

Humor Me

By Ronald P. Culberson

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“Is it Better to Give or to Receive?”

I’ve always thought of myself as a charitable person but frankly, modern day fundraising tactics raise more blood pressure than money. While I may support their cause, I just don’t like being hassled in the midst of my daily routine. Whether it’s the Brotherhood of Balding Police, the March of Quarters (inflation) or SpleenPeace (the non-profit civil liberties organization dedicated to eliminating the mistreatment of spleens in third world countries) they can all be irritatingly persistent at catching me when I have other things on my mind like getting a latté or watching the latest episode of 24.

Take Girl Scouts...please (apologies to Henny Youngman)...and their worldwide Microsoft-esque cookie monopoly. When I’m leaving the grocery store and they’re exchanging money for cookies like a crack deal in a back alley, I sometimes feign blindness. I use my cart like a cane and pretend I don’t see them. Or I look through them as if I just arrived from a foreign country and don’t speak the language. And sometimes, I just run to my car screaming, “Aliens are working Aisle Nine! Aliens are working Aisle Nine!”

You see, I can’t eat a lot of sweets – and Girl Scout Cookies are the mother load of addictive confections. It wasn’t that long ago when I would eat an entire box of Samoas® in one sitting. A sleeve of Thin Mints was just an appetizer. But now, years of Girl Scout Cookie abuse has damaged my duodenum not to mention my spleen. So, I *can’t* have them in my house and I *refuse* to buy them.

But during cookie season, the girls are like stalkers – they’re everywhere. And not buying Girl Scout Cookies is like burning the flag. It’s anti-American. I bet there’s even a “cookie mafia” that puts animal cracker heads in your bed when you don’t buy the requisite six boxes of Tagalongs®. So out of guilt, fear, and Step Three from Cookie Eaters Anonymous, I avoid these future telemarketers whenever possible.

By the way, if you agree with me on this, I’m starting a Foundation for the Elimination of Foundations and you can help the effort by sending a small tax-deductible cash donation directly to me. But I digress.

So, when your blood pressure rises in response to the fund peddlers, I have the perfect solution: Become one of them. That’s right. Go door-to-door. Call people during dinner. Stand in the middle of busy intersections. In a few short minutes, you’ll be transformed. Let me explain.

I'm in a Rotary Club which a group of business people who do community service. It's a very noble organization and I'm sure we'll all go to heaven (at least that's what the brochure said). And sometimes, we organize fundraising projects to support our local and international service programs. One such project occurs right before Christmas.

While standing outside the local Kmart, we hand out flyers listing personal items needed by residents in the local homeless shelter. Shoppers can pick up toothpaste, socks and shampoo while they're in the store and we'll deliver them to the shelter. It's a very efficient and effective fundraiser. And yet, the flyers seem to irritate some people.

I once chased a priest for six blocks trying to get him to take a flyer. He forgave me. Another time, a man driving a BMW refused the flyer saying that he currently *lived* in a shelter. Yeah, right, maybe a *tax* shelter. Then there was the woman who said she "gave at the office." Liar, liar, pants on fire.

Like a bolt of lightning going in one ear and out the other, it finally occurred to me like a mixed metaphor that receiving *is* actually better than giving. For you see, once I was on the receiving end of blank stares, growls and those who claimed to be in the Witness Protection Program, I realized that it's not about whether you give or not, it's about whether you treat the solicitors with respect and compassion. Because they *are* serving humanity – even if the *way* they're serving is sometimes annoying.

Since my enlightenment, I view fundraisers with newfound appreciation. Now, I give whenever I'm asked and I thank the recipients for their willingness to support such an important cause. And when I can't give, as with purchasing Girl Scout cookies, I smile, thank them for their service and inform them that regrettably, the sugar damages my spleen.

Until next time, just humor me.

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Ron Culberson, MSW, CSP, CPAE is a speaker, humorist, and author of four books including Do it Well. Make it Fun. The Key to Success in Life, Death, and Almost Everything in Between. His mission is to change the workplace culture so that organizations are more productive and staff are more content. He shows people how to have more FUN while preserving the integrity of the work they do and the lives they lead. For more information, visit www.RonCulberson.com.