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THE COMPETITIVE EDGE

By Sue Kendrick

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There's nothing quite like the thrill of being short listed, placed or winning a writing contest yet many writers quickly become discouraged by a total lack of feedback from the competition organisers.

All too often their entry seems to disappear into a literary black hole which not only swallows up their cash, but all details of the results, short list and winning entries!

Now before you start getting alarmed, most writing competitions advertised are above board and the main reason for the dearth of feedback is not dishonesty but disorganization.

A great many writing contests are run on a voluntary basis by secretaries of writing clubs who often have to fit this extra work load in with their other duties, not to mention the day job and demands of family so don't let's be too hard on them!

Even so, having sweated blood, chewed finger nails and teetered to the brink of divorce by spending long hours hunched over a flickering monitor, you do at least deserve some kind of feedback even if this is just a quick email notifying you that results are up on a website.

Unfortunately this is generally not the case. To be fair, most competitions do offer to post a result list if a s.a.e. is included with entry, but the technological age is now well established so there is really very little excuse for not giving a reasonable feed back service.

The good news is that there are a number of very good writing contests taking place on a regular basis that are fully aware of this problem and go out of their way to make results, judges reports and winning entries prominently available. As you would expect most of these tend to be web based or at least have a very active web presence.

Before we take a look at them, a word of warning! Don't get too carried away by the lure of big prizes! If you are not a regular winner, some form of feedback is what should take precedence since you need to know where you went wrong and what the judges were looking for.

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Here are a few questions to ask yourself when evaluating a particular competition.

Does the contest offer:

1. A postal result service. All competitions should offer this as a minimum as long as a s.a.e. is included.
2. Publish results together with the judge's report on a website. Not really much excuse for not doing this either. A very basic website will suffice and can be designed cheaply or for practically nothing by someone with a little technical ability.
3. Critique service. More and more contests are offering this as an optional extra. Most make an extra charge, but well worth the outlay if you are not getting the success you hoped for. (Check that whoever is doing the critiquing does have the necessary credentials).
4. Email results. Competitions who take on-line entries really have not excuse for not sending out full results and web links to the winning entries to every competitor that has entered this way.
5. Announcement date. If none of the above seem to be mentioned in the contest details and you still fancy your chances, look for a date when results will be available and contact the organiser for winners. If no date is included forget it. There are plenty of other competitions around that will give you better value for money. Here's a few to start you in the right direction.

The Battle of the Bards poetry contest is one that certainly puts you on your mettle as it doesn't reveal the lineage or the theme until the day of the competition. You then get just 24 hours to pen your missive! Feed back comes in the form of all entrants receiving a shortlisters and adjudicator's report, full results plus the top three entries are posted on the website.

http://www.writelink.co.uk/Competitions/Battle_of_the_Bards/battle_of_the_bards.html

The Weekender Challenge runs on similar lines except this is for fiction. Again the word count and theme are not revealed until the beginning of the contest but two days are allowed for this one. Past entries are archived on the site so you can get a good idea of the standard that you are up against. Feed back is a full results listing, shortlisters report and adjudicator's report which are also archived on the site and sent to every entrant.

http://www.writelink.co.uk/Competitions/Weekender_Challenge/weekender_challenge.html

Subscribing to some of the on-line writers ezines is definitely a good idea as these will often list on-line competitions which usually offer feed back.

WriteLink produces Competition News, a quarterly newsletter devoted to quality competition listings. This is free and includes full contact details which makes it handy for those shy of using on-line payment systems. You'll find the sign up box at the bottom of the Competition page.

<http://www.writelink.co.uk/Competitions/competitions.html>

First Writer has a very extensive database of writing contests which you can search by date and genre.

There is a small charge for this, but definitely worth it if you enter a lot of competitions and want to save time searching the web.

<http://www.firstwriter.com/>

Competitions Bulletin is a print magazine which is updated monthly. It's been running for a long time and again worth considering if you intend entering a lot of competitions.

http://www.cherrybite.co.uk/writers_comps/w-cinfo.html

Good luck and remember ...you can't win if you don't enter!

Sue Kendrick is a freelance writer and publisher of www.writelink.co.uk a writers' community dedicated to helping new and emerging writers published and paid for their work. www.writelink.co.uk

What Does It Take To Be An Entrepreneur?

By Gray Rollins

Over the years countless institutes and individuals have asked the million dollar question. What makes an entrepreneur an entrepreneur? What traits or characteristics are inherent to a successful entrepreneur and is one born with those traits? There's great news! Successful entrepreneurs are born every day!

Some people believe an entrepreneur is born while others believe an entrepreneur can be taught. Some believe an entrepreneur is like an artist – either you have it or do you don't. Some see entrepreneurs as leaders that are focused, disciplined, competitive, and charismatic, while others see them as huge risk takers. And all of these analogies are right to some degree.

It's true all successful entrepreneurs share a few qualities and skills that allow them to be successful. These inherent qualities can be taught; but they often seem to be an inherent driving force that sends individuals down the path of being in business or formally training to for a career in business.

Entrepreneurs see the world differently. They have the ability to see the world as a system. They have the ability to see something in its entirety and as an integrated unit, and they seem to possess the ability to see opportunity within the global picture. They are what is called a system thinker.

There are other characteristics they possess. Entrepreneurs possess an overpowering need to achieve and tend to be very competitive against themselves. They are continuously trying to outthink themselves and others and they are constantly looking for the edge. This is a process that occurs as naturally as breathing and is a driving force behind most entrepreneurs.

They have the determination and dedication to follow through with commitments and they always appear confident and in control. You'll notice they also possess a positive atmosphere. They are of the mindset "I can," and "I will." They are not afraid of failure because failure is not in their vocabulary nor is it an option.

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They are objective but have the ability to weigh risks realistically within the big picture. They have an uncanny ability to anticipate developments which gives them the edge on many competitive situations. Entrepreneurs seem to feel right from their gut, call it instinct. They are a resourceful group that possess excellent problem solving skills and are able to diligently work through obstacles as they occur.

Entrepreneurs are excellent communicators and recognize how important clear and concise communication is to their success. They also possess a sound working knowledge of the business they are involved in.

When it comes to successful entrepreneurs it's a question of what came first, the chicken or the egg. Is it inherent qualities that we are born with that lead us to be entrepreneurs or is it when we choose to become an entrepreneur that we develop the skills and qualities of success? That's a question we shall leave to the great debaters to resolve.

What is for certain is that successful entrepreneurs are born every day and that you too can be a

successful entrepreneur by developing the skills of success.

Gray Rollins is a featured writer for YourEntrepreneurs. To learn more about entrepreneurs, visit us at

and



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