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Columnist

Professional Development

Art motivates life

During the Christmas and New Year's holidays I took a vacation from work and saw a lot of movies with my brother Tom, his girlfriend Julie, and my friend Linda.

We know art imitates life and sometimes vice-versa. So as not to feel as if I'd "wasted" my time by being "only" entertained, I've been pondering the messages in each of the movies I saw to see how they could motivate me in my work and life. Here's what I learned.

King Kong. Some people will do almost anything for money and/or fame. Jack Black's character, Carl Denham, lacked integrity in his business dealings and as a result many died, including one of God's most magnificent creatures. And Carl lost not only his fortune, but also the good name he was building. When he said at the end of the movie, "T'was beauty killed the beast," I thought, "No, it was you for bringing him here in the first place." Moral: When we violate the laws of nature, we suffer and cause others to suffer, too.

Memoirs of a Geisha. Success is shallow if we're unhappy with our job or career. The human spirit longs for freedom and we must follow our hearts to be fulfilled. Moral: To thine own self be true.

The Chronicles of Narnia. This allegory on the life of Christ looks at some of the spiritual values He taught. It's a classic look at the battle between good and evil – the desire for spiritual power vs. earthly power. Moral: When we put our attention on serving others rather than our own gain, we will win in business and in life.

Fun with Dick and Jane. A comedic look at corporate greed and the suffering of its victims. Dick and Jane lose everything and turn to a life of crime to get their "things" back. But it brings them unhappiness. They get their lives back only when they recover the money for the company's disenfranchised employees. Humorous in its presentation, but happens for real far too often in today's corporate culture. Moral: Crime doesn't pay.

Munich. Hard to relate to everyday life, but shows us that fighting fire with fire only begets more, in this case, terrorism. No matter whose side is "right" or "wrong,"

operating from fear and hatred brings misery to all involved. Moral: It's best for our own souls to forgive our enemies and move on.

Walk the Line. This biodrama of Johnny Cash's life shows us once again that fame and fortune don't bring happiness if we're not living in integrity. Only when Cash got off drugs and began taking care of himself did he achieve true success and happiness. Moral: Inner strength brings outward success.

The Producers The quintessential story of greed and its destructive results. This film is so funny, though, we don't mind the underhanded dealings of Bialystock and Bloom. I will say I'm glad they went to prison and glad they got out to achieve Broadway success. Moral: Cheaters never win until they stop cheating. (At least I assume they did.)

Casanova. A delightful farce about cheating of another sort. Casanova was obviously a good salesman and provided a service to others. But he lacked the follow-through to keep his "customers" happy. He gave up his nefarious ways when he learned to respect himself and others. (Well, okay, also when he fell in love.) Moral: Everyone deserves our respect and unconditional positive regard.

All of these movies had elements of the disastrous effects of misused power, greed, and in some cases revenge. These themes make great fodder for entertainment, but never lead to a productive life or career. All of the characters had one quality I admire (even the evil ones): The passion to succeed.

My favorite among these films: *The Producers.*

Have a productive and prosperous New Year!

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