



Gifts and Hospitality Issues

Part 2 - Connecting Character

Manipulation or Persuasion?

Consider the intention of a gift. Is the purpose to manipulate or to persuade? There's nothing wrong with using a gift or gesture of hospitality to persuade someone else. In fact, the whole point of a gift is to connect with your customer or business partner 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.

So, what's the difference between manipulation and persuasion?

- **Persuasion** happens when we make someone believe something by giving good reason, coaxing, or an effective argument. This is typically what a good sales person or manager does. It is the ethical way to communicate and motivate.
- **Manipulation** seeks to control or influence somebody or something in a devious way. Manipulating others fundamentally unethical and unwise in any business or person context.

A gift is **persuasive** if it is...

- Given in a spirit of friendliness and good will.
- Distinctive and memorable
- Communicates your values
- Is a good representation of you and your company
- Has usefulness to the receiver
- Given at the right time and place
- Is Honest
- Has a message attached to it

A gift is **manipulative** if it is...

- Too expensive
- Out of place
- Used to gain favor
- A payback
- Based on the wrong intentions
- Out of context
- Timed with a purchasing or other critical decision



You need to know the difference between persuasion and manipulation. Oftentimes, your gut instincts can help you. If it feels wrong then it probably is wrong.

Something for Nothing

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...

1. Don't get greedy! Don't let your need or desire for money to disallow you to say "No" to unethical situations.
2. Think about what is at stake!
 - Your reputation
 - Your honor
 - Your character
 - Your job!
3. Remember that your moral decisions either build up your character or break it down.
4. Don't open yourself up to the slippery slope of getting something for nothing.
5. Don't let your need for acceptance or to have someone "like" you get in the way of your ethical decision-making.

Fairness

The fundamental moral principle behind giving or receiving gifts is fairness. Attempts to manipulate or bribe others sidestep the moral principles that enable a healthy, ethical business climate to occur. This creates an unfair advantage for some and 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, even those who "feel" like they're benefiting from it. It is a shortsighted, ill-conceived premise for doing business and should be completely rejected.

Facts about fairness...

- Playing by the rules is the moral and honest thing to do.



- Laws and rules exist so that everyone can enjoy freedom in a competitive marketplace.
- Don't be confused about "fairness." Fairness in this context refers to the fairness in opportunity and not necessarily fairness in outcome.

Character Connection

The bottom line is that you do not need to engage in unethical gift giving in order to be successful in business. Your success should be based on the merit and the quality of your product, and not by any other unethical means.

Honesty should be a thread that runs through everything you do. Giving and receiving gifts and hospitality should simply be another area where your morals are pure and your behavior is clean.

What does inappropriate gift giving say about your character?

- You only care about short-term success.
- You have no real substance or creativity upon which to persuade others.
- Your principles are not principles at all.
- You are selfish. You can't see beyond the present.
- Your character is like an empty suit. It is weak. What people see on the outside is not what is really on the inside.

How can you strengthen your character?

- Focus on the long-term implications of your actions.
- When you resist temptation, see it as an opportunity to refine your character.
- Become someone who has enough genuine substance that you don't have to engage in manipulation to get what you want.
- Work on consistency in your character.
- See the whole picture of who you are and how your reactions to these kinds of ethical situations either detracts or adds to who your character.