

The Psychology Of Contest Prize Winning

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The Psychology Of Contest Prize Winning

If you want to win, start with an advantage. You must know the basics!

Ceaseless as the surge of the sea, wave after wave of prize contests sweeps across the nation, engulfing millions in the constant struggle to win wealth and fame at a single stroke. By television, radio, newspaper and magazine come the startling announcements of ever-growing awards by the contest sponsor. Fortunes that would mean retirement, life time annuities, trips around the world and an innumerable host of lesser prizes are the targets at which the millions aim. And with the flood of announcements comes a universal plea from the vast majority of participants: "Where can we get help to assist us in winning?"

Contesting has grown into a national pastime, and with its growth the suspicion that the so-called contest experts have the inside tract to wining and that the amateur or beginner is hopelessly outclassed. And to a certain extent it is true. The records of contesting are full of stories about men and women who have accumulated fortunes, not through one big winning, but from successive contests. There are women who have furnished their homes and built up their bank accounts through contest checks. There are men who abandoned their former means of earning a livelihood to devote all their time to contesting, which they found more profitable. In nearly every contest of considerable size, it is a certainty that the entries from these "repeaters" will be included.

Their skill, accumulated by years of contesting, adds to the odds which the average person encounters when entering a contest. But the task is by no means hopeless. For the law of averages, unswerving and unbiased, proves that the vast majority of prizes won every year go to the so-called beginners in contesting. All men were created equal, but nature put an individual set of brains in all our heads. and that means that anyone, at any time, is likely to get the idea that means prize winning checks.

The prize winning idea may come at a most unexpected moment; again, it may be the result of painstaking effort and research. In either case, the possessor is just as apt to be the beginner as the veteran. The first entry seldom brings a prize. Failure to win must not bring despondency and a shrug of the shoulders attitude. Instead, it must serve as a stimulus to greater effort. Ingenuity seems to grow with practice. The law of averages stays the same and if ingenuity shows an improvement then the chances of winning become much greater.

Without ingenuity the entire case becomes hopeless, because the casual entry, without any special preparation or serious thought, is usually a waste of time and postage.

There are many things which might be listed as among the requirements of a contest entry, but because the types of contests are so numerous it could be impossible to give one word that would be descriptive of the entire lot. So the contestant himself must decide when he enters the contest just what the nature of his entry should be.

The first lesson in contesting might fittingly be described in these words: "Are you entirely positive that you understand the rules?" The slightest doubt should be erased before actual work on the entry is started, provided of course, that a brilliant idea hasn't struck simultaneously with hearing or reading the contest announcement.

The records of prize contesting show that a terrific percentage of entries in every contest is ruled out because of failure to comply with the rules. The percentage in some contests is so great that the average contestant would be amazed if he learned the true figures. Strict adherence to the rules, no matter how simple the contest may be, is the first lesson which every prize contestant must learn. The prizes cannot be awarded to entries which do not conform to the rules and nobody knows how many excellent entries have been cast aside simply because of some infraction that made it impossible for the judges to consider its merits.

Next in importance might be ranked some of the tools, which every profession and trade requires. There are hundreds of persons who follow contesting with all the determination a profession or trade requires and that is the most certain road to success in this fascinating "profession." Hit or miss methods are not conducive to repeated winnings. Careful methods, sometimes brain-testing determination and constant alertness for progress are all required.

the contestant must have a good dictionary, and a thesaurus and also to be recommended are good publications on the subject. I do not hesitate to recommend subscriptions to some of the outstanding magazines in the field, which can be procured at newsstands. These magazines are filled with hints and suggestions and they change from time to time, for the contest picture is like a kaleidoscope - constantly changing. Also, a number of good books on the subject can be found at your local library.

Likewise, a file which contains as much information about contesting as can be procured should be started at once and kept up with unflinching devotion. Here should be kept records,

copies of all entries, winning entries from every contest where procurable, and similar data. The contestant who wants to enter seriously into the field must be on the alert constantly with paper and pencil to jot down anything that might have a bearing on any angle, from bright and unusual sayings to unexpected comments of friends and associates. These must all be filed away in the proper place where they are instantly available.

It might also be said that if a person is determined to become a contestant he can have no other hobby because this one will require his entire spare time - and there are thousands who devote their full time to it. This thought should serve the purpose of showing the importance of careful consideration of every angle in contesting. The slightest detail must be considered as important if success is to be achieved. Casual methods do not succeed. Thoroughness is the mother of winning entries.

