

Opinion: Spending choices often reflect values

By Carl Richards, New York Times

I have a crazy idea I want to run by you. Imagine that a cultural anthropologist finds one of your credit card statements in 100 years. What would your spending suggest you value the most? Based on your spending, what assumptions might someone make about how you live your life?

Our credit card statements (really, any financial statement) reveal a lot about what we care about. They are unintentional personal manifestoes. In stark detail, these statements lay out how we spend our money and our time. As a result, we end up with a clear picture of what we value versus what we say we value.

For instance, my top priorities are spending time with my family and serving in my community. In theory, every decision I make, every action I take, should be about meeting those priorities. But sometimes, my statements show I have made other things a priority. I get distracted.

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