



Barb Kastens
Editor

The Optimist's Club

If you didn't attend the Denver-WESA Market in January, you missed a good show. One thing is certain for those of us who wander the Mart, the Pavilion and the Expo Buildings and talk all day every day to exhibitors and retailers alike: everybody has an opinion.

I talked to one grumpy exhibitor who was counting the hours left in the day and said he was having the worst market he had ever had. In contrast, an apparel manufacturer who had been writing orders non stop in her ever-packed showroom was heard saying, "Recession? What recession?" A saddle maker cast doubt on whether President Obama could really do the country any good, while a boot maker confided, "New year, new president, good reason for hope." Speculation about when or if the economy would start to turn around was rampant. And as usual, the bets were on for who would make it to the Superbowl.

In the midst of all this, something struck me dead on. Those who had a positive attitude were outselling those who were openly negative. The booths of the head shakers and eye rollers were as empty as my church on what our pastor calls "canon ball Sunday." That's the week after Christmas or Easter when he says you can "shoot off a canon in the sanctuary and not hit anybody." But the showrooms of the exhibitors who welcomed folks with a smile and a warm greeting were as full as that same sanctuary on Christmas Eve.

Take a moment to think about that, because the same principle applies to your store. What kind of opinions are you and your staff sharing with your customers, and how are they being presented? Do they reek of doom and gloom, or do they ring with a powerful note of optimism? Are customers running out the door to escape your negative attitude, or do they seek out your company because of the positive aura that surrounds you? What you say and how you say it is just as important, if not more, as any service that you provide.

Workshop presenter Rita Suiter offered a wonderful business seminar for retailers on Monday morning of the Denver Market. Suiter professes that how you present yourself to others "from the neck up" is critically important to the customer experience. That is, you can say "good morning," but if it looks and sounds like "I wish I were still in bed," the customer will pick up on it and it will have an affect not only on their shopping experience, but how long they stay, how much they buy, and if they ever patronize your store again. That's a powerful notion, and one that bears heeding. Consider joining the Optimist's Club today if you want to succeed at attracting more customers tomorrow.

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