's off, in search of more welcoming waters.

Avoid these mistakes and the dozens of others that come from judging people solely on appearance. Remind your staffers of the following:

- Hot prospects are not always "hot". Buyers come in all shapes, sizes, and styles.
- Engage with all attendees. Everyone deserves a courteous, warm welcome.
- Not all attendees will act the same way: a quiet attendee might be a powerful buyer or a shy assistant. You have to ask questions to find out.

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