

# Now What? Recognition

## The Write Stuff

Everybody knows the intrinsic value of recognition when it comes to job satisfaction, morale, retention, productivity, level of effort, etc. For amplifying these things and many others, recognition is a power tool. But how do you put effective recognition to work during social distancing, with so many of the traditional recognition vehicles temporarily unavailable? You can't, for instance, take someone to lunch, recognize them at a large meeting with their peers, or send them off with a gift card to their favorite store or coffee joint. So perhaps you're among those struggling to find an effective form of recognition for today's uniquely challenging (and weird!) circumstances. It's rather ironic, then, that one of the BEST ways to recognize employees and clients—*especially right now*—has actually been around many hundreds of years. Introducing (...or re-introducing): The simple but effective handwritten thank you note.

Personal, handwritten notes are becoming a rarity. In 2010, the US Postal Service reported that the average home received only one personal letter per week. When you consider that the average corporate email account sends/receives more than 100 emails per day, and the average American aged 18—29 now sends/receives 100+ texts per day, the handwritten “thank you” note stands out as a unique and impactful way to express gratitude and create permanence. \*

You might think the personal note is too quaint, if not antiquated, to be effective. But recent research in *Psychology Today* would challenge you on that. The research showed that people expressing gratitude **underestimated** how pleasantly surprised recipients would be to receive a handwritten “thank you” and how **positive** the expression of gratitude made the recipients feel. On the flip side, people who write “thank you” notes **overestimated** the potential awkwardness that the person receiving the note would experience. \*\*

But wait, there's more... Turns out the benefits of handwritten gratitude extend beyond just the person who gets the note. In his book [365 Thank Yous: The Year a Simple Act of Daily Gratitude Changed My Life](#) \*\*\*, John Kralik describes how he was inspired to write one thank-you note per day for an entire year. It wasn't always easy. Sometimes he really had to work just to find people and situations for which he could be thankful (to meet his one-note-per-day quota). But doing so actually magnified his gratitude over time and helped him transform into a much happier, more positive person.

It only takes a couple of minutes to write a “thank you” note, it doesn't cost much, and the benefits are typically greater than people expect. Saying “thank you” in a handwritten message shows an investment in remembrance, gratitude and appreciation.

Here are some tips to help you get the most impact:

- BE SPECIFIC: Explain clearly why you are saying thank you
- DESCRIBE THE IMPACT: What did it mean for you/team/organization?
- FOCUS ON ONE THING—SAYING THANKS: Stay on message, don't mention any other work, deadlines, deliverables, expectations, etc. Just say thanks
- SIGN AND DATE: May seem formal, but if people hang on to their notes (and they often do) the date and person who sent the note will be meaningful later

If you need one more nudge to push you over the edge, we've attached a printable thank you card (print and fold on regular letter-sized paper) to this email. There are also tons more on the internet. So go ahead... give it a try, make someone's day.

Have a great week. If you need ideas, communications, tools or other support, Jenn and Ron are here to help you. And most importantly... Thanks!

Want to read more?

\*: <https://hbr.org/2013/04/handwritten-notes-are-a-rare-c>

\*\* : <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-athletes-way/201808/handwritten-thank-you-notes-have-surprising-consequences>

\*\*\* <http://365thankyounotes.info/book-simple-act-of-gratitude.php>