



Thank You Very Much

I am a fan of Amanda Gore and I was recently reminded of her claim that the one thing that human beings want more than anything else is recognition and acknowledgment. I would prefer to sum it up in a single word: Appreciation. Now whether or not you believe that people crave appreciation more than anything I'm sure that all readers would agree that it is important. But I wonder how much appreciation is actually demonstrated, day to day, in your business? I also wonder how diverse your "thank you" messages are and how many different ways that they are expressed.

Let's start with basics and remind ourselves that appreciation can be expressed in many forms, not just face-to face. There are plenty of occasions when appreciation can be delivered by telephone or email. It can also be expressed in letters and hand-written cards. Yes, even in the 21st century! Often it might be reinforced by a gift or another symbol. There might also be occasions when that "thank you" might be expressed publicly or shared widely. As a final reminder, spoken gratitude can be reinforced by non-verbal gestures – a smile, a handshake, a pat on the back. Are you using all of the methods at your disposal to demonstrate your appreciation?

Let's now think about who deserves your appreciation as you wouldn't want to forget anyone. I propose three categories of people in this context:

1. Clients

I'm sure that you appreciate your clients but when do you express that to them? Here are a few possibilities:

- When they sign up as a new client
- When they refer new clients to you
- When they pay their fees
- When they renew for another year
- When they reach a milestone in your relationship, say 10 years of service

I am not suggesting that all of these are necessary. It's just a checklist. But if you don't do any of these then your clients may feel that they are being taken for granted.



2. Staff

Similarly, I'm sure that you appreciate all of the members of your team but how often do you remember to tell them? It's fascinating to observe different patterns of behaviour in businesses when it comes to acknowledging people:

- Some people only recognise "one-off" efforts, whether those efforts be reflected in additional hours or a special value add.
- Some people rely on calendar-driven recognition such as birthdays, Christmas, salary reviews or 30 June.
- Some people are triggered by the behaviour of others in that they pass on compliments when good work is reported by clients or other team members.
- Some people prefer to recognise individuals whilst others praise entire teams.

All of these may have their place in your business. I would like to provoke some reflection on what works for you – and what may be missing.

3. Business Networks

There are many other people that you deal with in the course of your business activity that may warrant occasional (or regular) expressions of thanks:

- Your centres of influence and sources of new clients
- The professional experts that you work with (eg Tax specialists, lawyers)
- The people in the institutions that you work with (eg Underwriters, BDMs)
- Your suppliers, such as the people who prepare your accounts or IT

They might not all deserve your appreciation but I would like to encourage conscious thought about appreciation rather than rely on old habits.

These are the best of times to express genuine appreciation – in many different ways and to many different people. Thank you very much for reading....