

## MANAGING THE REPUTATION OF YOUR EVENT.

As a Consultant in Quality and Customer Service, Roberta Meier often attends seminars and workshops as a "Mystery Shopper". As well as checking out how well delegates are catered for by the training teams, she also takes great delight in testing how tenaciously event organizers pursue her for her true opinion about their reputation.

If and when they do catch up with Roberta, how do they quantify reputation anyway?

The easiest thing to do is to use the happiness sheets (event evaluation forms) and the post event questionnaires, remembering that this is not a popularity contest but a search for factual information.

If your questionnaires ask for a numerical score against each question, finding the average score (adding all the scores together and dividing the total by the number of delegates who answered) is a useful guide. It is also constructive to look at the spread of results. Check how many people rated the presenter a 6, how many a 7 and so on. A small cluster of very high or very low scores can give a false average, pulling it up or down. You should be interested in what the majority (60%) of the attendees thought and usually these valid results are centered on the true average.

### Stress Avoidance

Also consider which elements of the project were the most stressful for you, for your team and for the delegates. Events management will never be a completely stress-free activity but, on occasion, poor planning, poor preparation or badly selected people can cause unnecessary anguish. Think back over the event and identify situations that you would prefer not to repeat if and when you run a similar event in the future. Use a cause and effect grid to home in on the real cause of problems and identify a course of action to avoid this happening again.

### Effect

What actually happened?

### Cause

### Action Plan

Guest speaker was late arriving.

A rail strike was called on the day and we had to fly her in at the last minute.

We tried to save money by avoiding an overnight stay.

In future guest speakers will be put up in a hotel the night before the event.

One of our key delegates had to leave because of an allergy to marker pen solvent.

The interactive sessions of the workshop required lots of flip chart work and we only had solvent based markers with us.

We didn't ask and he didn't tell us about the allergy.

Only use water based markers in future and update the registration questions to include all allergies.

The statistics of customer satisfaction can make distressing reading, however, if you have a proactive system, you can track down the 60% of delegates who found it difficult to tell you they had a problem. If you then listen carefully to them and attempt to resolve the issue; you will convince a large proportion of them to do business with you again and you will prevent them from damaging your reputation through non-recommendation.