

Volume	4	Managing a Company
Chapter	04	Employee Recognition
Section	02	Say Thanks
Key Word Tags	Gratitude	

UNEXPECTED THANKS

File No. 4.040201 | 2017-06-01

Quick Summary: Taking time for people and saying thank you can have instant and dramatic positive impacts.

Abstract:

Every day, employees go out of their way to be helpful or go above and beyond the call of duty. Their efforts are appreciated; however, most of the time, these efforts go unrecognized. Taking a moment to show gratitude and say thank you can have remarkably positive impacts and reinforce desired behaviors throughout the workplace. When the thank you is unexpected, the impact is even greater.

Very few words are more powerful than “thank you.” Although we say it often in our personal lives, often, it goes unsaid in the business world. Saying the words directly or performing a simple “thank you” action can have an immediate positive impact on the person to whom it is directed, as well as many others who merely observe the event. Not only will the recipient benefit, but the initiator will benefit, perhaps even more. By saying thank you, the initiator has noticed and made the conscious decision to take action regarding the event or situation, outwardly showing that they appreciate the other person. Saying thank you is a simple way of giving back, something that provides its own reward.

To make the experience even more meaningful, provide unexpected thanks. When it is delivered as a surprise, the recipient, taken off guard, will be even more appreciative and will reinforce the behaviors that have been recognized. Many opportunities occur every day in the workplace that are meaningful candidates for a quick, simple unexpected thank you. All we have to do is observe others or think about the tasks at hand and those who have contributed to their success. The article in this series, by its very name, suggests a simple approach to identifying these situations. It is titled “*Take Time for People.*” The following are a few simple examples of methods that can be used to provide the positive, thank you reinforcement. Additionally, just by taking a moment to think about the notion of taking time for people, other instances will immediately come to mind.

- Keep it simple. A thank you does not have to be a large, company-wide announcement or accompanied by cash compensation. Small, more frequent thank-you recognitions are more effective.
- Often employee’s spouses are totally unaware of the day-to-day interactions that occur at the office. An excellent method of showing the company’s appreciation to the employee is by presenting them with a night-on-the-town prepaid credit card. The amount does not have to be large; the mere fact

that the company has chosen to present this reward to the person to be used with whomever they choose will show the person's loved ones that their efforts are appreciated.

- Invite a lower-level person to a senior staff meeting or other gathering to show them their input and effort are appreciated and respected. Similarly, ask an "inside" person to accompany someone on a sales call or partner meeting to help them better understand some aspect of the business. This can also build their confidence and show that their efforts are appreciated.
- Say thank you in an open, informal setting, such as in the breakroom when the person's peers are within earshot. Better yet, ask a senior manager who normally would not be involved with the person to deliver the thank you. Use this approach if and only if the senior manager is truly familiar with the situation to avoid the appearance of this activity being only a "check the box" required event.
- Send a birthday card to the employee's home with a short note identifying one or more of the activities that warrant a special thank you. This activity is not as hard or time-consuming as it might first appear. Once a month, plan for the birthdays that will occur in the next month and spend an hour or so filling them out in advance. Then, mail them when appropriate.
- Send a congratulatory email or card on each person's employment anniversary. Rely on their manager to provide a specific comment about the employee to make the note more personal. Follow the once-per-month organization method mentioned in the previous suggestion.
- Ask others in the organization, not the employee's work group, to say thanks. For example, ask a sales rep to thank a developer for a new product feature, a finance person to thank a sales rep for a new order, or a senior manager to thank a manufacturing person for the on-time shipment of a critical order.

None of the suggestions listed above are hard or time-consuming. We can probably relate to each item and think of instances when we could have taken the opportunity to say thank you but were too busy. There is no question that everyone HAS the time to say thank you; the issue is that we do not TAKE the time to do it. Perhaps a good way of FINDING the time is to start the day by thinking about what happened yesterday, and who should you thank for it; then take the time to do it. It will clearly help the other person almost as much as it helps you.