

Thanks for the Kidney!

A guide for providing MEANINGFUL appreciation



"Thanks for the kidney!"

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Cover Art by Joe Lawson, JD, MLS

Usually, when someone provides a service, favor, or courtesy, many return the courtesy with a “thanks.” Unfortunately, there are instances when thanks is not only insufficient, but can have the exact opposite intended effect. Instead of the recipient feeling appreciated, he or she may feel unappreciated, angry, and very unwilling to do anything to help us again.

“Thanks for passing the ketchup,” works.

“Hey Bob, thanks for the kidney,” seems to fall short.

-- [Practical Communication: 25 Tips, Tools, and Techniques for Getting Along and Getting Things Done](#)

I was facilitating a workshop and had just discussed the importance of showing appreciation, when we took a 10-minute break. During the break, a senior manager approached me and said,

“I don’t see why I should thank employees for doing what’s in their job descriptions; they’re getting PAID to do the job after all.”

I won't get into our discussion regarding money and motivation. However, regarding appreciation, my response included the following comments:

- Everyone needs encouragement and to know that their effort is appreciated
- It doesn't matter if it's in their job description, good work is worthy of appreciation
- A little appreciation pays off- good work that is noticed will likely be repeated
- It takes 30 seconds to make someone's day with a meaningful “thank you”
- Appreciation given is usually reciprocated—and as we know ...**(repeat first bullet)**


However, as the excerpt from [Practical Communication](#) on page one notes, there's "thanks" and there's a meaningful "thank you" and we don't want to confuse one with the other.

"Thanks" is adequate appreciation for ketchup passed and other tasks requiring minimal effort.

However, if just saying "thanks" is the only thing you ever say to show your appreciation, others will feel unappreciated.

Imagine how you'd feel if you worked through your lunch hour for a week to help a friend, only to have him or her just say "thanks" when you're done? Or even better, my favorite- the "backhanded" thanks,

"Thanks. It's about time you got this report to me."



**A meaningful
"thank you" is
required for hard
work, quality work,
and of course,
donated body
parts.**

To show others appreciation that will make their day, follow these "Five Keys to a Meaningful Thank You."

1. Be timely- say "thank you" right away.

Waiting to say thank you, especially if you wait too long, is almost as bad as not saying it at all. If it takes you a week to thank someone, think of how they're feeling in those interim days. Unappreciated? Angry? The odds are, they're also thinking "Well, I'll never do THAT again."

Try to thank people on the spot. Doing so connects their act with your appreciation and increases the odds they'll do the thing you appreciated again.

2. Say "thank you" in person whenever possible.

Although thank you notes are great, and we'll talk more later about showing appreciation in writing, most written notes lack one key thing that makes a thank you MOST meaningful -- sincerity.

You can write, "I sincerely appreciate. . ." but without hearing the sincere tone of your voice and seeing the sincere look on your face, written words can often fall flat. In fact, I think we've all had experiences with written communication where the reader isn't sure if the writer is being sincere, sarcastic, or is joking. Therefore, whenever possible, try to give your thank yous face-to-face. If you can't, then a phone call is a great second choice. At least on the phone, people can hear the sincerity of your tone of voice.

3. Be specific- tell the person exactly what he or she did that you appreciate.

Don't just say, "Thanks for all you do," or "Thanks for your hard work."

Although saying so is nice, after a while, if that's all you say, people will realize it's just something you say to everyone and that you have no idea what they've really done. In one organization where I used to work, a senior leader came around once a quarter and made a grand announcement to the entire office, "Thanks for

all your hard work people." He did this every quarter, no matter what had been going on and regardless of our accomplishments. I quickly realized that although this was a nice gesture- that's all it was. He had no idea what any of us was working on, what we had accomplished, or how hard we were working. Therefore, his thanks were basically meaningless.

4. Share the impact- tell the person specifically what positive effect(s) his or her actions had on you, your family, your customers, etc.

If someone passes me the ketchup at lunch, I don't need to stand up and give a thank you speech.

"Thank you, Frank, for passing the ketchup. The fact that you did so has improved the quality of my hamburger and as a result, my life is now complete."

However, if my coworker stayed late three days this week to help me with a project, my employee turned a report in a day early, or my brother donated a kidney for me, telling them not only exactly what they did, but how important their effort or sacrifice was to me, is essential.

