



Paying it forward: Personal public relations - by Stanley Hurwitz

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A few months ago, a friend told me about an experiment. He asked his bank teller for a supply of Kennedy half dollars. You probably haven't used one lately: They're heavy, jingle so loud they announce your arrival, and can wear a hole in your pocket. This big coin has a diameter of 30.6 mm, about one inch.

My friend told me he always carries a few 50-cent pieces ready to give to anyone he observes doing a nice deed: A kid who holds the door open, someone who picks up your dropped keys. This "paying it forward" concept dates back to a play in ancient Athens: When someone does something for you, instead of paying that person back directly, you pass it on to another person instead. One example: buying coffee for the person in line behind you; then they buy coffee for the person behind them and so on.

The coins with JFK on the front and an eagle on the reverse were first minted in 1964, a year after president Kennedy's assassination. Billions have been produced. There are so many, most carry no premium value. At first they were 90% silver, 10% copper. Since 1971, they're 75% copper, 25% nickel. Worth: 50 cents.

On a recent vacation in Las Vegas, I took several half dollars. (Very loud when I emptied them into the TSA tray!) I learned that coming across someone who shows special kindness is harder than you think.

As my brave wife left for a helicopter tour of the Grand Canyon and boat ride on the Colorado River, she left two postcards to mail. I learned stamps could only be bought at the FedEx store

(1/4 mile from the front desk). The store's posted Sunday hours were 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. It was still dark at 9:30. The adjacent gift shop manager divulged FedEx rarely opened before 10. As I waved the postcards, explaining my dilemma, another guest stopped, smiled and handed me two stamps. I offered to pay. She said, "No, just pay it forward." I promptly handed her a special half dollar. She waved me off. I replied, "It's not for the stamps, it's for your nice gesture. Give it to someone who does something for you. Pay it forward." She smiled and walked away, clutching the coin. The gift shop lady also smiled from ear to ear. I did, too. I affixed the stamps and mailed the postcards. I came home with two half dollars that never found deserving recipients. Let me know if you try this experiment!

One of my favorite sayings: A good idea can be worth a million dollars. Similarly, a nice gesture is worth a million smiles. "Paying it forward" makes the world a better place. And a good PR person can be worth a million Kennedy half dollars.

Contact me for a complimentary consultation.

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