

Unlock the Power of Gratitude: Strengthen Your Business Relationships Today!

Most of us learn at an early age that it's polite to thank others for the kindnesses they extend to us. Saying "please" and "thank you" becomes routine. And while gratitude is always a good thing, I think it's essential that we regularly remind ourselves of the impact that expressing gratitude can have on the people around us.

This is especially true as we become more successful at work or gain influence in our position. It's far too easy to overlook the people and events that have allowed us to get to where we are today.

And our appreciation for the help we've received from others should be intentional rather than routine.

November of 2004 is when I first addressed the subject of gratefulness and how it works to make us more effective leaders. I wrote about how gratefulness leads to loyalty, which leads to submission, which leads to humility, which finally leads to promotion. In other words, when we realize that the world doesn't revolve around us, we become the kind of person those around us want to champion.

In the spirit of intentionally showing appreciation, I'd like to share with you some examples of gratitude.



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 VIOLAND

CTO—Chief Thanking Officer

At a recent annual meeting of the homeowners' association for my community, the president mentioned that one of the most important elements of his job is to be the Chief Thanking Officer. He knows that it is only through the efforts of the other board members and the considerable number of volunteer hours from committee members and homeowners that he is able to perform his job properly. I know the president well enough to know that annual meetings are not the only times when he expresses his gratitude to the folks in our community, and it's always appreciated—so much so that he was rewarded by being re-elected for another term.

Gratitude as a sales strategy

It's no secret that most small business owners don't view themselves as the chief salesperson for their company. The thought of knocking on doors to promote their products or services causes many to break out in a cold sweat or fall into a litany of excuses as to why right now is a bad time to call on people—even those with whom they're already doing business.

The next time you're planning to visit an existing customer, try this: visit them with the intent of expressing how much you appreciate their business. Then ask what you can do to improve the service you're providing. I think you could build a case that doing this is a differentiator for your company. After all, how many of your competitors visit their customers to thank them for their business? As your company grows, being smart enough to perform your job well, knowing how to build a better mousetrap than your competitors, or consistently delivering a higher level of service, becomes table stakes in sustaining your company. It's the relationships you develop with others, both within your company and outside of it, that create long-term success. And one of the cornerstones of building relationships is being intentional in letting people know how much you appreciate them. In addition to the obvious benefits that expressing gratitude brings not only to the recipient but also to the sender, there are more subtle benefits that can contribute to business success as well. Here are just a few.

Gratitude as a retention tool

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing businesses today, especially small businesses, is attracting and keeping a committed workforce. Millions of dollars and countless hours have been spent conducting interviews with people to see what motivates them and keeps them engaged at work. Near the top of every one of these lists is that people want to feel appreciated.

This doesn't mean we need to pass out gold stars for showing up to work or pin medals on people for doing a great job. These lose their meaning if we don't first take care of the basics like saying thank you, paying attention to people, letting them know they matter, or just simply being available to listen.

Gratitude as an ego antidote

Over the years, I've filled quite a few pages writing about the negative impact an over-active ego has on a business. It's destructive and avoidable. Just like our individual attitudes, our egos are something only we can control. Showing gratitude to others is a wonderful way for us to do that in our personal and business lives. It impacts everyone around us.

The Arbinger Institute is a global training and consulting firm that helps individuals and organizations achieve breakthrough results by shifting from a self-focus to an others-inclusive focus. In their work they cite Neel Burton, MD who writes, "By turning us outward, gratitude shifts our focus from what we lack or strive for to what we already have, opening our eyes to the bounty that is life, something to marvel at, revel in, and celebrate rather than forget, ignore, or take for granted as it flies us by."

Thank You

Gratitude as a sleep aid

The connection between getting a good night's sleep and maintaining good health is inarguable. Sleep deprivation can weaken our immune system, increase blood pressure, affect our ability to concentrate or think clearly, and the granddaddy of them all—we're often grumpier.

Neuroscientist and psychologist Dr. Tamsin Astor suggests that developing a habit of gratefulness at the end of each day can be a powerful sleep aid. And this doesn't need to be complicated. A few quiet moments to reflect on the blessings in your life will help to quiet the mind ... and the soul.

So, the evidence is in, and it's undeniable. The simple act of showing gratitude to others for the contributions they've made to your organization or to your life is a fundamental step in becoming the kind of person others want to be around.

We can complicate the subject of leadership development by reading all the latest books or watching endless videos on the subject. Or we can simplify it with two simple words: thank you. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm long overdue for intentionally letting some people know how much I appreciate them and the impact they've had on my life.

Chuck Violand is the founder of Violand Management Associates (VMA), a highly respected consulting company in the restoration and cleaning industries. Through VMA, he works with business owners and companies to develop their people and profits.

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