

The dangers of giving advice



Sometimes, I feel the desire to give advice. The problem is, it can so often go wrong, especially if it is unrequited. I'm quite good on websites and will comment if there is a technical fault or if something about it puts me off. I would like to give an example of a person I wrote to about their website, someone who specifically invited readers to

comment.

Dear xxxxx

I had cause to visit your website today and noted your comment about the low number of people who give donations.

I'm afraid this is par for the course. The general public is used to getting something free and there are so many demands upon people's energy, time, and resources.

I run a site, actually more than one site, listed below. If I recall I have had five donations so far. I have quite often asked for money on the same grounds as yourself to very little effect.

It seems that we are both motivated by idealism and as history shows us this does not bring immediate recognition or rewards. I can only say that 'as you sow, so you will reap' but there's no indication of timescale here.

I am encouraged by the occasional letter saying 'thank you very much what you are doing' but I have now reached the state when I do things automatically and see what I'm doing as a work of art.

All the best

Brian

PS your site could use a makeover.

The typeface is really old-fashioned and not attractive. I know it is not content but these things do matter.

I was put off by the red heading because red equals emergency, panic and stress and I would have thought a blue

heading would be much more appropriate bearing in mind the spiritual nature of the topic. # Makeovers do not have to be expensive as small changes can be made internally, so to speak.

You can ask for help on social media and I would have thought people would be forthcoming.

to which she replied:

Hi Brian,

Whilst you are free to your opinion, I have to disagree – in fact, yours is the only email i have ever received saying it doesn't look nice. Also, honestly, people are far more interested in the good quality ebooks than they are in the color of the header. In addition, the site isn't really spiritual based. There are over 100 genres of books on there. From someone who can sympathise with the donation aspect, I assume you didn't download any books? If not, I hope you come back and find something good. I usually add new books every couple of days or so.

Kind Regards,

My impression was that she let off steam in the first paragraph and then settled somewhat and became rational. I always get a 'woomph' when there is pent up anger in the writer and for this reason do not like opening some types of letter.

My feeling is that I may have a completely valid point, and unless I make it who is going to know what I think. If I am wrong then nothing is wasted. The English are not very good at giving or indeed accepting criticism and I'm going to try and change this somewhat. What I feel in this case is that I did my best but this was not good enough, or perhaps inappropriately put. Alternatively the person had some sort of resentment or need to defend themselves and they would react the same way to everyone.

On balance, I'm glad I said what I said. I know that other recipients of my observations have been grateful for my pointing out some aspect of their website. The last person I did this to relied, 'yes I know it needs some updating, but

I've been so busy'. The problem is a member of the public visiting a site does not know this and first impressions count. One of the things that annoys me most is a dead link. In other words, leading to a page with nothing on it. It's better to have no page than a 'nothing' page.

There is an overall lesson from this. If you are writing a response as an instant reaction and out of anger, it is better to write it, leave it a bit, and then come back to it the next day. By that time you have calmed down and you will often be motivated to modify what you said, and write something more reasonable. It can save embarrassment in the long run especially if you find out that other person had a point.

There is a good letter in the Huffpost ['Write it but dont sent it – and turn what happened into good.](#)