

Random thoughts to start November

Work for your treats!

Last night was Halloween, and I had a bowlful of good (chocolate) candy. There seemed fewer trick-or-treaters this year than last, and a lot fewer cute costumes. I am not sure what that was about. But what really bugged me was the teenager who showed up with her backpack open, wearing no costume, just ready to grab some candy. Really? She made no effort at all and perhaps she felt a sense of entitlement. I shut the door after that and decided to keep the rest of the candy for myself.

(Also, why is it that the littlest kids grabbed one piece of candy each, but the teenagers grabbed a handful?)

The takeaway here is that looking the part helps with buy-in. I am not inclined to give you candy if you don't look like a trick-or-treater, right?

How am I supposed to get home?

Last week I called a couple of dealerships about a malfunctioning knob in my car. Both dealerships were able to figure out approximately how much it would cost to fix but only one dealership offered a shuttle to take me home and pick me up. Where do you think I made a service appointment?

When your car is in the shop, and it is going to take all day to fix, what are you supposed to do? You can't drive yourself, obviously, but you do have options: 1) you could sit at the dealership all day (and be bored and unproductive); 2) you could get a friend or family member to pick you up and take you back (if you have a favor that needs returning); 3) you could take a cab (could cost you lots of money); or 4) you

could take public transportation to where you need to go (if it is even available).

The marketing lesson here is that offering a useful service like a courtesy shuttle will set you apart and bring you business, often more than advertising will.

Complain but with a purpose

Blogs are great for so many reasons, not the least of which is that it gives you a place to air your concerns. If you have a personal blog, complaining about something that happened to you at your local fast food shop or a blow up with a neighbor is appropriate. However, if you are writing for a small business or organizational blog, complaining just to blow off steam is not only useless, it may be detrimental. What is the reason that you are sharing the complaint? How is it helping your blog's readers? How is it getting your blog more readers of the kind you want?

For example, a couple of years ago, I wrote a complaint post about a certain cosmetics company. I did try to give it a communications spin, but the people that find my blog because of that particular post are other angry customers who are in no way interested in my thoughts on marketing communications, but rather in complaining about the cosmetics company. It gets me readers, but not readers in my target audience.

Before you start a complaint blog post or rant, think about how it fits with your blog's purpose and target audience.

Happy November!