

# Ease and Do<sup>©</sup>

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## But I Wanted to Sit With Mom!

It pays to plan ahead; but either way be prepared to respond.

My favorite lunch spot (*Ease and Do*, July 2007) has booths and tables. Booths seem to be the accommodation of choice; particularly for young kids. One such child escorted her Mom and Dad to lunch this day and naturally she asked the hostess if they could sit in a booth. Upon arriving at their booth the young gal scooted in obligingly and urged her Mom to join her. That's when her Dad said in a tone that can only be described as heart-broken, "but I wanted to sit with Mom!"

For a brief moment I was unsure if there was more than one child in that booth but one thing for sure, the conversation didn't end there. Some terse adult and a few confused child-like comments were uttered.

It's happened to all of us at some time or another; we assume that things will go along in a certain, predictable way and then without warning the rules are changed. Dad here was caught off guard when his little one chose Mom as her booth partner. Could this 'crisis' have been avoided? Could the outcome have been a bit more pleasant? The answer to both is a resounding YES! There are two key considerations—planning and responding:

### Plan Ahead

Advance planning addresses four fundamentals:

- The outcome you expect to achieve
- Likely impediments (unexpected outcomes)
- Contingencies to deal with those impediments
- Planned response

It's not possible to prepare for all contingencies but that doesn't diminish the value of having a plan. There may have been a very good reason for Dad to want to sit with Mom. I presume he knew that *before* they arrived at the restaurant. At the same time one can expect a child to have impulsive expectations. Knowing this, Dad most certainly could have foreseen that his plan to sit with Mom may not work out. If they had developed a contingency for this *likely* impediment they may have been able to avoid the 'crisis'. Even if the contingency was ineffective, Dad could have rehearsed a more appropriate (e.g., non-disruptive) response.

## A Measured Response

Typically we are prepared for the expected outcome; our response is automatic, perhaps even rehearsed. It's when we are caught unprepared that our response takes on a significantly greater level of importance. A lack of preparedness does not diminish the need for an appropriate response, no matter how surprising (or unsettling) the outcome might be. Dad's response was apparently not rehearsed; and for that matter it was neither appropriate nor productive. Had he considered this possible outcome, he would have been prepared to respond in a more suitable manner.

## Lessons for Business

Business is full of occasions such as these (OK, without the children on hand). On a daily basis we interact with a variety of people; each occasion plays an important role in our business success and growth. Whether interaction is planned or not we can take steps to ensure that it consistently supports the success and growth of our business.

- Understand what it takes to make your business succeed- keep this detail at the core of your interaction; it will serve as your guiding light and a source of focus.
- Always plan ahead! Keep in mind the outcome you expect to achieve, potential, unexpected outcomes, contingencies and likely responses (your own and those of the person(s) you are talking to).
- Acknowledge that preparation puts you into a place of balance; it is easier to thread a needle on dry land rather than in heavy seas.
- Anticipate the unexpected- it is a fact of life; don't let these events catch you off guard. The planning you have done is invaluable in steadying you during these times and offers you the greatest chance of success in an unpredictable environment.
- At all times remember the value of as well as the potential damage that can result from your response. Anticipate that each response is the opening line in a continuing conversation.