



Gifts and Hospitality Character Connection

Honesty, Character, and Temptation

Within the area of giving and receiving gifts, there are two sides of the issue: the side of the giver and of the receiver. Both have their ethical limits and both have their own set of suspicious intentions and rationalizations. On one side, there's an urgency to do anything to get the deal, close the sale, pay back a friend, or manipulate others. On the other side, it's about getting something for nothing and being able to sell your ethical principles to the highest bidder. Although both sides can have dubious characteristics, the common element between them is that they break all the rules of fair play and make honest, ethical business harder for everyone.

How you behave in this area is a real testing-ground for your character. Accepting an inappropriate gift is one of the hardest things to do – even for the most honest and ethical person among us. When giving a gift, the temptation to want to DO something extra to gain the favor of others is tremendously difficult to resist.

Manipulation or Persuasion?

Consider the intention of a gift. Is it to manipulate or to persuade? There's nothing wrong with using a gift or hospitality to persuade someone else in order to build a relationship and hopefully secure their business. Gifts are bona fide tools used to achieve this. The down side is when gifts are used to manipulate someone else.

So, what's the difference between manipulation and persuasion? Manipulation seeks to control or influence somebody or something in a devious way. Persuasion, on the other hand, happens when we make someone believe something by giving good reason, coaxing, or an effective argument. A persuasive gift is given in a spirit of friendliness and good will. It communicates your values and is a good representation of you and your company. When receiving a gift, ask yourself if it's given to persuade you or manipulate you. Manipulative gifts may be too expensive, out of place, used to gain favor, based on the wrong intentions, or is timed with a purchasing or other critical decision. Oftentimes, your gut instincts can help you. If it feels wrong then it probably is wrong.

Something for Nothing

Think about it. Who doesn't like to get something for free? But beware that your natural feeling for wanting something for nothing can lead you astray if you don't stick to your principles. Anyone, both rich and poor, can be vulnerable to "something for nothing" pressure. There is no easy way around it except to fight it and to say "no."



Here are some tips...

- Don't get greedy! Don't let your need or desire for money to override a "No" when faced with an unethical situation.
- Think about what is at stake! Consider,
Your reputation
Your honor
Your character
Your job!
- Remember that your moral decisions either build up your character or break it down.
- Don't open yourself up to the slippery slope of getting something for nothing.
- Don't let your need for acceptance or to have someone "like" you get in the way of your ethical decision-making.

Unfair Advantages

The moral principle behind giving or receiving gifts is fairness. Attempts to manipulate or bribe others sidesteps the moral principles that create a healthy, ethical business climate. They create an unfair advantage for some. This puts others in the unfortunate position of having to compete honestly with someone who is playing outside the rules. Lack of fairness brings down everyone. It is a shortsighted, ill-conceived premise for doing business and should be completely rejected.

Consider the whole notion of fairness. It is the moral principle of playing by the rules choosing to take the honest route. We have laws, rules, and codes to keep things fair for everyone. The business world must be able to enjoy the freedom of a competitive marketplace without bribery or manipulation. Your moral rule should be not to use gifts and hospitality in a way that rejects the principle of fair play and honest dealings.

Character Connection

You do not need to engage in unethical gift giving or receiving in order to be successful. Giving and receiving gifts should simply be another area where your ethics are good and your behavior is clean.

Consider what inappropriate gift giving says about your character. It says that you only care about short-term success and you have no principles in this area. It demonstrates your lack of substance or creativity. It says, "I've got nothing of substance upon which to persuade others." Manipulation is a selfish act that keeps you only operating in the present and not for the future. It tells people that your character is empty and what they see on the outside is not what is really on the inside.

So how can you strengthen your character? First, focus on the long-term implications of your actions.



Second, resist temptation. See temptation as an opportunity to refine your character.

Third, become someone who has enough genuine substance that you don't have to engage in manipulation to get what you want.

Fourth, work on consistency in your character. Your character and ethics are consistent through all areas of your life.

And, finally, see the whole picture of who you are and how your reactions either detracts or add to who you are.