QuietConversion studies trust signals in cybersecurity go-to-market. This is one of six scored case studies from RSAC 2026.

QUIETCONVERSION

Trust Report · RSAC 2026

Mid Stage Expo · Booth Evaluation

INCOMPLETE EVALUATION — RESEARCHER EXITED EARLY

Company	**[Company Anonymized]**	RSAC 2026
Vertical	Cybersecurity [Subvertical withheld due to anonymization]	
Booth size	Mid Stage Expo	
Eval surface	*Booth — partial. Evaluation terminated.*	
Recognition	**QC Mid Stage Trust Gap Analysis — RSAC 2026**	

Score Not Assigned — Evaluation Terminated

Reciprocity signal failed · Researcher exited · Full methodology available upon request

What Happened

My assistant and I came to this booth warm. We had just left another conversation about [REDACTED] and when I saw a company working in that space I was genuinely interested. I asked them to tell me about it. The explanation made sense. The product was real. The use case was clear.

They asked for a scan. Then I told them what I tell everyone when I'm not their buyer: I'm not enterprise, I'm not in this industry, this demo isn't going anywhere, as long as you're okay with that.

They were okay with it. The scan happened.

They knew I was a researcher and so I asked if they would mind helping me out with a quick research survey. I study trust signals in cybersecurity GTM and I was asking for thirty seconds of their time in exchange for the time I had already given them.

The refusal was immediate. Abrupt.

As I was walking away a pen was offered.

Not a cheap ballpoint. A quality pen, weighted, in one of those little carrying sleeves. There was real money in that pen.

I wasn't there for swag. I was there for reciprocity. He gave me the nicest thing in his pocket and it was the completely wrong currency.

My research assistant took one. Later she held it out and asked if I wanted it.

I didn't.

Evaluation terminated.

Here's what I think happened — and this is the more interesting analysis.

At early stage, you can't afford to burn anyone. You don't know who knows who, who advises what fund, who sits on which board. Every interaction is a potential thread. Early stage founders know this, which is why they talk to everyone.

At mega booth level, sometimes you use contractors. The person scanning badges at an enterprise vendor's booth isn't a founder protecting pipeline, they're staff doing a job. The arrogance doesn't live there either.

This was neither.

This was someone confident enough in their existing pipeline to roll the dice on a researcher asking for thirty seconds. That's not rudeness as a character flaw. That's rudeness as a signal. It means they can afford it. In a space where most companies are fighting for every warm contact, being willing to burn one means you don't need it.

That tells me something about where they are. It doesn't make it okay. But it tells me something.

In one “No” the conversation became asymmetrically transactional. After extracting what they needed from us, they were unwilling to reciprocate a fraction of the time that I had already given them, including the time I spent ensuring that they knew I wasn’t their buyer. From a customer standpoint I need to know that they will support me when I have an issue. That forces me to vet the rest of their signal at a much higher bar because distrust is already present.

In a high-trust vertical the signal you send when you think nobody important is watching is the most honest one you'll ever send.

I was watching.

The Signal

Evaluation terminated after reciprocity signal failed.

Score not assigned.

The behavior itself was the data point — not because it was rude, but because of what the confidence behind it suggests about where this company is in its growth.

Post-evaluation research confirms they are doing very well. The confidence was earned.

Which makes the read even cleaner: this wasn't arrogance from someone who didn't know better. This was someone who genuinely didn't need the interaction and knew it. That's a very specific stage signal.

A buyer who watched this interaction would not know any of that. And in this space, that's the only thing that matters at first contact.

Score based on the QuietConversion High-Trust Booth Diagnostic™ — a proprietary 13-signal framework developed from 60+ live booth observations and 145+ documented survey interactions across BSides SF and RSA Conference 2026, supplemented by qualitative field interviews. Evaluation surface: booth only. Website and drip diagnostic in development. Full methodology available upon request.

Anonymized per QC methodology. Companies scoring below 85 are not published with company identification. This threshold was established prior to publication.

Strategy matters. But trust moves markets.

With heart,
— Rhea Lynn Mascarinas Founder & Lead Researcher | QuietConversion

