

READINGS AS ENTERTAINMENT

By Richard Webster

I'd hate to think how many thousands of readings I've given over the years. For many years, I did full-length private readings, as well as brief, "fun" readings for entertainment purposes. I always found the private readings hard work. People only want a private reading when things are going wrong in their lives. Some people experience incredible problems, and expect the reader to provide all the answers. This can be incredibly draining. Readings for entertainment are a different matter entirely. In the space of a few minutes, usually at a party or corporate function, you tell people about themselves. They leave with a smile on their faces, and you're reimbursed handsomely for the privilege of making people happy. I love giving readings for entertainment purposes!

I also love the fact that providing readings for entertainment is a huge market, and very few people seek work in this area. This is probably because most people have no idea how to find this sort of work. Most real psychics that I know have no desire to pursue this market as they fail to see the potential of it. Also, as professional readers normally do lengthy readings, they have no idea how to do a three-minute, or perhaps five-minute, reading.

I learned the hard way that you cannot advertise readings as entertainment in the Yellow Pages or daily papers. People ignore the word "entertainment" and phone wanting full-length readings. Many years ago, a friend and I promoted "theatrical recreations of a traditional séance." We advertised these in the daily newspaper, and received hundreds of phone calls as a result. However, hardly any of the people who phoned wanted a reenactment of a traditional séance. They all wanted a real séance, so they could contact deceased relatives and loved ones. I could have made a fortune if I'd gone into that particular market.

In a way, I'm glad that you can't pick up work as a provider of readings for entertainment purposes by placing an ad or two. If it were that easy, every psychic in your market would be competing for the work. Fortunately, although it takes a bit of effort, particularly when you're starting out, it's easy to obtain work because what you are offering is different, slightly unusual, and fun.

I found this market totally by accident. An agent who occasionally booked me for mind reading and hypnotism shows asked me if I could do quick palmistry readings at a large corporate event. Naturally, I agreed. When I arrived at the event, I discovered several close-up magicians were there, too. We were all booked for two hours of table-hopping. I must admit that I felt envious of the magicians who were performing magic, while I was merely reading palms. However, once the two hours were up, the magicians were dismissed and I was kept on for another couple of hours.

I arrived home tired, but extremely happy. I'd had a great evening, and had discovered a whole new area of work. Within days, I'd prepared a flyer to advertise my services as a reader for corporate events, and posted it to every company I could think of who would be likely to use my services. I didn't deserve to get any work using this approach, as my letters were addressed to the company, rather than the person responsible for booking entertainment. Amazingly, this mailing did produce one booking. I learned from that experience, and started phoning different corporations, telling them what I did, and offering to send them my flyer. This produced much better results, as my mailings got to the right person, and he or she had already spoken to me on the phone.

Over the years, I've sold many things over the phone. It's easier than you might think. The very worst thing that can happen is the person you speak to will say, "No." At one time I offered stop smoking

sessions for companies. That was when I received the most “No” responses, and also the most abuse. If the person I spoke to happened to be a smoker, and didn’t like the idea of the company becoming smoke free, I’d receive an earful of abuse. However, it was worth persevering, as every “No” brought me closer to a “Yes.” I never received abuse selling readings for corporate events. However, I received my share of “No’s.” Sometimes the people I spoke to had religious objections to someone doing readings. Frequently, party planners arranged the company events. Sometimes, the entertainment budget had already been allocated. There are many reasons why people might say “No.”

I know people can get traumatized when they receive several “No”s in a row. When I worked as a hypnotherapist I saw many people suffering from call reluctance. I never had that problem. All I did was phone twelve people a day. I started at 9.00 A.M., and was always finished by 10.00 A.M. It made no difference to me what people said. I phoned my twelve prospects, and then stopped. You might choose to call six people, or twenty. It makes no difference, as long as you can handle it without stress. With twelve people a day, I spoke to sixty people a week, and almost three hundred a month. That’s more than three thousand people a year! I’d love to be in a market that provided me with three thousand leads. My market wasn’t large enough to provide three thousand prospects, but it was large enough to provide me with all the bookings I wanted.

I was working in this market long before emails and the Internet were in common use. A Web site is probably a good idea, as you can suggest that potential bookers look at it. They can see you are presentable, smartly dressed, well groomed, and look normal. This is a concern for people who are booking entertainment. You might have a calendar on your website, listing the dates you are available. You certainly should include many of the enthusiastic thank-you letters you’ll receive, especially the ones from well-known corporations. I wouldn’t use emails to try to sell my services. It’s too easy to click the delete button. I think they’d be even less effective than my postal mailings to corporations were.

Naturally, you’ll have to let all the agencies and party planners know what you’re doing, and provide them with flyers to send to prospective clients. Incidentally, I always gained many more bookings for this service from speaking bureaus than I ever did from entertainment agencies. I found with everything I did, that most of my work came as a result of my own marketing efforts. Agencies and party planners will find you work at the busy times, but if you want to work year round, you must use the phone.

