

HEADER: Gift Giving As Strategy

SUBHEADER: Four Basic Gifting Rules (Everyone Is Screwing Up)

WORDS: ~1400 words

NOTE: Backlinks marked inline with [BACKLINK] tags

It's likely that your company logo is sitting in the bottom of some landfill.

Likely, that is, if you're among the majority of business leaders who try to woo clients, prospects, and employees with self-promotional gifts.

You know the kind I'm talking about: food baskets, towels, tee shirts, hats, coffee mugs, and poorly made laptop bags.

And for the more progressive companies out there: ear buds, cell phone projection keyboards, wine bags, flasks, and inflatable paddle boards.

I'm not accusing these well-intentioned (yet misinformed) givers of being cheap.

Heck, we all have a few old tee shirts sitting in the bottom of the drawer.

But the mentality of 'slap a logo on it and call it good' misses the mark by a good mile-and-a-half.

BUSINESS LEADERS: WHY GIFT AT ALL?

The journey to great gift marketing --as a business leader or company-- often starts with the budget.

"Is this something we can fit in? How little can we get away with? Should we do the same thing as last year?"

Ok, I get it. We have to be good stewards of our limited resources.

But budget-driven gifting is usually treated as a TO DO item.

Whereas skillful gift marketing is a limitless opportunity to open doors, build (or amend) relational bridges, and retain your industry's top talent.

Budget-driven gifting is an unenviable task, often times delegated down to some administrative assistant who won't lose track of the calendar.

Whereas masterful strategic gifting (aka, being a 'Giftologist') can make you a darling of the media, a personal favorite of your big-fish client, or the world's greatest boss.

Yes, it's possible, even probable when you do this correctly.

It doesn't matter if you're a solopreneur, hiring your hundredth employee, or trading on the NASDAQ.

Every generous, hard-earned dollar you spend on some lucky recipient should have the same (epic) purpose.

SURPRISE AND DELIGHT

It's not the thought that counts. It's the thoughtful thought that counts.

Take, for instance, the day I tried to impress one of the planet's most sought after consultants... CEO Whisperer, Cameron Herold.

This is a man who has more connections than me, more money than me, and has forgotten more about business than I could ever hope to learn.

But no matter. Giftology levels the playing field.

I was an unknown, a blank-face-at-a-conference, a nobody in a sea of fanboys all jockeying to get on this man's radar.

But an original gift (see rule #2) given at the right time (see rule #3) with the right intention (rule #4) can change everything.

Yes, I got (and kept) Cameron's attention.

Yes, he's helped my business more than I could ever put into words.

And yes, the formula is the same for you as it was for me: surprise and delight.

(Click here to watch a video of me showing my appreciation to Cameron.)

***** [BACKLINK- <http://bit.ly/dollarceo>] *****

Look, if your gift isn't going to absolutely blow the proverbial socks off your recipient, then spend the money someplace else.

DEVIL'S ADVOCATE: QUID PRO QUO GIFTING?

Reciprocity theory: another term for "scratch my back and I'll scratch yours."

If this is your purpose behind gift marketing, hear me loud and clear. You're doing it wrong.

This is not a game of bribery. This is authentic, no-strings-attached, appreciation-at-its-finest.

There is nothing sinister or inauthentic about gift marketing done right.

In the game of surprise and delight, there is no such thing as excess.

A true Giftologist showers the recipient with such love, there can be no thought of ulterior motive.

Take, for instance, the President of Dan Kennedy's company, Nick Loise, opening a "small" gift in the mail.

(Scroll down to September - he was so blown away by the presentation, he made an entire video about it)

***** [BACKLINK- <http://bit.ly/wrapforwow>] *****

And while some critics may claim that "such excess comes across as gaudy and wasteful," as one recent emailer so delicately put it?

I (nor the thousands of my students) see nothing wrong with leveling the playing field in our favor.

BECOME A GIFTOLOGIST TODAY

Relationship building (and expressing genuine care) has been, will be, and will always be a game of effort.

And even if you cringe at the thought of adding gift giving to your budget, calendar, or TO DO list?

Your efforts can be vastly improved (and your brand irrevocably improved) by following a few simple rules.

