

By Bill Guertin

The 800-Pound Gorilla

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Give Value First: A Tale of Two Cities

Jack is a tour bus driver in Key West, Florida. His job is to take cruise ship passengers back and forth from the port of Key West to the popular shopping and dining areas of the island town in his trolley-like open-air vehicle.

Jack has another job. And frankly, he stinks at it.

Jack's "other" job is supposed to be happening while he's doing his real job. They should happen simultaneously, but in Jack's world, it's not happening.

What Jack is supposed to be doing is making visitors smile.

People come from all over to visit Key West. The visions of Jimmy Buffett, lazy warm days, a carefree escape from the real world... it's all there.

But the sunny hospitality doesn't start with Jack.

Somewhere along the way, Jack got old and crusty. At some point in his driving career, he decided that talking with passengers was too much work. Instead, he started talking AT them.

He began asking for tips on the loudspeaker. Then he started asking for them earlier and earlier on the trip into Key West. Now, Jack asks for tips three times during every load of passengers he takes. And barely anyone gives him the time of day, much less their spare change.

What poor Jack has forgotten is the golden rule of a successful business.

Give Value First.

Before you ask for anything of value, you must first prove yourself value-worthy to your customer. And that sometimes means doing something nice for someone without expecting anything at all in return.

Isaac is a value-giver. And Isaac is much richer than his friend Jack.

Isaac is a tour guide in Cozumel, Mexico, a beautiful cruise ship destination that has many shore excursions. Isaac is employed by a company that runs bus excursions to an exclusive Cozumel beach area called Passion Island.

On the 20-minute bus trip, Isaac delightfully describes the surrounding jungle areas to his passengers in a fun, interesting way on the loudspeaker. He talks to several of the passengers, gets to know their names, and asks where they're from.

The last 5 minutes of the bus ride is the bumpiest, most treacherous road anyone on the trip has ever been on. Because of the wildlife refuge status of the area, it is not allowed to be repaired, and so it must remain in this condition. It could potentially be an awful experience for those on the bus, but Isaac tells them it's their "Mexican massage", and it's free for all the passengers today. Everyone laughs and enjoys the bumpy ride.

Isaac is personal, enjoyable, and real.

"I've been doing this work for several years, and it never gets old," Isaac says. "People come up to me all the time and say, 'Hi, Isaac! My friend from Buffalo said to come and see you. She was here about six months ago. Her name is Joy, she was about 5 foot 9 inches tall...' There's no way I would remember her, but people are comfortable enough to come and talk to me like I'm a friend of the family."

But what's the one thing that makes Isaac different from Jack?

"My wife tells me, 'Isaac, you're not just going to a job. You're doing something you love, and you do it for the people, not yourself.' I believe that's the secret. Love what you do, and do it for the sake of others. That, in turn, will bring your reward."

If Jack ever had the secret to start with, he lost it long ago.

Isaac gives value first. He does his very best for the sake of others, without any expectations.

And get this: he never asks for tips, but gets far more money in tips from those on his tours than anyone else.

Are you old and crusty like Jack? Or alive and giving of yourself like Isaac? How much value do you deliver to others without asking for anything in return?

Give Value First.

Yes, a few people will take advantage of your generosity. But the majority's satisfaction will support you many times over your initial investment in time and energy.

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