

THE GARY HALBERT LETTER

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The Boron Letters - Chapter 20

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Dear Bond,

A long, long time ago Dennis Haslinger told me that most of the most serious mistakes I would make in life would be bad ego decisions.

I have found that to be true. I have made quite a few bad ego decisions with women, many, many bad ones with money and quite a few that put me in some sort of physical danger.

I am trying to avoid such a mistake right now and I am hoping that maybe writing to you about it will help. What happened is that yesterday I was playing my radio through my headphones and I was playing it so loud that all that KMET rock and roll was irritating my roommates. In all truth, I was wrong in doing this and I have done it once before and one of my roommates (the first time) had to politely ask me to turn it down.

This time I was laying there completely lost in all this rock and roll I became aware of someone screaming my name and when I cut the radio off I could hear one of my other roommates screaming at me and telling me to show some consideration for everybody else and not to give him any "back" talk or he would break the damn thing (my radio).

Well, how about that? It got very quiet in the room and he turned away from me and I remained silent.

It shook me up some. Not an enormous amount but some. All kinds of things ran through my head. I wanted to explain to him that I was sorry and didn't realize I was disturbing everybody and, also I wanted to run a "macho trip" on him and tell him if he kept running his mouth I was going to rip off his head.

And, I also thought of simply explaining to him that a better way to handle a situation like this would have been to simply tell me the volume was too loud and then I would have voluntarily turned it down.

But I didn't do any of those things. What I did instead, as I said, is I remained silent eating a little humble pie.

Well, Bondy, I think I made a good decision. But I'll tell you, it's hard for me to live with. Unfortunately, however, that sort of thing sometimes is a part of being in prison and, in this case, the matter was a little complicated by the fact that the guy who did the yelling usually conducts himself in a way as to have very little friction with other people. He does his time quietly doing a lot of exercising and studying an accounting course.

But that - "and don't give me any back talk" really got to me and I feel a little bit cowardly for not calling him on that. And that may have been satisfying for my ego and my pride but it would have been really dumb.

By the way, I want to maybe surprise you a little at this point by telling you that everything in this letter has a lot to do with creating better ads and DM pieces! And don't even try to guess why at this point because I'll explain it before I am finished.

Meanwhile, back to my story: As I was saying, there was a lot of things I didn't do and I'd like to talk about why I didn't.

The first reason I didn't get tough with this guy is I was a little scared. Not much, because I am in very good shape and I am a very physical person now. But I was a little scared and with good reasons and here are some of them. First of all, this guy might have hurt me. He's pretty physical too and he has been working out in prison for years. Secondly, I might have hurt him because, as I said, I'm not exactly a guy who routinely gets sand kicked in his face. And thirdly, (and this is the big one!) if he and I had gotten in a fight we would have both been put in chains and immediately transferred to a higher security prison PLUS we may easily have lost our "good time" and, I myself, would perhaps have had to do six months longer before I got out.

So, I think you'll agree I did the right thing but, I'll tell you, my ol' ego is having a hard time of it.

And, let's talk briefly about why I didn't explain to him a more mature way he could have handled the situation. One of the big reasons is:

I Am In Prison!

And, here doing time with me, are a lot of people who would not be here if they were capable of handling an emotionally charged situation with any kind of maturity.

So, what does all this have to do with writing sales letters and ads? It has, as I promised you, quite a lot and here is the gist of it: Now that I've told you what I didn't do when this situation arose, I want to tell you what I did do. What I did do was stay in the room and I worked on yesterday's letter to you. And, if you will look at that letter you will see that my handwriting was somewhat shaky because of all the adrenaline working in my system.

But I did write the letter to you and then I took a walk and I went to my "thinking spot" and I plotted out my schedule for the month of July.

And this morning what I did is I did 8 long miles of roadwork on the hill. That's 10 laps. In the beginning I walked two to warm up; in the end I walked two to cool down and in the middle I jogged 6.

And what else did I do? Well, I have sat down and written this letter to you all about the event.

So, anyway, I still haven't gotten to what this has to do with writing a good sales promotion or, a "good anything" for that matter so, here it is: What I am doing, Bond, by all this writing and road work is that I am "clearing the deck" and getting (in so far as possible) this garbage out of my system so that my strategic decisions and my future letters and ideas will be clear!

Please remember this word: HALT. HALT stands for hungry, angry, lonely and tired and you should never make a decision when you are any of those things.

What should you do? What I did. Write, run, walk, talk, jog, etc.

But be careful who you talk with and write to. You see, it should be someone who realizes that all this must be considered as "time out babble".

You see, Bond it really doesn't matter much what the "content" of this letter is. What matters is that I am going through the "process" of writing it. And it is the process or physical act of the writing and the road work that does the therapy. Remember this:

You Don't Have To Get It Right...

You Just Have To Get It MOVING!

And now, in closing, let me tell you another true prison story. It is about another encounter I had that was very different than this one. You see, in the event I just described my roommate wasn't trying to "bulldog" me or shove me around. He just lost his temper in a childish way and doesn't have the "emotional tools" to respond to such a situation with maturity.

But this other one was different. You see, we have this black guy here at Boron (never mind his name) who is very strong and very loud. He lifts weights all the time and he is forever yelling (more prison talk - unprintable).

Well, as it happens, one evening I was playing pool and there weren't enough pool cues to go around. So what happens is this black guy comes into the pool room (where everybody but me is black) and starts running his mouth and while I'm racking the balls he snatches my pool cue and informs me that that is the way it was going to be.

I walked over to him and it got real quiet in that pool room. It got even quieter when I put my hands on his shoulders and my face right in front of his and said to him eyeball to eyeball:

*"Look my friend, here's how it is. This
is my stick and you ain't taking it."*

And then I took the stick away from him and resumed playing pool.

God I Hate This!

I Love You And Good Luck

Dad