

11-30-18 Memories and Marvelous Moments

Christmas has a way of sneaking up on me and it seems to be getting worse each year. If this is an aging phenomenon, no one share that secret with me! It is supposed to be a time of joy, but pressure does not feel joyful; it feels stressful. Rather than be stressed, I look for some way to reign that in and achieve the goal of finding gifts for a large family. For the last decade, choosing a theme has guided me within the parameters of the theme.

As a mother, it has required great effort for me to step away from “more stuff equals proof of love” equation. In an effort to give in ways friendlier to the environment and reduce unnecessary stuff, the thematic gift-giving has helped with that also. *Let's Get Cooking* resulted in a family cook book. *It's in the Bag* gave everyone a tool bag or a lunch bag or a pocket book. *Read All about It* was the gift of magazine subscriptions arriving all year long.

An aspect common to thematic guidance has been a small investment with a great return. It might be a business concept but it's a great philosophy for life, too. It is especially inspirational for guiding us at Christmas time. You know, that time when stress, guilt, competition and excess so often are the mantras, even if only on a subconscious level.

This year's theme is not yet fully formed but I have decided it has the bang for the buck I look for, along with a lasting and growing value. The idea came to me while making a photo book for a granddaughter who needed a teaching tool. The book included titles such “Uncle Eric”, “Cousin Colin's seventh birthday party”. While putting that together with an online site I have used before, I thought about how few pictures are held in hand or put in frames. It is ironic that in this age of constant picture taking, that we have so few in print, to hold and cherish and ignite memories of the event.

There is very interesting research indicating our ability to recall is weakened when we take a picture of something. That might seem counter intuitive. Wouldn't you think that the act of taking the picture would strengthen the memory of the object you photographed? This is better understood when research examines the effect of knowing there is an external source retaining information for us. When we know information resides on the computer, for instance, our memory of that information is reduced because our mind does not “want” or “have to” remember stuff, knowing that the device is retaining it for us.

I hope I am correct in thinking that there is a difference between something as tangible as a book, with a picture on the cover, and glancing at a smart phone, an iPad or computer and knowing that the device contains all sorts of information, including hundreds or even thousands of photos. How often do we open the device and re-visit each photo? Are they even organized? How often have we wished we had made an album for that occasion?

I guess time will tell because I am giving my family photo books, organized online. The name is simply, *My Family*, and has a cover picture of me, my six children and their father. It is filled with pictures spanning several years and a few of my siblings and childhood. I think no matter what my future themes are, a new and different photo book will find its way into future Christmases.

According to BusinessDictionary.com, the definition of cost-benefit ratio is, “Comparison of the present value of an investment decision or project with its initial cost. A ratio of greater than one indicates that the project is a viable one.”

I believe a physical book of magical moments to marvel at is a viable project.

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