

ARE YOU *REALLY* TOO BUSY TO WRITE A THANK-YOU NOTE?

No one is ever too important or too busy to say “thank you!” Yet, I am continually surprised at how few thank-you notes are sent these days. In this day of “high tech,” the writing of thank-you notes seems the most nearly effortless means to attain the “high touch” we so dearly need as balance.

The handwritten thank-you note is a modest action that not only shares a sentiment of gratitude, but also equally engages its sender as it reinforces kind or helpful actions. It does not matter who we are or how small the action or service, we all appreciate acknowledgment for our efforts.

A while back I returned from a business trip to Kansas where I delivered a customized training program to a large, multi-location CPA firm. The topic I addressed was client service, developing the “personal touch.”

During the sessions I introduced what I believed to be a rather obvious possibility, using the firm’s own attractive, personalized note cards to acknowledge clients and others. Over 50% of this large staff were unaware of the availability of the cards! I suggested that at the end of each day each employee review their conversations with clients and write thank-yous where indicated. This would demonstrate that the needs and concerns of the client had been duly noted, understood and appreciated. Isn’t this what active listening means—truly hearing what a person is saying?

If you really want to “knock the socks off” a client, prospective client or friend, attach an article you have read that target an interest of theirs. Further, keeping scissors handy as you read the morning paper will remind you to clip articles or photos of clients or prospects. Attaching these to your personal letterhead or your company’s, or sending a fax with a brief congratulation from you will speak volumes. I practiced this as part of my regular routine when I was in private banking. Today it is habit.

I also ask friends and colleagues to mail me articles they know I would find interesting. One of my friends once sent an article she saw in Fortune magazine on customer service. After sending off a delighted thank-you, I copied and mailed the article to a prospective client, just to touch base about a conversation we had had on customer service training. I got business from them and a thank-you!

THE POWER OF PERSONAL TOUCH

I believe there is a distinct correlation between the time we give the little thank-you note and the amount of business we receive. When we give this courtesy, the returns continue to manifest.

I remember years ago when I started selling real estate. I had just moved to a large metropolitan area where I had only one friend. Unfortunately, she did not own a home! I not only worked hard seven days a week to build my business, but I used the company-provided note cards and stamps to connect with local homeowners. I wrote short two to

three word sentences, like “The new brick trim on the front of your house looks great and adds drive-by presence and value. Call me for a free appraisal! Thank you.” Of course, I always responded to walk-ins at Sunday open houses by sending a follow-up thank-you. My business grew quickly and dramatically; part of which I attribute to simple courtesies.

Let me end by thanking my mother who worked hard to instill in me the values by which I live. Among her teachings I particularly remember is her dictum, “Never take gifts or thoughtful actions by others for granted.” I think back to the time I sat at the family desk trying to write unique and personal thank-you notes for my eighth grade graduation gifts. It was difficult to individualize each note, but the effect of both the writing and the actual mailing of those cards gave me such a lift and sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. Have you ever noticed how good it feels when you receive one of these personalized notes? Sending them feels even better!

Why not make a promise to yourself: try my end-of-the-day ritual for one month to determine the impact of a short, handwritten thank-you -- and thank you for taking time to read this article.

QUICK TIPS

- It doesn't matter who we are or how small the action or service, we all appreciate acknowledgment for our efforts.
- At the end of each day, review your conversations with your clients/customers and write a thank-you note.
- Keep your eyes and scissors focused on articles your clients/customers or prospects might be interested in and attach a note or send a fax to touch base.
- Practice simple courtesies. No one is ever too important or too busy to send a note to say “thank you!”

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