

## **Dealing with Professional Disappointment**

by Robyn Davis, When I Need Help

I hate disappointing the people I care about, whether they are friends, family, or business associates. So, on the rare occasion when this happens, I don't take it well; I obsess over what I could have done differently, how I can ensure this won't happen again, and what I will do to make up for the error. Emotion has no place in effective problem solving, so I make sure I save my obsessions until after the situation has stabilized. However, if someone else has disappointed me, I don't typically give it a second thought, I resolve the situation and press on...

How do you handle disappointment in your professional life? Whether you have been the disappoint-er or the disappoint-ee, these tips will help you to become better able to resolve your next potential crisis.

### **Immediately – Take preventative measures and play “what if” to identify potential solutions with a clear head.**

Consider the obstacles you may face and how you can prepare for them. If you get stuck in an airport or find yourself with a flat tire, how will you get to your destination? If your baggage is lost, what will you wear to your meetings? If you encounter the perfect prospective client while you are waiting somewhere, what will you give/show him? I'm not saying you need to go to the extremes here, but take a moment to think about what could happen and prepare yourself to succeed despite the elements. Then, consider what could happen if your Plan B turns out to be ineffective. What would you do next? Repeat this process to form a Plan C, D, and E for the most important aspects of your next business trip. By completing this “what if” exercise, you are teaching yourself to look at situations from multiple angles, which will be very helpful during a crisis.

*Remember, the best time to think clearly about an appropriate solution is before you find yourself needing it. Not only will you be better prepared to act in the moment, but you can also bring along anything special that could help you.*

### **During the crisis – Pause and think creatively.**

Sure, your first solution didn't work. But, you wouldn't be as successful as you are now if you were incapable of coming through with the results when it counts. Before you act,

take a moment to consider your options (I realize it won't seem like you have any, but I'm telling you that you do so you can ignore that thought). Remember the solutions you have prepared and start with the one that makes the most sense. Don't accept failure as an option... if your new solution doesn't work, try another. Look at the resources you have at your disposal and think creatively. As a worst case scenario, either deliver part of what you have promised with a plan to complete the rest within an agreed upon amount of time or be prepared to pay out of your own pocket to find someone else to do the job (they may not be as good as you would have been, but something is likely to be better than nothing).

*There is a fine line between alarming those involved unnecessarily and waiting until it's too late to solve the problem. Especially if the crisis is due to circumstances beyond your control, collaboration may provide the idea or resource you had been missing.*

#### **Afterwards – Learn from your mistakes and make amends.**

If you have disappointed someone by failing to deliver on your promises, remedying the situation should be your first priority. Apologies are a must, but a reliable professional will find a way to do more to account for any losses the other party has encountered (a promise to do better next time is nice, but doesn't pay the bills and is hard to believe until it's proven). When the dust settles, calmly reflect and evaluate your actions. Ask yourself how you could have been better prepared, what other options you didn't see but you did have in the moment, what you would do if you were facing a similar situation today, and what else you can do to correct your error. Don't dwell on the past, but don't move forward until you have learned from your mistakes.

*Oftentimes the greatest clarity comes after the fact. Whether you were successful or unsuccessful, this is the best time to implement a better plan for the future.*

Disappointment isn't fun for anyone involved so act upon this advice and help your associates to do the same: start immediately to prepare for the next potential crisis, keep a clear head and think creatively when you find yourself in a difficult situation, and remember to evaluate your choices afterwards to better prepare yourself for next time.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Robyn Davis is an accomplished event hostess and experienced marketing consultant... she is here when you need help! Robyn has more than ten years of leadership experience and a well rounded background. Offering on-site sales and marketing support to exhibitors and pre-/post-event consulting services, Robyn is definitely not just a stereotypical "Booth Bunny."

Learn more about Robyn Davis and When I Need Help by visiting her website (<http://www.whenineedhelp.com>) today.

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