

Stupid Credit Card Tricks

There has been an ongoing skit on the David Letterman Show called "Stupid Pet Tricks". It was an aptly named bit because the things people teach their pets to do are truly silly. Letterman did so well with that skit, he followed it up with another series called "Stupid People Tricks." Well, when it comes to the dozens of credit card offers that you get in your mailbox every week, you might think that some of these credit card companies would like to be on the next series called "Stupid Credit Card Tricks".

These promotions that you get for credit cards seem to be playing on just about every tactic they can find to get you to take out yet one more credit card. You would think that the fact that credit card debt is a virtual epidemic in this country would let the credit card companies know that its time to get on the side of the consumer to learn responsible use of credit. Instead they do all they can to get you to have more, not less, credit cards and use them as much as you can.

We need to be smart consumers because as much as credit card companies try to make credit cards seem fun and happy and like big toys in your wallet, they are not toys. We should never forget that a credit card is nothing more than a way for the credit company to extend to you dozens of small unsecured loans that they will create credit payments on the fly to enforce through your credit card bill that will include high interest rates and additional fees as they see fit.

This is not to say that having a credit card is not a good thing. Good credit is one of the real assets any responsible adult will use to help make life easier and to make the necessary purchases in life. And more and more credit is becoming the currency of choice replacing cash and checks as the preferred method for paying for gas, at restaurants and any more even at retail outlets and grocery stores.

While the spread of credit as actual currency is a fact of life for us, it is also a major move by the credit card companies to take over the economy and to make you even more dependent on them. So the best defense is to take charge of your credit card life and make sure that you are the boss of your credit cards, not the other way around.

The stupid credit card tricks can be really fun to look at and sometimes enticing. They will appeal to your sense of school pride by giving you a credit card in your college school colors. You can get credit cards that give donations to save the environment, help the poor or create a college fund for your kids. There are all kinds of premiums, cash back concepts, frequent flier

miles and gifts and toys that credit card companies will fork over just to lure you into getting more credit cards and using them a lot.

To put it bluntly, you and I need to learn not to be suckers for these deals. We can laugh at the stupid tricks they try to use. But if a credit card company is going to try to trick you into getting a card or using one, they are not doing business honestly with you. You want a credit card company that deals straight with you. They should offer fair rates that don't change at the drop of a hat. They should sustain a reasonable credit limit and not always be jacking it up to try to get you to buy more stuff on the card. And they should have good customer service and be ready to renegotiate your relationship with them so you are getting good value from their service, not just paying for a bunch of toys and frills that do you no good whatsoever.

By keeping in mind what a credit card company actually does and that credit cards are mature adult tools, not games or toys, we can keep in perspective how to use our credit cards and how to keep from abusing credit which will lead to the nightmare of credit card debt.

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