

how to welcome people, and how not to

Yesterday I received a communication from the CEO of a peer-to-peer money lending firm. The newsletter was so badly constructed and such a dog's dinner that I had to write to her with a point by point comment about syntax, grammar, construction, layout. Now I know that you don't write to the CEO of a company telling them that their newsletter is rubbish but I know that if I don't do it no one else will because people are afraid of authority. I would rather stand up and do something and get told off for it than just put my head down and switch off my brain. She was barely self-controlled in her response but at least she did come back to me.

One of the features of my psychology that I very much appreciate is the ability to detect in advance which events are potentially beneficial for me. In our travels throughout the world we seem to get it right time after time. In recent years the only problem I had was that my wife had her passport stolen in Barcelona but then Barcelona have some of the best pick pockets in the business as they are in Rome. I believe that most of us have the ability to see ahead the problem is we don't take any notice and then berate ourselves for not doing it. in the case of Barcelona it was I'm afraid the case of a carelessly worn handbag which has is it that was easy to open. I remember going along to the main police station to see five or six groups of miserable tourists. Some had everything taken including purse and one lady has to go back to the United States the next day so I think we got quite likely. Anyway I digress.

We went yesterday afternoon on Thursday to the Victoria Art Gallery in Bath yesterday. An artist called Peter Brown was featured in a special exhibition. Art exhibitions come in various shapes and sizes, this one had just enough to give the

visitor a full experience of life and work and not too much to give indigestion. I sometimes think that less is more. A huge bonus was the tape-recorded commentary that so often is offered these days notably at the Tate Gallery where you just tap in the number and listen. Peter is remarkably unaffected and tells it as it is. His nickname is Pete the Street due to his extraordinary number of paintings of street scenes and really making them come alive. He is charging up to £50,000 with average £25,000.

We then proceeded to an evening at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution. this was a new venture where Ph.D. students were invited to summarise their work in 5 min. My usual automatic guidance system worked here and I scanned through dozens of events but this one jumped out at me and I just knew that we had to go. We were two hours early, and I thought 'shall we call a friend and have a drink with him'. Something in me said no so we arrived very early and just sat there in the reception. It was a delight to see the whole thing happen from beginning to end, the organiser arriving 90 min before, the five speakers arriving one after the other being introduced to each other and familiarising themselves with the situation.

Us English are fairly good at welcoming other people but there is one aspect that people need to pay attention to. When people come into place for the first time, and they are a little bit shy, it is very important that they are welcomed at the door and not left standing. The first few moments are critical in setting the tone of the evening and the comfortable this newcomer has been with people that perhaps they have not met before. I don't think people should be spoonfed but the first few moments you always remember. It's not good enough to say, the meeting is upstairs, but to ask something bland such as "is this your first time". Asking if you found us all right is a bit self-defeating because of course they have otherwise they wouldn't be there.

I remember once going to my first meeting at the University of the Third Age. There were about 100 people in the room all sitting at tables chatting to each other and there was I standing at the door like an idiot not knowing where to turn. Do I just walk up to the nearest table and say hello? This should be part of staff training for any job no matter how menial or simple. Anyway, on this occasion, I walked around until I found the membership secretary and talk to them a bit but they were pretty busy and could not really have a chat. I went for a couple more meetings but then decided to place was a bit cliquey and did not go again.

The whole event when it started at 7:30 had an element of untidiness about it. I like untidiness because creativity comes. You could almost say structure or creativity. they gave their piece and the audience were invited to question them or make comments. Being English of course there was a pause but I was having none of it so I cracked in straightaway with a couple of questions and started and started the ball rolling. we had a wonderful evening wear not only did the audience a chance to ask questions about something they didn't know about but the speakers got a chance to give feedback to each other and see how their presentations worked in public. I sometimes think that you don't know what you know until you tell somebody.

The prelude to the whole event was as important to me as the event itself. The little voice in my head that said we shouldn't call my friend on this occasion because we would have missed out on most of the fun. I think the most difficult thing is to follow your intuition when there is no reason to do something. In my earlier life I used to do a considerable number of counselling and psychic readings and so on; he never cease to amaze me the number of people who said to me, I should have followed my intuition but..intuition is given to us as a gift so let's not ignore it.

Today I am sorting through my papers from the last 15 years.

It's amazing how much clutter you can collect simply through not throwing away items of correspondence. I have a great pile of contracts, invoices, writings, and it is a little bit of a wrench to throw them away. It's a little back saying goodbye to a past version of myself.

Just watching a debunking YouTube account of the claimed fake journeys to the moon. An interesting comment was made about how the astronauts could have possibly got through the Van Allen belt with its super high levels of radiation. Dr Van Braun commented that since there was no atmosphere, the people presumably land it would have had taken refuge in caves because micro meteorites travelling at 25,000 miles an hour will go through anything. It was also interesting that all the relevant tapes had been destroyed. This was a really good story, The Americans would have made a huge exhibition out of it shown for generations to come about how wonderful they were but in this case there is even a reluctance on the part of the astronauts to talk about their so called time on the moon.