Another angle which should be touched upon is the often repeated doubt over the honesty of contests and the judges. Any person can rest assured that a contest by television or radio, or scanned in the daily newspapers and reputable magazines will be fairly conducted, without bias or prejudice. The powerful weight of Uncle Sam's authority alone is enough to protect against frauds, but equally as great is the value the sponsor places upon good will. There is absolutely no basis for the often repeated statements that contests are not conducted fairly, and most generally these comments come from disgruntled contestants who didn't win anything.

The true contestant does not spurn a contest because the prizes are comparatively small. On the contrary, for these smaller contests hold the power of revealing just where the contestant's strength lies. There is just as much of a thrill in winning small contests as there is in many of the larger ones. And if the technique of winning can be developed, these smaller contests prove a profitable source of investment in the matter of time.

Because many of these smaller contests are conducted locally the winning entries usually are announced. Comparison can then be made and the reason determined why somebody's offering won. In virtually every instance where this happens the contestant who lost will admit, if he is fair, that the better entry won. So it's always easy to profit from our defeats in the struggle for prize contests.

And because it's a local contest, or a small-prize contest, the contestant must not assume that slipshod methods will win. The same painstaking care for ingenuity, brevity, force and vitality that is desired in the larger contests must be present

here. The contestant can have this proven for his own satisfaction after several unsuccessful entries are submitted.

In many ways contesting can be compared with running a race or any other kind of physical or mental contest. An athlete must keep in shape if he wants to compete at his best. A bowler, baseball player or football star must keep in practice if he isn't going to slip before his time. and in contesting you likewise must practice and keep in shape, but happily there is no set time in life when retirement is forced upon you. You can start early in life and keep at it until the end.

The author is reminded of the manner in which a close friend, who since has won consistently in contests of many types, was started in the field of contesting. His wife was handed, about 10 years ago, an entry blank for a contest sponsored by a nationally known maker of detergent. The prizes were a number of items valued at from \$100 to \$5,000. The contest consisted of writing an entry blank furnished by the sponsor, a brief statement indicating the part the wife plays in the management of the home.

This friend happened to be employed by a newspaper and was regarded as a writer of considerable skill. When his wife handed him the entry blank and suggested that he write the brief essay he immediately started for his portable typewriter and dashed out what he considered a fitting entry. Then he prepared to copy his effort on the entry blank when his wife intervened.

She explained that she had heard how more experienced contest winners prepared and submitted entries to various contests. She suggested that he take more time with the entry, consider the situation from all angles and then put the result of hard concentration and thought on paper and perhaps revise and condense until it was considered perfect. The newspaperman thought the suggestion over and complied. In fact, it was several days later before he believed he had the necessary thoughts in the proper sequence. The entry was posted and it wasn't long before his wife was awarded a prize of considerable value. This started the contest mania in that home.

Just a few days later the newspaperman noticed a local contest in which a large beverage company offered as a prize a year's supply of their product for a brief letter stating why the writer liked their product. Again he concentrated, made actual test with the product in comparison with others and was one of the winners.

Since that time he has won scores of contest prizes. He is regarded as one of the authorities on contesting in the city

where he resides. But his methods have changed greatly since that day when he started to dash off a statement with hardly any thought and without any preparation.

Today his den is a store of contest information. He subscribes to contest services, contest magazines and is constantly filing clipped contest information, advertisements, copies of winning entries, and much similar data. The time he has spent in accumulating the information has brought dividends of great value.

CONTESTANT'S READY RECKONER - Taken from many national contests.

Average percentage of entries disqualified for violation of rules - 30%

Average number obviously too inferior for final consideration - 37%

Average percentage received after closing date - 3%

Average number of replies bearing no name or address - 1%

Average number disqualified for illegible handwriting - 4%

AVERAGE NUMBER ACTUALLY PRESENTED TO JUDGES AFTER PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION ONLY - 24%

Before you seal the envelope, be sure that you haven't made any of the mistakes listed in the table above. One final check should always be made before the envelope bearing the results of many hours of labor is sent away on its way to the contest judges, bearing the hopes of the contestant under its flap.

And be sure that your entry has the right label, boxtop or similar requirement firmly attached or neatly enclosed. Although the announcement always includes "or a facsimile." It's better to buy the product.