
GivingGrinch.com

BudgetFree for Life!

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March 2009: A Nation of Value Shoppers



Everyone is talking about cutting costs. It's en vogue in daily media discussions. What encourages me is how this topic is being approached. We're willing to spend, but demand more for our money. We still travel, dine out, go to the theatre, etc. Extravagance is in a downward spiral, but if the price is right our wallets will open. One example is travel. A family trip is no longer considered a luxury; it's an annual activity. This year travelers want to know exactly what they are paying for in advance and are opting for all-inclusive or packaged vacations over a la carte. Meanwhile, hotels and airlines offer deep discounts to lure you their way. It's not surprising that corporate travel is down this year, but leisure is not. To the chagrin of hoteliers, trips planned around stays with friends or family is also on the rise. If your family vacation is on the fence, download the Master List from either www.GivingGrinch.com or www.GivingGrinch.Blogspot.com for more value-oriented travel suggestions.

BudgetFree for Life Consulting (2.0)

Based on feedback from my clients, I'm putting the finishing touches on my BudgetFree for Life Consolation Service. Tailored for individuals, couples or families, this package comes with all the training, tools, techniques and support you'll need to live BudgetFree for Life. It's an affordable way to bring fiscal and personal balance to your life. To learn more, check out my 60 second presentation via my products and services page on GivingGrinch.com: <http://www.givinggrinch.com/8.html>

BudgetFree for Life Tip: Annualize to Minimize Habit Spending

If you want to understand the magnitude of habit shopping think annually. For example, a \$2 cup of coffee may seem like chump change, but repeating this habit daily costs \$730/year. Take stock of your habits and determine if they are getting in the way of more important needs like health care, an emergency cash fund, eliminating credit card debt or even saving for a vacation. The solution isn't necessarily to stop the habit. Rather, it's to understand how it brings value to your life so you can find ways to fulfill the need in conjunction with meeting the needs of other areas. For instance with coffee, here are three suggestions: cut back on the frequency, brew at home or bring your favorite blend and brew at work. Habit shoppers must also beware of check-out lines. Annualize all the magazines, candy, gum and other small dollar items you reach for than ask yourself, how exactly is this adding value to my life? Here are a few examples clients and readers have shared:

Safety Needs:

- It's only a \$45 parking ticket; unfortunately I seem to get one monthly by forgetting to feed the meter. Annually, that's **\$540** I could have put towards replacing my worn out tires! – P. Johnson, Reader

Social Needs:

- Once a week I go out with friends from work. I always order Grey Goose vodka. After a couple drinks, my tab with tip is around \$30. I really didn't care what I drink; Grey Goose just rolls off my tongue. I still go out, but ordering happy hour specials cut my bar tab in half. **Annual Savings \$750.** – S. Hanson, Reader
- The only reason I still have HBO, Showtime, Star and Cinemax is because I didn't cancel after the free trial expired. It costs me an additional \$40/month and I rarely watch those channels. I also have NetFlix. I kept NetFlix and cancelled the pay channels. **Annual Savings \$480.** – J. Hayes, Client

Coupons Hot, Clipping Not

Coupons can save a lot of money, but not everyone likes to clip. In the future we may not have to. There are now services that link coupons to loyalty cards or to personal PDA/cell phones eliminating paper clippings at checkout. The Wall Street Journal recently discussed this trend. http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123551425475363603.html?mod=most_emailled_day.

A few sites to get you started:

- Shortcuts.com is linked to the Kroger loyalty card
- Smartsources.com is linked to Giant Eagle
- CellFire.com has partnerships include Kroger and Hollywood Video and sends coupons to data network-enabled cell phones
- Coupons.com will soon launch electronic coupons linked to a number of chain store loyalty cards as well as a cell-phone based application

Before you jump on this bandwagon, I would like to remind you of advice I offered in the Houston Chronicle last year (<http://givinggrinch.blogspot.com/2008/10/welcome-houston-chronicle-readers.html>).

"Coupons are marketing messages. If you know what you are shopping for and you find a coupon to match that, then you worked the system, but if you get something unplanned because you had a coupon, the system worked you."

Another tip, a coupon does not guarantee you the best deal. Always scan the aisle for alternative.

Grammar Contest/Winner: Congrats to Meera Naehr of Houston, TX for being the first reader to submit two grammar errors from my February newsletter. Thank you for all who responded. **The first reader to find two or more errors from the March Newsletter will win a drink - a 2 oz pack of coffee!** Email me at with corrections, name and address: advice@givinggrinch.com.

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