

Friends Lead to Clients Lead to More Friends

by **Robert Alan Black, Ph.D., CSP**

What do Warmbad, South Africa; Daegu, South Korea; Columbo, Sri Lanka; St. John's, Mauritius and Toyoma, Japan have in common? For me, they are towns where I have developed lasting relationships—friendships—which in turn have led to very beneficial work, repetitive work in those towns and other countries.

The principles I use to develop the valuable aspects of my personal life have exploded my professional one: meet people, develop relationships that turn into lasting friendships and help your friends whenever you can. Some call it “Relationship Selling.” Because I detest “selling” and generally see myself as poor at it and detest people trying to “sell” me, I have focused on meeting new people with the purpose of developing friendships.

One morning at the Creative Education Foundation, I asked, “May I join you?” of a man about my age who was sitting alone. “Is this your first CPSI?” He expounded, “No, it is my second.”

We spent about 25 minutes talking and sharing experiences about the international creativity conference we were both attending. During our breakfast together, we laughed and shared many ideas.

“Where are you from?” I asked as I stood up to leave. “Istanbul,” he replied.

Because of his accentless, perfect American English, I expected him to say Chicago or somewhere else in the middle states of the US.

Two days later, he attended one of my “Creative Thinking Tools” sessions. Seeing him again in the group was like see-

ing a new friend again.

The last day, he stopped me in the hallway of the campus where the conference (about 1100 participants from 38 or so states, eight Canadian provinces and over 20 countries) was being held and asked, “Would you come to Istanbul to present at a conference I am putting together for next year?”

Being a professional speaker who loves to travel, especially internationally, I said, “Hmmm. I will need to check my schedule and think about it. Let me get back to you.” Hogwash! I immediately said, “Yes! Let me know as soon as you can about the dates.”

Since our breakfast that morning, I have traveled to Istanbul and around Turkey to help my new friend, Halim Ergunalp, five times: to present at four of his conferences and once just to say hello. After the second conference ended, another consultant friend and I were invited by Halim to join him to visit his hometown, Bursa, in the north central section of Turkey. Blair and I have often reminisced about the fantastic 30 hours we spent with our friend Halim, traveling through his country to his hometown to visit his family and spend a beautiful day in the mountains where he spent his childhood.

Relationships. Isn't that what life is all about?

*Since earning his CSP, **Robert Alan Black** has spent much of the last two years traveling the world and speaking on his expertise, Creativity. While he is traveling internationally, Alan can be reached through his web site: www.cre8ng.com.*

