

A Value(able) Lesson  
by Janet Christensen

Recently, I attended a workshop that had been highly recommended to me by a colleague. The workshop fee was \$79.00, and it took place in Toronto from 10am to 4pm on a Sunday. Added to my costs were gas, parking and travel time from London to Toronto and back - I left at 7:30am and got home at 6pm.

I am committed to life-long learning and I carefully choose the workshops and courses that I take. This one seemed like a great fit because it was about speaking professionally. Since it came highly recommended, I attended with the expectation of a day full of learning and information. The presenter was a professional speaker who has spoken internationally for many years, and whose credentials and introduction reinforced the expectation of great content and inspiring delivery. The speaker made a few good points and shared some nice personal stories, however, there was not a lot of substance. She was from the USA and was not prepared with information about some Canadian issues, or with relevant Canadian content. The workbook (workshop materials an additional \$10.) looks good and it will be of value to me. I concluded that I would have been better to buy the workbook and spend about two hours reading that. I was disappointed with the quality and quantity of the presentation and felt that my time and money were not well spent.

As a speaker, facilitator and coach, I view these events both as a participant and as a professional. From both perspectives, I expect professionalism in the presentation and content. I have attended and benefited from many presentations where my expectations have been more than met and I have received excellent value for my time and money.

It is said that if you get just one good idea from a presentation, it is worth it. On my two hour drive home, I thought about this. Is it about hearing one good idea, or is it about perceived value? I had invested money and time to attend this event. Whether or not I came away with one good idea was not important to me. What was important was whether or not I felt that I had received value for my time and money. I was more irritated by not getting value for my time than about the cost of the day. I can make more money; I cannot recoup time spent.

What is my lesson from this experience? When people invest their time and money to hear me speak, facilitate a workshop, or be coached, they deserve to receive great value for their investment. The great value from my day did not come from hearing a money-making idea, it came from having this concept of providing value reinforced from being on the receiving end. It is a warning not to become complacent. This goes to the core of how I conduct myself, my business and the reputation that I earn. I want to be known for the excellent value that my clients receive for doing business with me.

No matter what business you are in, whether you are an owner or an employee, if you want long term success and a great reputation, it comes down to this – know what your customer wants and expects and deliver value. Under promise and over deliver and you will never go wrong. Focus on this, and success will follow.

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