

# What is a VIP?

by Roop Shrivastava

I strolled into the large convention center, searching for the registration area. I looked up and saw my picture, an uncomfortably large poster of my face, that stated I was the emcee for the night. It was a good cause. I was thrilled to be able to represent the TV station I work at as host of this outstanding event. Then I saw the three dreaded letters that make me cringe. “VIP” area here. Very important person. I have never been able to properly digest the enormity of what’s being said in these three words. Think about it. We’re differentiating our audience at any given event into a hierarchy. We are essentially telling everyone that there are plain, regular people. Then there are important people. And even more importantly, there are very important people. I disagree with this wholeheartedly. I’m certainly reading into this deeply. I believe it’s important. In fact, I believe it’s very important to bust through this strata we have created which makes “special guests” more important than the rest. The event I was emceeing was packed with 1,000 plus people. Each of them paid more than \$150 a ticket to attend. How important were these guests? They helped raise thousands of dollars. But they were redirected to the main hall while the very important people were wined and dined in a small VIP area. My script was in that area so I hesitantly obliged and walked in. There they were. The supposed, most important people in the hall. I looked around. I saw fellow TV personalities, congressional leaders, wealthy business people and organizers of the event. All of these people deserve their privacy, their prep time ahead of speaking and also a chance to catch up with their colleagues. I get that. I believe

that’s important. I’m not suggesting there shouldn’t be an area for folks to diffuse ahead of shaking thousands of hands and taking dozens of selfies.

I am suggesting that maybe we call those folks what they are. Speakers. Guests. Perhaps the organizers can have an area called “speakers” and have this area for them. It would make a world of difference. The cheese and wine would taste just as good. The relative quiet before walking into the main hall would be just as cherished. These people aren’t very important people. They are, instead, people who happen to fall into where most everyone falls into. After all, every single one of us has a position in life. All of them are important. That’s the VIP that embodies all fields. It encompasses all of us. Teachers, lawyers, construction workers, receptionists and waiters all have very important positions. The mother who is tasked with raising our future leaders, that’s a very important position.

Perhaps if we really thought about the reason we get together at these events, we wouldn’t care about what area or room we are put in. We all want to help these non-profits and groups do well. Isn’t the best way to remember that our importance isn’t based on our job but by the fact we show up to help our community do better? That’s a VERY important reason to treat your guests as if they’re all the same regardless of the rank you’ve assigned to them.

I believe there are very important organizations that do great work. Let’s treat our guests who support this work with the very important respect they deserve. Just my two cents.