"Paula, thank you for getting your report turned in a day early. I know you worked through your lunch hour to be able to get it to me today. Your willingness to take the time to get the report done early will give me more time to ensure that the proposal we submit for the XYZ contract will be the best it can be."

5. Say “thank you” not “thanks,” and say it sincerely.

There are several reasons to say "thank you" instead of "thanks". First, if you're a really picky grammar person, you probably already know that "thanks" is actually a noun, not a verb.

Therefore, to say, "Thanks for your help," is not a complete sentence. You would actually have to say something like, "I give you my thanks for your assistance." "I thank you for your help," is a full sentence containing a subject, verb, and compliment. "Thanks" is also more informal and some people feel it borders on slang. Therefore, "thank you" is probably the best choice in formal or business situations.

Finally, when you break your gratitude into the two words, you can use your voice to emphasize each one, and as a result, add further sincerity and meaning to your message.

A sincere and meaningful thank you contains three parts:

1. A specific description of the person's words and/or actions, including any “sacrifice” that may have been involved for the person in doing the task
2. A description of the positive results or outcome of their actions
3. Actually saying the words “thank you” either at the beginning or end of the comments

A final tip- In addition to thanking a colleague, vendor, or employee in person, be sure to follow up with a "thank you" in writing. Doing so provides people with evidence of their hard work that they can then provide their supervisors to consider when writing their performance appraisals.



Remember, 30 seconds is all it takes to make someone's day with a little appreciation.

Be sure to take every opportunity every day to say "thank you" to those around you.

Have you missed opportunities already today?

It's not too late!

Think about all the people around you whose actions support you and help you to be successful. From the administrative assistant who sets up the conference room for your meeting to the child at home who empties the dishwasher without complaining, people need to know that what they do is appreciated.

It doesn't matter if the task is in their job description or on their list of chores, a little appreciation will make them feel great and increase the odds they'll willingly help you the next time.

From now on, no matter if the act is extraordinary or mundane, take every opportunity to show sincere appreciation to those around you for the things they do. Take the time to write a handwritten thank you note, or to send an e-mail to someone and send a copy to his or her boss. Call people into your office, look them in the eye, and provide sincere, meaningful appreciation.

The ultimate success in communication is finding the frustratingly elusive balance between 'getting along' and 'getting things done.' Lean too far one way and people love you, but treat you like a doormat. Lean too far the other way, and they fear you and don't perform. Find the balance and you can achieve any goal.

– Amy Castro



About Amy Castro

If you want to create more satisfying and effective working relationships, lead your employees in a way that will make them want to follow, and create a workplace where people “get along and get things done” then you need Amy Castro!

Amy is a recognized Performance Communication® expert, author, blogger, and proud U.S. Air Force Veteran. She holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Journalism from the George Washington University and a Master’s Degree in Communication Studies/Human Communication from the University of Northern Colorado.

She is the author of the book [Practical Communication: 25 Tips, Tools, and Techniques for Getting Along and Getting Things Done](#) and [The Secrets of Effective Leadership Communication: From the Top Leadership Communication Posts of the Performance Communication Blog](#). She is also a regular contributor of management articles to business publications, including the pet industry’s Pet Age Magazine.

Amy uses her down-to-earth style, REAL stories, humor, and fun to create her customized and engaging workshops, keynotes, and breakout sessions, focused on Performance Communication® assertive communication that helps people find the balance between getting along and getting things done. She brings her communication expertise combined with 18+ years of leadership and business experience to help you conquer your biggest problems, including growing your leaders, hiring the right employees to serve your customers, and how to attract and retain life-long customers.

Some of Amy’s clients include: NASA Johnson Space Center, Texas Children’s Hospital, Texas Children’s Pediatric Associates, McKesson Specialty Health, Marathon Oil, Reliant Energy, and more. She has also provided training for more than 25 Texas cities and counties. To see a full client list and to read what clients have to say, visit her website at www.Amy-Castro.com.

Four Little Known (and Some Well Known) Facts about Amy

- 1. Amy once saved the White House from invasion!*
- 2. She can touch her tongue to her nose.*
- 3. Her favorite saying is, “Couldn’t you be doing something more productive with your time?”*
- 4. Amy has been a foster mom to more than 500 kittens and puppies.*