

Leave Yourself Open To Random Encounters and Random Experiences In Your Business and Personal Life



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When I was 19 and working for a travel agency which took students to Europe, I was told on the pier in New York that I was the odd man out in our group and would have to share a double cabin with a stranger on the Atlantic crossing-five days. My first thought: Cool!

And cool it was. Sam was 33 and while he was waiting for his elderly father to pass away, he was studying languages in Europe – just what I was headed over to do (not the father bit). One difference: Sam spoke fourteen of them, including really difficult ones like Finnish, Japanese, and Serbo-Croatian. He taught me his tricks to learning a language...just what I needed at that very moment!

When he learned that I was headed to University of Geneva to spend a year, he told me to go directly to La Clemence ("Clemency"- it was across the square from the Palais de Justice!!)

He said "This tiny bar is the navel of Europe-everybody passes through that little bar."

And he was right.

I met my roommate there-a Munich boy who has since been a life-long friend; I met my French girlfriend there, and she later came to Houston and enrolled in Rice, and we remain friends; and many, many other interesting people.

All this because I wasn't programmed. I took a random shot at crossing the Atlantic on the SS Rotterdam with a total stranger. I never saw him again, but because of my taking a chance with him, my stay in Geneva was hugely enhanced...including having a very close and devoted French teacher.

Sometimes we win big by playing the unexpected card!

Many of us feel like our calendars need to be, filled in days or weeks in advance...that 'executive assistant' need to screen our calls and filter who gets in to see us at the office, and that we never leave town on a leisure trip without a small posse of close friends from home.

Many people subconsciously build a 'bubble of deference' around themselves, avoiding new encounters with new and strange and different people, feeling it is best to be surrounded with others who know them and 'who they are'.

To follow this behavior is to wall one's self off from all new experience.

Random is good. Go to a new place by yourself and sit at the bar alone. You may meet someone who will change your life. If it is a slow night, you may discover a very interesting philosopher-bartender.

If you play golf, asked to be included in a foursome with unknown people instead of your regular group.

When you go to a new town, get a haircut in a cool part of the town (even if you don't quite need one yet)-barbers are fountains of just the kind of information you might profit from.

Set yourself up to be free...to be free to meet new people and to go to new art galleries or new restaurants or new towns. Get your life out of the (pleasant/unchallenging) groove it is in-you may find something more pleasant, or more profitable.

Remember what Alfred, Lord Tennyson said: "I am a part of all that I have met, yet all experience is an arch wherethrough gleams that untraveled world, whose margin fades forever and ever when I move."

Shuffle your deck!

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