

This Thanksgiving, thank your employees

by Connie Brubaker

Thanksgiving Day in America is a time to offer thanks, a time for family gatherings and holiday meals. It's a time of turkeys, stuffing and pumpkin pie. It's a time for Indian corn, holiday parades and football games.



Connie's Comments

But the underlying theme of Thanksgiving isn't uniquely American. Throughout history, nearly every culture has celebrated the harvest with ceremonies of thanks — and relief. And why shouldn't

they? A poor harvest meant a hungry winter, after all.

Granted, most of us these days aren't dependent on our own agricultural efforts (a good thing, given the fate of most of our vegetable gardens). But we are dependent on our customers and employees. Our harvest — in the form of profits — are the result of their efforts. So during this season, it's a good time to remember the source of our prosperity with an appropriate show of thanks.

With that in mind, have you expressed gratitude to your employees lately, other than in the form of a paycheck? In my experience, the best "thank you" comes in the form of appreciation, recognition and rewards.

During *The Customer* training that I deliver, we use *Caught You Doing Something Right* cards. Employees and managers complete cards recognizing co-workers and bring them to the sessions,

where the employees are publicly recognized. One company, Realty World, went one step further by recognizing an "employee of the week" each week of the nine-week course. The recipient was cheered, applauded and given a gift.

Another company I worked with had 50 people in training who didn't usually interact with each other on a daily basis outside our training. During the small group-oriented training sessions, though, the employees had the opportunity to learn who was really applying our customer service principals. At the end of each of the eight sessions, each table selected one person for a "book award." As a result, the workplace environment became charged with enthusiasm and positive attitude.

I've seen it time and again: when employees feel that their contributions have meaning and make a difference within the organization, they are more committed to their jobs.

The Herbal Life Company in their Reward of Excellent program uses WOW! cards to encourage employees to jot a thank you notes or praise to any other employee for service, teamwork, etc. The cards are divided in two: one part goes right to the employee and the second is deposited into a recognition box that is reviewed monthly by six volunteer members of a recognition committee. The committee then selects the most WOW!-worthy employee each month, posts their name on a WOW! bulletin board, and awards them extra points toward merchandise purchases as well as extra tickets for a cruise drawing held at the end of six months. The

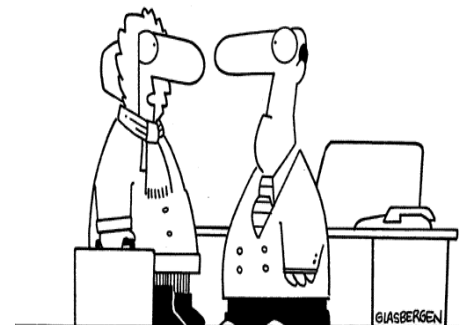
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3 ways to say "thank you"

Verbally — Take the time to tell your employees (or customers, for that matter) something positive. Praise them for specific actions, and let them know how much their contribution is appreciated by you personally and the company at large.

In writing — Whether it's an email or a card, the written word carries a special weight. It's even better if it's something the recipient can display or read repeatedly.

With a gift — Prizes and awards can be a terrific motivator. But so is the unexpected gift, the one given out of the blue for a job well done. That kind of consideration goes a long way, even if the gift itself is inexpensive.



"I have a confession. I skipped Sales Training the day they taught us how to make cold calls."

Thanking the people behind your success

continued from page 1

word-of-mouth excitement generated by such an innovative policy has proven a far better incentive for employees to work hard and conscientiously than any number of rigid corporate policies, generic announcements or ho-hum Human Resources initiatives.

The WOW! program has worked wonders, but you don't have to implement something as elaborate to see similar morale-boosting benefits. Just take the time to write a card, or give out a gift certificate for a local restaurant. More than anything else, people just want to feel appreciated.

The small things really do count. Take the time this month to show your appreciation to your team for their hard work. Even better, give them a reward. It can be tickets to a show, a turkey, an extended lunch hour — anything, really, as long as it shows how much you care and how thankful you are for their efforts.

Key Elements of Good Communication

- Trust and respect
- Listening
- No ego
- Shared goals and values
- No hidden agenda
- Honesty and truthfulness
- No fear
- Directness and openness

Can “success support groups” help your business?

It's no secret that the team approach is as applicable in business as it is in athletics. Productive companies understand that people are at their best when working synergistically — when their combined efforts are greater than if each worked towards the goal separately.

One way of sparking that synergy is to create “success support groups.”

The formula is simple: organize employees in small discussion groups that meet an hour or so each week. Their goal might be to review a business self-help book or to recommend some quality-improvement action.

Each group should elect a leader

whose responsibility it is to involve all the members and encourages their personal and professional growth.

The meetings themselves should offer a totally positive environment that discourages criticism and arguments, and gives participants the opportunity to solve real problems with innovative solutions.

Try it in your company. Within three to four weeks, you'll see visible growth among your employees — and that will translate into greater employee job satisfaction, a more motivated workforce, better customer service and happier customers.

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**Integrity
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In this issue of SOLUTIONS:
• Thanking your employees.
• Using success support groups for better productivity.
• The keys to good communication.

Building People, Productivity and Profits through Integrity