



Why Giving Back is Selfish

by Kathy Santini

As a child, I remember Christmas Eve being agonizing, just agonizing, the waiting and wondering about whether Santa had received my requests and most importantly, whether or not he would deliver them. One Christmas, in an effort to distract me, Dad gave me a pearl of wisdom that adults seem so keen to hand down to the “youngins”.

He told me that one day I would realize that it was better to give than receive, which opened up a discussion about the presents that I had chosen for the rest of the family. Not wanting to disappoint him, I nodded my head as if I understood while silently thinking to myself, “Only eight more hours until I see what Santa brought ME.” Because at six, it was all about me. Isn’t it funny

how much wiser our parents become as *we* age? Today, I tend to agree with Dad, it *usually* is better to give than receive, unless you're the recipient of the Hope diamond, an around the world trip, or something that you value as much as these two gifts. In fact, today I'd go one step further than my Dad, by saying that giving back is selfish. Why? Because if your heart is really into the gift that you're giving, you benefit so much more than the person receiving it. The following story illustrates this point. Gary gave one of his daughters, who loves to travel, the gift of a two-week trip anywhere in the world. The gift consisted of a box brimming with travel brochures on trips to the four corners of the earth, along with a note explaining what the gift entailed. Gary said that it was the greatest gift he gave to both himself and his daughter, who loves traveling so much that she is seriously looking for a 12-step program for people who travel too much. They both had the greatest times as she shared her process for deciding where to go, anticipated the trip, enjoyed the trip and then lived on the memories which are still *theirs* 10 years later.

While ideally gifts are given just for the pleasure of giving them, a side effect is our increased social and economic capital from giving them. Or as Business Network

International (BNI) says, "givers gain." I've seen this over and over as I've built my coaching practice, particularly in the early days. When a newbie coach, I wanted part of my practice to include cancer survivors and so I offered a number of free workshops for them. After attending one of these workshops, a young cancer survivor became a client; in fact she still is. In addition, my experience coaching and holding workshops for survivors was a pivotal reason, I believe, for the Canadian Breast Cancer Network's invitation to lead a workshop at their first national conference for young survivors in Toronto last November.

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My Dad, the same one who distracted me all those years ago on Christmas Eve, was an extremely successful businessman whose motto was, "service, service, service." That attitude helped him become B.C.'s largest home builder in the 1980s and 1990s, before selling Parklane

Homes in the late 90s. And that same attitude has helped many of my business coaching clients turn their businesses around to successful ventures.

So often as entrepreneurs, as we pour our blood, sweat and tears

into creating the living, breathing entities we call our businesses, we feel that we don't have the time to give back; that it's something we'll do *once* we make it. But I've seen time and time again how giving *during* the journey hastens that success. Wondering how? There's a famous business adage that is as true today as when it was first coined many years ago: people do business with people they like, know and trust. Your profile, likeability and trust factors increase exponentially when you give back to your community. And that, "Ca Ching," translates into goodwill and then business, always in that order.

There are other beneficial spin-offs from being connected and giving back. Social scientists have told us for a long time that it also helps our health, as seniors who live the longest have one thing in common – they are all well connected socially. In this day and age where the nuclear family is going the way of the dinosaur (and if you don't believe me, take a look at the book *Microtrends, the small forces behind's tomorrow's big changes*), and where more and more people are living on their own, giving

back is a smart strategy. Why? Because today, it's more likely that when an emergency happens, it's more likely that you'll reach out to your neighbor or close friend, rather than your Uncle Bill who lives in the neighboring state or province.

Take Action Now

Whether you own a business or work for someone else, live alone or with someone, make a point of doing something nice for someone, at least twice a week. Don't include the things you already do for the special people in your life. It can be as little as holding the door open for someone when you're in hurry, or offering to baby-sit your neighbor's young children so they can enjoy an evening at the movies and come home more refreshed to face the demands of parenting. Whatever it is, as the Nike ad says, just do it. The untold rewards for doing so might surprise you and at the very least will make someone else's day. And hopefully, they in turn will pay it forward, maybe even in your direction. No doubt about it, giving back *is* selfish.

Kathy Santini is a life and business coach, Gary's daughter and the person who received the gift of a trip around the world as a Christmas present. And yes, she's looking (but not too hard) for a 12-step program for people who travel too much. To learn what clients have to say about coaching with her, visit www.arbutuscoaching.com/testimonials.php or call her at 250 388-6108 to discuss how coaching can help you.