

July 2018

Dear MREA Energy Fair 2018 Sponsor,

Unfortunately, your energy fair sponsorship is not giving you the best return on your investment.

Wisconsin billionaire Ken Hendricks made his billions by asking people at the bottom of companies this question:

“If you were running this business, what would you do differently?”

He asked that questions because:

"I guarantee if you fixed what they tell you, 95 percent of the time that would be a successful business. These guys hit it on the head all the time. But management never asks them."

If you want to get the best return on your energy fair sponsorship, start asking the people at the bottom this question:

“If you were running this fair, what would you do differently?”

Who are the people at the bottom in the energy fair world? Volunteers.

I have attended every single energy fair, all 29 of them. I started out as a volunteer for the Stevens Point Area Food Coop. Then I volunteered for the MREA. Then I paid money to bring my grandchildren. My recommendation for what to do differently is for the Midwest Renewable Energy Association staff to treat volunteers with respect.

I endured rudeness from MREA staff members four times. I'm finished volunteering for the energy fair as long as the MREA staff insists on being rude to me.

Rudeness Experience #1

I made a documentary about the energy fair, *Renewing Energies: The Ingredients For Spectacular Success*. I shot footage in 1998 and 1999. I finished editing the documentary in 2007. In 2009, Amy Heart contacted me to ask if she could use quotes from my documentary in a book about the energy fair. She promised I would see galley before printing. I said yes. The book, *The Energy Fair: Getting our energy from the sun for 20 years*, went to print without Amy showing me anything. Months later I discovered that Amy had listed the title of my documentary incorrectly – *Renewing Energies: The Ingredients For Spectacular Small Group Success*. She added the words “Small Group”.

Amy had moved onto the Milwaukee office by then.

Rudeness Experience #2

I contacted Doug Stingle about the incorrect title. I said I would like to put labels in all remaining copies of the book with the correct title. Doug responded by saying that Amy had assured him that I had told her to use the title that was in the book. Does it make the least bit of sense that I would tell Amy Heart to use an incorrect title for my documentary? Doug refused to let me put labels in the remaining books.

Rudeness Experience #3

In 2011, I signed up to work in the volunteer tent. Most of my volunteer work for the MREA has been in the office/volunteer tent, which means I had more experience working in the volunteer office/tent than any staff member there. A staff member told me to leave because they didn't need me. She did not thank me for signing up. She did not thank me for my work. She just told me to leave. I think she told other volunteers to leave as well.

I stopped volunteering for several years after that. I paid my way in to avoid MREA staff rudeness.

Rudeness Experience #4

In 2017, I thought I'd give volunteering another try. I signed up for the gate when I arrived at the fair. All went well. So this year I decided to try volunteering again. This time, I called ahead to schedule four hours on Friday. On the Tuesday before the fair, I found a not completely clear voicemail from the volunteer coordinator. She told me that their "priority" jobs had shifted and they wanted to set me up in another tent doing another job at different hours. I called the number the woman left. No one was available. I listened to the message, which gave office times and said that at any time I could dial a 0 and leave a message. I dialed 0. I heard, "Hi. This MREA extension is no longer in use." I left a message on the MREA's Facebook page saying I would not be volunteering for any job at the fair.

I have physical difficulties. I choose the jobs I am physically capable of doing during the hours that suit my physical needs.

Plus, where was the MREA's concern for my ability to attend the workshops I wanted to attend?

MREA Rudeness To Other Volunteers

Example #1

A local friend volunteered at the energy fair for years. This is how that friend describes MREA staff now:

“It really bugs me that some people puff out their chests, stick their noses in the air and treat you like you are pond scum.”

Example #2

I called a senior citizen friend of mine who has been volunteering for years. My friend told the MREA she would work 12 hours over the weekend so she could be a hardcore volunteer and get the t-shirt. Without asking this friend, MREA staff scheduled her to work 12-1/2 hours on Friday alone, and about another 12 hours over Saturday and Sunday. The MREA scheduled her to work parking on both Saturday and Sunday. Her Friday schedule had her selling t-shirts at 7:00 a.m., two hours before the fair opened at 9:00 a.m.

MREA staff was rude to me. MREA staff was abusive to this senior citizen.

How many people have stopped volunteering for the energy fair because they are tired of MREA staff treating them like pond scum?

MREA Rudeness To Fair Visitors

The energy fair's MREA Marketplace had a cash register for years. In 2011, the workers used only pencil and paper and a list of prices. An MREA staff member wrote a list of what each fair visitor was buying with the price of each item. Then the staff member used a calculator to add up the prices. A volunteer offered to create a computer program to make the process go much faster. MREA staff said no. I saw eight people standing in line waiting to pay while one MREA staff member wrote the lists and prices. The MREA hosts the longest running and most successful renewable energy fair in the world, but it chose to be rude to fair visitors instead of letting a volunteer shine.

MREA staff could have used that program just for that day at the fair or that weekend of the fair. Whatever the reason for saying no, making fair visitors wait for pencil and paper calculations was *rude*.

When I made the documentary about the energy fair, I discovered the 26 situational, organizational, financial, emotional, and relationship ingredients for spectacular success. Current MREA staff is failing at many of them. I will be talking and writing about the rudeness of the current MREA staff until the organization learns to treat its volunteers as well as fair visitors with respect.

MREA staff is failing to give you the best return on your sponsorship. Time for you to start asking all volunteers what they would do differently if they were running the energy fair.

“How To Buy A Business”

Inc Magazine Staff

December 1, 2006

speakingfromtriumph.com

Spectacular Success Ingredients

Please do something to make sure MREA staff never abuses a volunteer again.

Thank you,
Paula Kramer