

I Won? I Didn't Know I Was *IN* a Contest

A Special Report

By
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Waking Up Who You Want to Be

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I Won? I Didn't Know I Was *IN* a Contest

Jack laughed out loud when the letter came. “I won a sales contest,” he told us later, “and I didn’t even know I was in it.”

Jack, a freelance printing salesman, was one of our steadiest customers at the photo lab. He wasn’t really a photographer, but he sold full color brochures and picture postcards, and his customers never had good photos of their facilities, so he supplied the pictures.

Simply to ensure that no sale got away from him, he bought a cheap 4x5 view camera and learned to take the photos his customers needed. And he brought all his film processing to us.

He didn’t know that the photos he took were better than most of the work that came in from “real” photographers. And I doubt he would have cared if he had known. Jack never claimed to be anything but a salesman – just doing the job he enjoyed.

Then came “The Letter.” The company that printed all his color postcard orders notified him that he was their salesman of the year and that he’d outperformed the next competitor by four-to-one. They awarded Jack a cash prize, a trip and a nice engraved plaque.

He stuck the money in the bank, put the plaque up on a wall, and took a few days off in Jamaica with his wife. But as soon as possible, he was back out on the roads, knocking on doors. He enjoyed helping people put a better face on their businesses.

That's the way he saw his work. I guess a psychologist might say he was "inner directed."

But time moved on, I left the photo lab, and now, decades later, I was a writer and coach living in Japan. Then one day I got an unexpected phone call from my long-distance phone carrier. They told me I was their biggest non-corporate customer for the three-month period just ended, and they wanted to send me a prize to express their appreciation.

During the last several months I'd been doing a series of one-hour interviews for a new book I was working on titled "Inside the Minds of Winners". Thus, I'd spent many hours on the phone, racking up the minutes, and now they wanted to give me a prize.

That phone call reminded me of Jack's letter. He was just doing the job he had set for himself. So was I. He enjoyed what he was doing. So did I. For him, winning their contest was a nice little surprise, but otherwise irrelevant. And in my case also, the wristwatch they sent just went on a shelf. Eventually I gave it to one of my grandkids the next time I saw them.

And I kept on doing the job I enjoy.

Meantime, as I look around the Internet, it's easy to identify the people who, like Jack, really enjoy what they're doing. Their websites have a different feel, a personality. Their eBooks give real, solid, usable information. Their email gets read, not deleted.

They're the ones with the crowds of customers, the masses of fans and followers thronging their websites.

The public is rewarding them, but these achievers don't dwell too much on the prizes and awards. Oh, don't get me wrong. They like the big earnings and the popularity. That's all pleasant, but their real pleasure is the job they do.

They love writing their eBooks, producing their blogs and ezines, running their Internet businesses.

Giving value.

And you can be sure that if they weren't enjoying it, they'd instantly go do something else instead.

But not everybody recognizes how important it is to give value. And it shows.

That last eBook you produced: of course most of the information in it came from you... surely you didn't just drag it together from bits and scraps you lifted from here and there around the Web?

And your ezine – I'm sure you don't scrounge around and grab up whatever article is at hand five minutes before the mailing deadline. (Or 2 hours after?)

And your website? We've all read article after article warning that a page with nothing but banners, links and buttons – a flea market site – is a total waste of time.

So why do we still see them?

Two things I can guarantee: first, visitors to such a website leave almost immediately because they sense no personality; second, such sites are done by people who feel they don't have anything of their own to give.

This is tragic. Everyone has something valuable to give. Most people just haven't ever done a personal inventory, so they don't know all the things they have to offer.

In a future article, I may talk about how you go about doing that kind of inventory, but for now, just remember this.

If you're enjoying what you're doing, and you're giving it everything you've got, you'll win contests – even the ones you didn't know you were in.

Cheers from sunny Japan,

Charles Burke

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