

Stop Being in a Hurry and Say 'Thanks' Once in Awhile

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When is the last time you went home at the end of the day and said, "I am so tired of being appreciated. I don't think I can take one more pat on the back"? Unfortunately, probably less than 1 percent of the working population ever has uttered those words. It's more common to hear people complaining about not feeling validated and recognized for their accomplishments.

Maybe it's time to install an appreciation and recognition process at your sales organization in order to create better sales cultures and enduring business relationships. Start by asking two important questions:

- Is recognition and appreciation on everyone's daily to-do list? Is it a key performance metric for success at your sales organization?

There's an old saying that you can't give away something you don't have. How can we expect our sales team and colleagues to show appreciation to customers when they're not receiving enough of it themselves?

- Are we walking the talk?

Motivational posters are plastered on office walls, citing the value of appreciation. Books are written about the power of gratitude. The reality is that it's easy to find a nail and hang up a piece of motivational art. Like most things in business; execution is the toughest part.

Let's see how you can install an appreciation system at your sales organization.

(1) Call one customer a day and thank them for their business.

Don't up sell, cross sell or sell. Just let them know that you realize they have a lot of places to do business and you appreciate the fact they chose you and your company.

Or write a thank-you note — not a thank-you email. Get a stamp, pen and note card, and take two minutes to say thanks.

Nido Qubein, chairman of the Great Harvest Bread Co. and president of High Point University, makes it a habit to write five personal notes every day. Qubein came to this

country with \$50 in his pocket and little knowledge of the English language. Recognition and appreciation has been and part of his formula for success.

(2) Thank your peers.

John Wooden, the legendary basketball coach said, "It takes 11 hands to make a basket." Wooden was a huge proponent of teamwork. He knew there were a lot of things involved in winning a game, besides the one or two superstars on the court. The guy sitting on the bench was invaluable to the team because he helped the starting players practice new skills and plays. The player that gave the assist was as important as the guy that put the ball through the hoop.

Business isn't a solo act. It takes a sales village to win. Sure, the sales team brings revenue in the door. But there are many departments that help with the delivery, installment and service after the sale.

Take a stroll through the accounting department and thank them for paying bills and sending invoices. Visit the warehouse and tell the crew thanks for shipping the products you sold. Thank your CEO or sales manager for their hard work and leadership.

(3) Thank your mentors.

These are the folks that gave you time and expertise without expecting anything in return. This is the person that saw potential in you that you didn't see in yourself. A mentor is the person that assured you that there was life after failure.

Think about all the great teachers you've had in life. Some may have the official title of teacher; others may not. Reflect on how that person made a difference in your life. Then, get out your pen and write a thank-you note.

(4) Focus.

When you get ready to thank or recognize someone, be fully present. Take a few minutes to stop, turn off the technology and focus on one thing: thanking and showing appreciation to the recipient.

(5) Be specific.

Michael Allosso, communications expert and leadership coach, teaches that most of us need to be more specific when giving praise or recognition.

For example, a sales manager can be well-intentioned by showing recognition and appreciation to a salesperson by saying, "You did a nice job on that call." Recognition really lands with the salesperson when you get specific and say, "You did a great job of building a connection with this prospect. I noticed how much she appreciated you asking about how she got into her profession as well as her volunteer activities."

The late Sam Walton said it best. “Appreciate everything your associates do for the business. Nothing else can quite substitute for a few well-chosen, well-timed, sincere words of praise. They’re absolutely free and worth a fortune.”

Install a recognition and appreciation system in your sales organization. Make it a goal to have your customers, sales reps and colleagues say, “Stop — I can’t take any more appreciation.”

Good Selling!

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