

Holidays are the “thankful season”. From Veteran’s Day through New Year’s we tend to be cognizant of all the things we are thankful for. However, saying "Thanks" to others, especially in the workplace, may not be on your list. Consider these disappointing statistics from a study at Berkeley:

- Only 30% of employees thank co-workers multiple times a week
- Only 20% thank their boss several times a week
- 29% never thank a co-worker
- 35% never thank a boss

If those statistics aren't surprising enough for you, reflect on what Sue Shellenbarger wrote in a Wall Street Journal about a survey conducted for the John Templeton Foundation:

- The workplace ranks last among the places people express gratitude, from homes and neighborhoods to places of worship
- Only 10% of adults say thank you to a colleague each day
- Only 7% express gratitude to a boss each day
- A salesperson or mail carrier is more likely to get a "Thank You" than a coworker

And yet, we all know the impact of someone expressing genuine appreciation for our efforts. The reasons for not expressing gratitude range from being too busy to not knowing how to do it tactfully to fear of being seen as a "suck up."

Expressing thanks is a learned skill. The desire to learn the skill has to first grow from a heart of gratitude, recognizing that we don't achieve success without the help of others. Consider the old saying, “If you aren't giving back, you are a thief. Others helped get you where you are and you need to do the same.” That starts with saying thanks.

To get started having a stronger "attitude of gratitude" in the workplace (and our homes), here are a few suggestions:

Saying Thanks To Coworkers

- Be specific with your thanks. Use phrases like, "I really appreciate the way you ____" or "It was so helpful to me when you ____." Being general makes the praise lose its meaning and may seem like you are getting ready to ask for something.
- Make it personal. This includes telling them how their efforts have specifically benefited you, reduced your stress, or improved your performance. And nothing beats a genuine



face to face "thanks." Looking them in the eye and saying it has more impact than you might imagine. However, writing a personal thank you card or email is also acceptable.

- Put your gratitude into action even before saying thanks. Do something of specific benefit to them as a way of saying thanks.

Saying Thanks To Your Boss

- The right words, spoken in the right moment, will go farther than any gift you can give. If you can't speak to them personally, write a note. Many managers and leaders tell of their "file" where they keep cards and notes from employees. They speak of opening the file when they are discouraged or needing to refocus on what's important about their job.
- Be specific to how their action was of benefit to your professional growth and/or success in your job.
- Keep it short. Sharing thanks can be a very emotional experience. A few words, wisely chosen, will let your boss know your sincere gratitude.

Saying Thanks To Your Employees

- Make it about you. Letting the person know how their actions were of help to you in your role as a leader or manager is critical. Your personal approval of their efforts is critical. Letting them know how their work is contributing to the success of the organization is important too, but what carries more weight is how much they have your approval.
- Be specific. Avoid saying, "Thanks for your work today". Identify more specific things for which to be grateful. It might be something as simple as getting that spreadsheet before you were ready to review it or taking an extra 10 minutes to find the right hotel for a trip.
- Make it about them. Recognizing their interests, passions, or values in your thanks is important. Saying, "I know you value honesty, and it meant so much when you were willing to admit..." goes a long way in telling that employee you see them as more than just a warm body available to get work done. If you are giving gifts as a way of saying thanks, think about what their interests are, not what you want them to have.

There is a long way to go to improve the culture of gratitude for the efforts of others in the workplace. Changing behaviors now is easier than ever because it is the season of expressing gratitude.

Silent gratitude isn't much use to anyone. -G.B. Stern

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