

FUNCTIONAL, FASHIONABLE

To Rush Not, With Love

Marin Rose



If you haven't sent out your annual holiday cards, don't fret. Just in time for the winter holidays, I've composed this reminder of the true reason for season's greetings that might save you time, money and a lot of stress this month.

Ready? Here goes...

It's not about you. From selecting stationery and adorable photos of your kids to remembering all of the fun you had in 2013, it's easy to forget that holiday greetings are for the recipients, not for the sender.

Think about the cards you've received over the years. Which of the many were you most glad to receive? Which do you remember best or, perhaps, still possess? They're not necessarily the most elegant or the most impressively crafted, I bet. Nor are they informal family newsletters boasting about baby's first steps or junior's new car, and covered in sun-drenched vacation photos. They're not from your car dealer, accountant or web design company.

No, because the value of the cards we receive lies in the message they carry.

What message do you hope to communicate to the people on your mailing list? It should have nothing to do with your success, your activities or your appearance. Rather, it should convey your interest in the experiences of the recipients and your appreciation for their presence in your life.

One way to spare yourself the time, trouble and expense of sending holiday cards: don't. It sounds drastic but this is an activity that you can safely cross off your expanding task list. Friends and family are unlikely to notice, let alone care, when January rolls around with no mailed missive from you. Try making a more meaningful connection with the loved ones in your life by picking up the phone instead. A phone call is thoughtful and personal, and provides an opportunity for both parties to deepen the relationship through direct conversation. It also saves you time in line at the post office, 40-odd cents

for a stamp and the painful writer's block that overcomes even the most verbose writer after the 50th note or so.

Another advantage of using the phone rather than the mail is that you'll probably only call those with whom you have an ongoing relationship. So if Christmas just won't be Christmas for you without the obligatory holiday card mailing, double-check your sincerity by sending cards only to people who you would consider calling on the phone. Chances are, your neighbor from 20 years ago with whom you have not spoken since has no interest in reading "a year in the life" of you. As a general rule, if you aren't comfortable calling, then don't send a card.

That said, a personal note, even from a distant friend, is almost always welcome. So if you are inclined to reach out to that former neighbor, make sure it's personalized, sincere and focused primarily on your kind thoughts toward him, rather than on you.

Another way to shrink your mailing list to a manageable size is to ask yourself: would I be interested in hearing from this person? Send cards only to those from whom you'd be happy to receive a card and send only messages that you would be happy to receive.

Remembering that season's greetings are for the joy of the recipient might prompt you to reconsider that holiday newsletter — with its time-consuming composition, costly printing and expensive mass mailing — in favor of sincere, hand-written messages for those whose lives enrich your own. Even a thoughtful,

personalized e-mail is preferable to a me-centered paper card.

Still feeling rushed to get those notes out? Don't. The beauty of sincere, thoughtful correspondence is that it doesn't expire. The holidays serve as a gentle reminder to appreciate the good people in our lives but there's no reason to stress out over artificial deadlines. In an already busy season; remember that any day is a great day to reach out. Doing so in your own time takes the burden out of the task and, after all, quality is so much more meaningful than timing.

Questions for Marin? Send inquiries to functionalfashionable@gmail.com.

Marin Rose owns and operates Functional, Fashionable, a professional organizing, decorating and home staging company that also provides relocation services and Masters rental preparation assistance. For more information, visit functionalfashionable.com.



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