

Waste not...

I hate to waste things.

My weekday lunches are leftovers, I wash and re-use plastic storage bags, and, when I see a paperclip on the floor here at the office, I pick it up and put it with its little friends, to be used later. I try not to waste anything.

I was raised in a waste-hating family. We were not poor, and I can't think of any time when I felt deprived, but money was never plentiful. My dad, a housepainter, was a well-known re-cycler long before it became cool, and we were amazed at the stuff he would bring home from his jobs. When I was in high school, we added a family room and a heated garage to our home. What might have been a costly extravagance in our neighborhood wasn't much of a problem for my dad. He traded painting work for the bricklayer's labor (my brother and I mixed and hauled the mortar), he installed the heating system himself, and he scavenged most of the wood used to build the addition. The ceiling in the family room was supported by beautiful, solid wood beams that he found (for free) at an old warehouse that was being demolished. I'm not sure how he got them to our house with our Chevy station wagon, but he managed somehow. I recall that he was one beam short to complete the ceiling, and he had to buy one at the lumber yard. It just about killed him to have to pay money for something.

Now, I'd like to say that I have never wasted money, but that would not be true. I have. I wrote in this magazine several years ago about my zany purchase of a party barge and the hole in the water into which I dumped several thousand dollars. That was, by far, my biggest waste of money, but it certainly wasn't the only one. What about yours?

I tell clients that I don't care if they spend all their money on potato chips and Cheez Whiz – or even a party barge – as long as they first save and invest 15 to 20% of their gross income. That might sound like a lot of money to set aside, and it is, but it's doable by most people. The secret is to get started, set it on auto-pilot, stay away from the silly stuff you see on the Internet, and then leave your hands off. I can't guarantee success, but I've seen it work enough times to know that it can.

If you would like to learn more about how this might work for you, call me for a complimentary discussion.

I won't waste your time.

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