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1517 Buckeye Court
Pinole, CA 94564
510/724-9507; 741-8698 (fax)
jeff@put-it-in-writing.com
www.put-it-in-writing.com

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The Write Stuff

A quarterly compendium of writing tips and other useful information

THE GIFT IS IN THE GIVING

By Jeff Rubin

Have you ever been on the receiving end of a misguided or inappropriate gift?

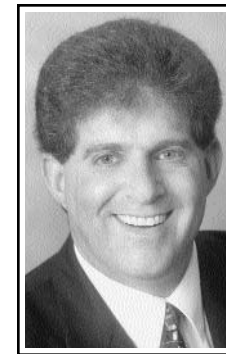
I know it's not socially acceptable — I'll probably be chastised by some of you for my lack of manners and appreciation — but let's be honest; sometimes people give you gifts that leave you shaking your head.

When I got married five years ago, at the ripe old age of 48, my wife and I had the following printed on our wedding invitation:

"We love gifts. To help you select one that will make us smile, we are registered at . . ."(and then we listed four stores). Then we added, *"Please, no appliances or linens. Thank you."*

So, wouldn't you know it, we got two toasters (along with some great gifts!).

Where am I going with this? A few weeks ago an acquaintance of mine in



JEFF RUBIN

Michigan phoned to ask me a question for an article she was writing. She's in the gift business, and she wanted to know what thoughts I had about gift giving.

She called because last summer she attended the National Association of Catering Executives' Educational Conference in Charleston, S.C., where I was a speaker. During my presentation, *Strategic*

Integrity: Why Ethics and Reliability are Great Marketing Strategies, I said how important it is to recognize and reward the people who help you grow your business.

Liz, my Michigan acquaintance, got me thinking about this whole business of gift giving. When she asked what unusual gifts I might suggest, I asked her two questions: "Why is it necessary to give a gift at all? Aren't there other ways we can recognize the special people in our lives?"

> **Inside**



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THE GIFT IS IN THE GIVING

➤ From front page

I have made it a practice for the more than 22 years I have been in business to do something nice for people who have increased my investment portfolio. My gifts have ranged from a day at a spa to a weekend at a bed and breakfast, from restaurant gift certificates to theatre tickets, from books to a boxed set of hard-to-find CDs recorded by a fairly obscure R&B singer a friend once mentioned as one of his boyhood favorites.

I've always tried to do a little research on my gift recipients to try to find out what their interests are. I know I always appreciate gifts that have something to do with my interests, and it's been my experience that others appreciate it, too. There are no toasters in my goody bag.

Two things happened recently to make me re-think how I gift others.

A few months ago I was hired by a product manager at a pharmaceutical company to interview 15 cancer survivors for an annual calendar the company produces. It was an exhilarating experience for me.

My customer then recommended me to the MarCom project coordinator for another drug this company manufactures, who hired me to design a quarterly newsletter.

You can imagine how these two projects, one of them ongoing, have had a very positive impact on my bottom line.

When I told my calendar customer that I'd like to get her a gift, she declined and told me to "pay it forward," meaning I should do the same for someone else. Not long after, she called with a request — she was hosting a fundraiser for a non-profit and asked me if I would take photos at the event. I'm booked for

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We recommend these businesses, which give discounts to our readers:

ALPHAGRAPHICS,
Walnut Creek, 925/937-4700 (Greg).

CRAFTSMAN TRADE PRESS, (printer),
Concord, 925/521-0156 (Ric).

PINOLE COPY CENTER,
Pinole, 510/223-8901 (Judy).

SCAN ART GRAPHICS,
(pre-press), Richmond (Hilltop), 510/223-3248 (Fred or Ron). ■

September 21 and only too happy to be able to help her.

The second thing occurred a few weeks ago. My friend Gordon, a physician, has a vaccination business. He travels throughout the country each fall and gives flu shots to employees of companies from coast to coast. I occasionally help him with his print marketing, but I don't charge him. It's my little mitzvah, from one friend to another.

Last year I happened to mention to Gordon that I was flying to Connecticut to speak at my alma mater, Norwalk Community College, where I had endowed a scholarship in memory of my late stepfather. This was the first year the scholarship was awarded, and I was asked to say a few words.

That conversation must have stuck in Gordon's mind, because when he called to ask if I would help him with another small marketing project, he mentioned that he was, at that moment, writing a check to my stepfather's scholarship fund.

What an incredibly thoughtful thing to do! It touched my heart, and reaffirmed my belief that there are many ways to thank people, other than buying them a gift.

As with most things, it's all about relationships, and knowing what's important to the important people in your life.

SUMMER READING BOOK NOOK PICKS

Two of my friends — John Alston and Steven Van Yoder — have recently published books that will make excellent additions to your summer reading list.

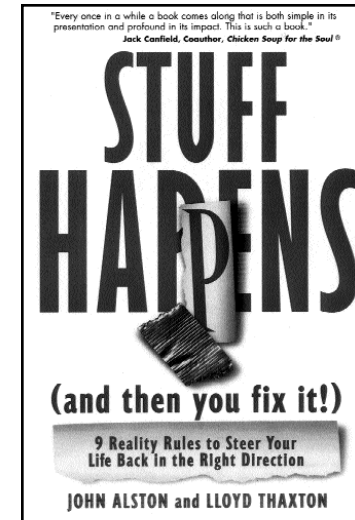
STUFF HAPPENS (AND THEN YOU FIX IT!)

Stuff happens! People lose jobs, get divorced, or suffer emotional pain from the loss of good friends or lovers. Even a flat tire that results in an important lost appointment can be traumatic.

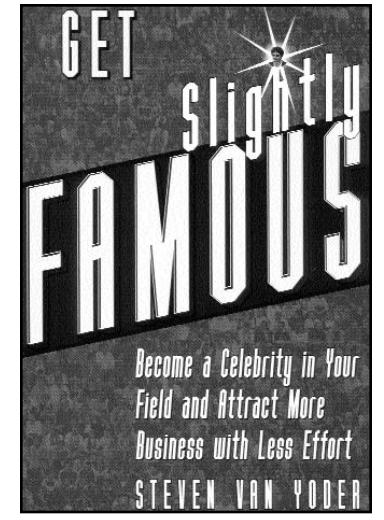
Let's face it — sooner or later bad stuff happens to everyone.

But it isn't what happens to you that's important, it's how you respond to what happens.

Nationally recognized motivational speaker and author John Alston, a member of the National Speakers Association's Hall of Fame,



and co-author Lloyd Thaxton, an Emmy Award-winning director and producer, present nine uplifting stories and inspirational Reality Rules for dealing with trying times. Whether you've suffered professional failures or personal difficulties, keeping these rules in mind every day will give you the



attitude adjustment you need to succeed.

GET SLIGHTLY FAMOUS: BECOME A CELEBRITY IN YOUR FIELD AND ATTRACT MORE BUSINESS WITH LESS EFFORT

To get more sales, you need to get more famous in your niche.

Steven outlines real-world marketing strategies relevant for small businesses owners. The book includes interviews and case studies of more than 135 entrepreneurs and leading business experts (including newsletter tips from Jeff Rubin on page 237).

What Jeff's customers say...

"Jeff is a real find. He is the best vendor I've ever worked with. I trust him to do a great job. He meets all his deadlines, and the quality of his work is outstanding!

"He's helped me find myriad resources for my business, including a printer who saved me a substantial amount of money. Working with Jeff has been a real pleasure. I consider him a strategic partner in my business."

— Diane Valenti, president, Applied Learning Solutions, Inc.

