

insights

Q&A with About.com sweepstakes expert Sandra Grauschopf, Part One

The sweepstakes world can be pretty evenly divided into two parts: The companies sponsoring sweepstakes, and the consumers who participate in them. Rarely do you have someone with a foot in both worlds, but [Sandra Grauschopf](#) does just that.

Based in Washington, D.C., Sandra consults with companies across the country on their sweepstakes strategies. She also manages [About.com's highly popular Contests & Sweepstakes website](#) and [forum](#), where avid sweepstakes entrants flock to learn about new promotions, swap tips, and commiserate about their biggest sweepstakes gripes.

Sandra has studied and written about nearly every aspect of sweepstakes for more than 10 years, so I was thrilled when she agreed to do a Q&A session with us. Her insights are particularly helpful for all companies striving to create effective, well-received contests and sweepstakes.

In the first portion of our exclusive three-part interview, Sandra explains how she got into “sweeping,” what appeals to her about certain promotions, and the most unique – and pungent – prize she’s ever seen for a sweepstakes.

How did you first get into sweepstakes and contests? What do you like best about “sweeping”?

Years back, a friend of mine asked me if I ever entered sweepstakes. “Aren’t those all scams?” I replied. But just for fun, I entered a handful of sweepstakes to see what would happen. And I actually won! My first prize was a game for a Nintendo DS, which was totally useless to me at the time, since I didn’t own the gaming system. But a few months later, I won the Nintendo DS to go with the game.

What I like best about sweepstakes is the potential that at any moment, I could get a letter, e-mail, or phone call with a life-changing prize. It makes checking my mail so much fun to know that there could be a big gift card in there, or even an affidavit for a huge prize. It’s so exciting.

What have been some of your best sweepstakes or contest winnings?

Some of the biggest prizes I’ve won included a shopping spree for a suite of furniture from Cargo Kids, three huge boxes of toys from Toys“R”Us, a shopping spree for Prada shoes from an exclusive boutique in New York City, and a \$1,000 cash card that paid for a fun vacation. But I’ve had smaller prizes that have been very exciting, too, like the Xbox I won many years ago that got me hooked on console gaming. I’m now a big fan, and I probably would never have bought a game console on my own.

What are some of the more innovative promotions you’ve seen over the years?

I was really excited when I saw the first [Pinterest sweepstakes](#), where companies encouraged fans to pin their products for the chance to win prizes. I thought it was such a smart way to get Pinterest buzz. Now a lot of companies are doing it.

I also love the HGTV Dream Home Sweepstakes, where they build a home and show off their design abilities on television, and then give the home away.

I really admire sweepstakes like those two, which are intelligently designed to achieve the company’s goals while making entering fun and exciting for sweepstakes fans.

What is the most unique or strangest prize you’ve ever seen advertised in a sweepstakes?



Deer urine. No kidding. Apparently, hunters use it to mask their scent. It was a very good example of a company tailoring a prize to suit their target audience, because I don't think anyone who wasn't a hunter would have wanted to get it!

Check back tomorrow [for our next post](#), where Sandra will detail the top frustrations and complaints she hears from her community of sweepstakes entrants.

This post was written by retired Thompson Coburn partner Dale Joerling. If you have any questions about the topics discussed in this post, please contact Thompson Coburn partner [Hap Burke](#).

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