You might think that the people you read for at a corporate event are not prospective future clients. This is not necessarily the case. Half of the attendees at most corporate parties will be partners of people who work at the company. Most of them won’t be in a position to book you directly, but they’ll talk about you when they return to their own jobs the next day. Consequently, you should have an attractive business card that describes you as a (say) “tarot card reader for corporate and private events.” You should not mention the word *psychic* on your business cards or flyers. People are happy to have entertainers at their functions, but are not nearly as enthusiastic about employing a psychic. You should sell yourself as a business person who does fun readings. In other words, you are a normal person, not some wacko psychic. Unless you also do private readings, you should mention on the card that you are not available for private readings. This will save you hours of time on the phone later when people phone you wanting a private reading.

When you are in a situation where you have to do as many quick readings as possible you are limited in the types of readings you can do. My personal favourite is palmistry, as you can give a reasonable reading in as little as three minutes. It would be hard to give a three-card Tarot reading in that time, though I must admit I can also do them pretty quickly now that I mix and deal the cards myself, rather than giving them to the client to mix. I tried quick astrology readings using a computer once, and it

didn't play particularly well in a party-type situation. Quick tic-tac-toe readings work well, but I got bored having to quickly explain the meanings of all the numbers before each reading. Flower readings can also be done quickly, but you need a supply of different types of flowers.

Once you are established in this market, you will receive a great deal of repeat business. I found it helpful to be able to offer different types of readings for repeat bookings. Usually, they did not require this, but I always mentioned it, just in case someone in the office said, "Don't book him again. He's read palms for the last five years in a row." If this happened, the booker could always say that they'd ask the reader to do the tarot this year.

The larger corporate functions, at least in my market, are in the two months leading up to Christmas. There would be a number of functions all year round, but before Christmas I'd be turning down three or four bookings for every one I accepted. On a couple of occasions, companies changed the dates of their Christmas parties so they could have me. That was highly flattering! One market niche that I particularly liked was reading for spouses and other partners at conventions. This was usually done during or after lunch, while the people attending the convention were in session. I enjoyed these for a number of reasons. They were almost always during the day, so I'd be home at night. They were more relaxed, as the people I was reading for had no interest in the convention, and simply wanted to be entertained. They were astonishingly lucrative. Sometimes I'd turn up for these and find only twelve people present, and I'd charged the client for, say, three hours' work.

On my card I mentioned that I was available for private events. This was never a major part of my work, but I'd usually pick up six or seven private parties a year. I'd get many more requests than that, but my fees were too high for most people. My view is that unless I get a really worthwhile fee, I'd rather stay at home with my family. For twenty years my wife and I didn't see a movie, as on the rare nights I wasn't working I wanted to stay at home. Also, you are appreciated much more when you charge a high fee. The other factor is you don't want to charge one fee for house parties and another for corporate events, as sooner or later someone will notice the difference.

I'd be remiss if I didn't discuss how exhausting it can be to read for three or four hours in a row. You need to ensure your contract specifies that you have a five-minute break every hour. In addition, I always took a sip or two of water between every reading. While doing that I'd take a few slow, deep breaths, and found this kept my energy levels up.

Usually, you will not be able to read for everyone who wants a reading. You'll even get people pleading for a reading as you're getting into your car to go home. It can be difficult to turn away people who've been waiting in line for possibly an hour to have a reading. I tried to resolve this by printing up a sign that said "last person." I'd give this to the person at the end of the line about forty-five minutes before I was due to finish. I'd tell that person to show the sign to anyone who tried to join the line, as I would not be able to read for them. This worked moderately well, but in situations when most of the people present know each other, the person at the end of the line would always let a few friends in ahead of her. Consequently, I created a set of cards numbered from one to twenty. I handed these out to the last twenty people in line. This ensured that extra people could not join the line. However, this didn't solve the problem of what to do with all the people who missed out on a reading.

Fortunately, Sheila Lyon, a wonderful reader at corporate events, came up with the answer. She provides group readings, and she and Mark Sherman, another excellent reader, have written a trilogy of books on the subject: *Gypsies Go Roving: Walk-about Palmistry and Fortune-Telling for Groups*; *The Book of Roving: Continuing Explorations in the Art of Walk-Around Palmistry and Mystery Performance*; and *Stand-Up Divination*. They are all well worth reading, and available from her at www.seattlesmarketmagic.com.

I hope this has given you some insight into the lucrative world of readings for entertainment. It can be exhausting work at times, but the pay is good, and the chances are you'll have no competition whatsoever.

This is one of a series of occasional essays produced by Richard Webster, 8 Napa Court, Shamrock Park, Manukau 2016, New Zealand (esp@psychic.co.nz).

This reprint of Richard Webster's essay courtesy of

Doug Dymont

www.deceptionary.com

