

Interview Transcript

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HOST: Jimmy Barrett

EXPERT: Dr. Tracy Tuten

(Automated voice) WRVA.com.

Jimmy Barrett: Oh yeah, Christmas shopping. Fun, isn't it? Oh, I can't think of anything that I just like more, honestly, then going out there and slugging it out to find the quote on quote perfect gift. I finally usually will break down and uh, buy a few gift cards. I do believe in buying gift cards. It is the easy way out. Unfortunately, my guess is the people getting them know that as well. Tracy Tuten is a marketing professor at Longwood University and she's here to advise us on gift cards. Tracy have you ever gotten a gift card you really truly liked?

Tracy Tuten: Absolutely.

JB: Okay, where was it to?

TT: Talbots.

JB: Talbots, okay you're a big Talbots shopper then, huh?

TT: I'm a big Talbots shopper. You couldn't go wrong if you wanted to send me one from Ann Taylor, either.

JB: Okay. Alright I'm marking that down, not that I'm getting you anything. But, I am marking that down. Is that the key to giving a gift card that someone will truly care about is you really, you really do have to take enough time to figure out what they want to buy. Right?

TT: Absolutely, that is one of my top five principals of giving a great gift card is to think before you give.

JB: Okay.

TT: You want to know what is that, that they really want. What's going to make them happy.

JB: Here's another one I would probably add to your list. I'm not sure if it's on there or not. Don't buy a gift card to a company that's likely to go out of business in the next few months.

TT: Well, that's not on my list because my list is Top 5 giving a great gift card but absolutely, you should be smart about how you give gift cards.

RB: So, I'm thinking that maybe I shouldn't give that Linens N' Things gift card that I've got collecting dust in my drawer right now.

TT: That's only going to have value as a place marker in a book you're reading.

JB: That's true. That's true. Alright. So number one. Number one tip is to make sure that you're getting one someone actually cares about. What's next on your list?

TT: You want to know what your role is.

JB: My role?

TT: Absolutely, gift card givers tend to be pleasers, providers or acknowledgers. So if you're a pleaser you're playing it safe, trying to pick a store that you know that person will like.

JB: Okay.

TT: If you're providing you're giving them something you think they need. That might be a Ukrop's gift card or a BP gas card.

JB: Okay.

TT: Unfortunately, a lot of gift card givers are acknowledgers and Jimmy it sounds like you might be an acknowledger.

JB: Well.

TT: An acknowledger is someone who settles, they want to minimize their efforts but still acknowledge the relationship.

JB: Guilty. Guilty as charged. Actually I think in my case because I get, uh, I usually get, Joe and Trey who are my producers here on the program, I usually get them gift cards. Um, but, I think my role in that one is more provider because you know, there kind of my underlings, if you will. So, I try to get them something I think they can use.

TT: Well, if you're trying to take care of them you're providing. But, if you just want to maintain the relationship as easily as you possibly can, then you're acknowledging.

JB: Okay. Can I be both?

TT: Not really. But, the danger with acknowledging is that the gift recipient can understand that you just feel like you have to get them something and you want to pawn it off on them and make them pick out their own gift.

JB: Okay.

Producer (Trey): You acknowledged!

JB: I am an acknowledged. Guilty, guilty as charged!

TT: Now there's hope for you Jimmy.

JB: Okay, how do I stop being such an acknowledged? If that's a bad thing.

TT: Well, if you just give it a little bit of thought then you can pick a store location that's going to be the right place for Trey. And then you should also package it up, so you can let him know that you've given some thought to his personality or his life situation.

JB: Alright, Trey what would be the best place for me to get a card like that for you?

Producer (Trey): Actually, I've been enjoying the Regal gift cards you've been giving me.

JB: See, alright. Alright.

Trey: Because I go to the movies a lot!

JB: Well there you go, I guess I didn't do too bad then.

TT: You did pretty well but, you could package it up in a way so it adds value for Trey. So if he loves movies...

JB: Hang on, how do you package up a gift card?

Trey: Put some sequins on it!

JB: Is that what you want? Sequins on it?

Trey: A nice little bow.

JB: A little bow, yeah?

Trey: Some glitter.

JB: You probably would like me to have a naked woman deliver it to you or something. Right?

Producer (Trey): yeah, that'd be cool.

JB: See, there you go.

TT: See, that's not what I had in mind.

JB: What did you have in mind?

TT: Well, if you picked out a book about classic movies throughout time and included the gift card with the book. Now you've added value for Trey.

JB: Okay, alright. I get where you're going with this. In other words, a gift card can be a very impersonal present unless you find some ways to personalize it so the person realizes you really care.

TT: Absolutely, and the whole reason you're giving a gift, is to help maintain and build a relationship, so you don't want the recipient to be thinking, "Wow Jimmy really didn't care about me at all, all he did was get me this lousy gift card."

JB: Alright, hey Tracy, who should I never get a gift card for?

TT: If it's someone you're in love with. Do not ever, ever, ever give a gift card.

JB: Okay.

TT: Because gift cards can not carry expressive value and that's what we want to show to someone that we're in love with.

JB: Alright, so, you're probably shopping for diamonds right now aren't you Tracy?

TT: Diamonds are far better than gift cards if it's the woman you're in love with.

JB: Somehow I thought you would believe that. Absolutely. Alright good advice, thanks Tracy! Good to talk to you.

TT: Thank you Jimmy.

JB: Have a great Christmas.

TT: You too, bye bye.

JB: Tracy Tuten she's a marketing professor at Longwood University.

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