

Appreciation vs. Avoidance

SUPPORTING THOSE WHO SUPPORT YOU

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Everyone has probably felt it at one time or another. You're at a chiropractic convention, enjoying a host of great speakers and presentations. Then you decide to take some time to walk through the exhibit hall. You're there to see what's new and what might interest you for the year ahead. You may even be interested in getting a few questions answered face-to-face.

But as you enter the expo hall, the atmosphere suddenly changes. Somehow, you've left the halls of academic and clinical discussion and now find yourself engulfed in a room seemingly filled to the brim with oversized display booths, promising literature and aggressive sales people. To insulate yourself, you walk down the middle of the aisle, never making eye contact. You avoid conversations that could end uncomfortably as you move past the exhibitors in a decidedly deliberate manner.

While this scenario may appear exaggerated, it's not too far from what many exhibitors *feel* takes place during an average trade show. In fact, during a recent conversation, one exhibitor (who is himself a doctor of chiropractic, well-known speaker and research presenter) lamented to me that he was essentially shunned at a recent show by many doctors who passed right by his exhibit booth.

What's sad about this entire situation is that the exhibitors are the ones who make so much possible. Their exhibit space fees underwrite a good portion of most chiropractic events. Exhibitors make significant donations to our state and national chiropractic associations. They are also the ones funding a good portion of our research.

If you look at the annual budget of the Foundation for Chiropractic Progress (FCP), for example, you will see that a little more than one-fourth of the budget comes from doctors of chiropractic - the rest comes from exhibitors. That's right: Three-fourths of the FCP's budget comes courtesy of donations from chiropractic-friendly companies.

Perhaps we need to look differently at exhibitors. Instead of shunning them, we should be thanking them. Yes, they are trying to sell their products and services, but these have been designed for use in *your* practice after significant investments in research and development. They are investing in our profession as much as any practitioner.

And true, you may not be interested in what they have to offer, but that doesn't change the amount they paid to support the conference you are attending and/or the association you belong to (or should belong to). They have already demonstrated their support with hard-earned dollars.

What I would like to suggest will probably take you a little outside your comfort zone, but here goes. Perhaps the next time you walk the aisles of an exhibit hall, you should thank those exhibitors who catch your eye. Rather than shy away, you can easily say something to the effect of: "You know, I see you at these events regularly, and I just wanted to take a minute to let you know how much we appreciate your support of our profession and this conference. Thank you."

As someone who has spent their fair share of time in an exhibit booth, I can tell you firsthand that

your expressed appreciation will be encouraging to the people who have taken the time and spent the money to be with you at your event.

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