GIFTOLOGY RULE #1 - DON'T BREAK THE BANK

The ease of online ordering and drop-shipping has turned us all into unoriginal gifters, incapable of surprise and delight.

As a rule of thumb, if you can find it on Pinterest, in a listicle post, or the top of a Google search then it's probably a thoughtless gift.

(Although I would rank this fine piece ***** [BACKLINK- <http://bit.ly/johnramp>] ***** by John Rampton as a notable exception).

The amount of money you spend doesn't matter. It is, quite literally, what you spend it on.

Here are two words to guide your gifting: practical luxuries.

Look at it this way. Most of your gift recipients are (more than likely) extremely high-powered.

They don't need an \$80 watch because they could afford to purchase an \$8000 watch.

So if you have \$80 to spend, gift something practical (RE: use every day) that the recipient might never buy themselves (RE: top-of-the-line quality).

Spend the \$80 on a custom coffee mug.

Or on a pair of zebra wood headphones. ***** ["zebra wood headphones" - BACKLINK- <https://lstnsound.co/>] *****

Or on an engraved cheese knife (American-made, guaranteed forever, and sold by college students). ***** ["by college students" - BACKLINK- <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrBhT5wvJGYOzKCpCydVYFQ>] *****

Make your recipient say, "I would never buy this for myself, but I absolutely love it!" and you're on the right track.

GIFTOLOGY RULE #2 - THE THREE CRUCIAL ITYS

The most sophisticated gifters have systems of clue hunting (shameless self promotion: this is one of many reasons why people hire the Ruhlin Group as their gifting concierge).

Failing that, however, a good gift shouldn't live in isolation. It CAN'T live in isolation.

Worthy recipients today are likely to be worthy recipients tomorrow, so set yourself up for success...

...NOT by putting your logo on everything, but by adhering your gifting to the three crucial "ity"s.

Visibil-ITY gifts are things that'll be seen by others. Conversation starters. Make your recipient look good and they will love you forever.

Continu-ITY gifts are those you can buy in a series. Today you send the leather belt, next month the leather travel bag, etc.

Qual-ITY gifts are things that last forever. Nothing says, "you don't really matter to me" like mediocre quality. If what you're buying isn't top-of-class?

Then you might as well slap your competitor's logo on it 'cause it ain't gonna matter to them anyway.

GIFTOLOGY RULE #3 - DEATH TO THE ABC GIFTER

"Surprise! I bought you a gift on your birthday! And on Christmas, too!" said no Giftologist, ever.

ABC gifters limit their strategic giving to Anniversaries, Birthdays, and Christmas.

Which is fine if your goal is to be like everybody else.

But if your goal is "surprise and delight," you should know that ABC gifting thoroughly eliminates the "surprise" part of the equation.

Better to change your giving calendar to reflect those months, dates, and days when your recipient LEAST expects it.

"I was having the worst Tuesday and then I got your package in the mail! THANK YOU!! Where did you find this thing?!?"

Shock and awe just isn't the same without the shock.

GIFTOLOGY RULE #4 - FOLLOW-UP WITHOUT ATTACHMENT

Yes, you should follow-up and ask "how'd you like the gift?"

No, it doesn't make you tactless.

The only way to become tactless is to make the follow-up about you.

"How'd you like the gift? GREAT! Hey, I was wondering if you could do me a favor..."

Nope.

Giftologists play the long game.

Does that mean we have given gifts of appreciation that have gone unheralded, unrecognized, and unnoticed?

No, we haven't.

And neither will you if you follow these four rules.

Because in the game of strategic and intentional relationship building, there is no finish line.

Only progress.

STRENGTHENING YOUR GIFTOLGY MUSCLES

When you make a decision that you're going to dedicate SOME money and LOTS of heart to showering your VIPs with practical luxuries?

You'll find a whole new world of opportunity that will leave your competition dumb-founded.

Doors will open.

Opportunities will present themselves.

Connections will be made, never to be forgotten.

Clients, prospects, and employees will fall (or refall) in love with you all over again.

So commit to gift marketing as a longterm strategy.

Surprise and delight, while following the three "ity"s.

And keep your hard earned dollars (and brand reputation) out of the landfill.