

Nick Knows...It's About Keeping in Touch

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by PENELOPE BURK

Once you meet Nick you can never forget him. He is the kind of person who is genuinely interested in other people; he listens with his entire being, not just with his ears. Nick is an actor, and like all good actors, a keen observer. He notices little details, but sees the big picture. And everyone who enters his life becomes important to him.

I joined the ranks of "people-who-are-important-to-Nick" a few years ago when I hired him for one of our seminars. (My company conducts fundraising seminars structured as a series of scenes played by professional actors.) In the fundraising context, however, Nick is important, not because of his talent as an actor, which is considerable, but because of his talent as a communicator.

After the first time I hired Nick, he sent me a beautiful letter to tell me how much he had enjoyed the opportunity of working on something so different. He said that he was proud to work in the company of the other fine actors that make up our group, and that he had learned so much about fundraising through this experience. The letter was completely unexpected and very much appreciated.

He appreciates the association

Working actors go where the work is, and Nick is no exception. As he moves from film to play to commercial, I hear from him from time to time. Sometimes a letter, often a postcard; once he wrote to me on the back of a piece of wallpaper trimmed from the set of his current production. ("...no time to run out for writing paper between rehearsals, but I just wanted to let you know where I was and that I'm hoping you are well...") His correspondence is all fairly brief, but it always includes an observation about what he's experiencing at the time and a reflection on the last time we worked together. The real message, though, always shines through: he is thinking about me and he appreciates our association.

There are 20,000 professional actors in Canada, and on any given day 99% of them are looking for work. So, when I want actors for my seminars, I have an endless supply of superbly talented and exceptionally eager people to choose from. Would I hire anyone but Nick? Not a chance!

There are 78,000 charities in Canada, and on any given day 100% of them are trying to figure out how to hold onto their donors. If Nick were a fundraiser, he'd have that problem licked. ~



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