



The Curse Of The Unscheduled Walkup Party

The Unscheduled “Walk-up” Party is dead weight for quality party brands

Unscheduled birthday parties are walk up guests that have not booked a formal birthday party package, but want to buy food, attractions and occupy a dining space, to host their own party. They will enter your facility in a group, carrying presents, holding a birthday cake and possibly table decorations. They may group tables together, drop their stuff and occupy sections of your dining area for long periods of time. They are loud, usually out of control, chaotic and unorganized. They will buy attractions and food, trying to save money, but in the end typically spend more and are less satisfied with their result, yet still blame your business and damage your party program’s image.

Here’s why.

Each party you execute offers a powerful marketing opportunity to demonstrate the value of your party program. You could never afford this type of advertising media. It has a huge impact on your most valuable marketing asset ... your current customer. I call it the “Live Billboard”. It’s run Friday thru Sunday, whenever you have ongoing parties or group events. All guests: party guests, general admission guests, and even parent’s dropping off their kids, get to live your party programs advertisement and judge its value, using their five senses. If what they see, hear, touch, taste and even smell is perceived positive, your party and its cost are pre-justified, negative and they will question and look directly at the cost to make their decision.

What to do.

1. List your “No Unscheduled Parties” policy on your web site and entry sign.
2. Have a system of how you to handle it when a parent enters your business with a group of kids, a cake and a pile of presents.
3. Stand your ground: Do not let the market control your business. Do not shoot your long term image in the foot by taking the revenue now because you’re afraid of losing it.

Do we allow walk up parties?



“I’m sorry we do not.” We provide professional party services as part of our core business and are proud of the awesome celebrations we host. No group, large or small is allowed to bring in a birthday cake, cupcakes, presents or party decorations into our facility unless approved by management or scheduled as a traditional party.”

The Following Policies Apply:

1. Guests entering as unscheduled party are not allowed to bring gifts to be opened on grounds.
2. Guests are not allowed to bring in outside food or beverage including birthday cake / cupcakes. (without management permission)



This is one of the hardest concepts for owners to understand.

If you have taught your market that it's OK to enter with their own food and take over what should be a profitable section of your facility with their own agenda, you will need to take back control, protect your brand image and re-teach your market that it's not OK. This will take some time, you will get push back and you must stay the course and even send the "they're not really my customer" somewhere else where they can do this. They'll be back when they realize, where they went, was not what they really wanted as well. Good news, their distaste will be for your competitor ... not you. If a small group shows up carrying presents and cake, without a scheduled party, use the following protocols to help the transition:

1. Get a guest service manager or a more mature employee to handle the guest issue.
2. Guest service managers may use their best judgment to handle each case delicately, trying to create a win-win, by remembering to keep the guest's interest in mind.
 - Explain that your facility is in business to offer outstanding birthday parties.
 - We are party professionals and pride ourselves on delivering superb birthday parties and group events.
 - Birthday parties or group events held in our dining areas are a distraction to our other guest's dining experience.
3. Guest Service Managers may offer the following suggestions:
 - Offer the guest one of our formal party packages. Show them the value versus the amount they would pay ala-carte. Try to accommodate them with a party room and a party host when possible.
 - Tell them we would love to have them play in our facility as a segment of their party. Instruct them that they can take the gifts and cake to the car (or store the cake in the refrigerator), enjoy the attractions and games, and then finish the party at home.
 - Offer them a mini group (six/eight pack) incentive discount package to make the transition easier.
 - Put them in an area to hold their party outside the public eye (minus the cake) if available. Do not make a habit of this.
 - Send them to the competitor who takes walk up parties ... you will be better off in the long run and sustain a healthier more profitable business.

