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# Building Relationships Through Gratitude:

The Power of Personal

*"Thank You"* Notes

By  
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**Building  
Relationships  
Through  
Gratitude:  
The Power of  
Personal “Thank You” Notes**

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## **Table of Contents**

Introduction .....	1
Who's Writing "Thank You" Notes? .	3
Use Time You'd Otherwise Waste ....	5
Why Should I Write "Thank You" Notes? .....	6
It's Relationships .....	7
The Personal Touch.....	10
It's Proper Etiquette .....	12
A Tiny Human Touch Goes a Long Way .....	13
Big Effect From Few Words .....	15
Which Came First – "Thank You"s or Success?.....	16
Letters You Don't Have to Write, But Should! .....	17
Business Letters .....	20
Combined Business and Personal Letters .....	32
General Thanks .....	37
Personal Letters .....	39

Good Writing: A Skill You Can Learn .....	48
The A-B-Cs of Good Letter Writing	50
Express Your Personality .....	51
Give Your Letters the Right Look...	53
Creating Your Own Personal Notecards .....	56
Create a Special Card .....	57
The Real Reasons People Don't Write "Thank You" Notes .....	60
Summary .....	70
Action Agenda .....	73

## Introduction

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*"He who praises another enriches himself far more than he does the one praised. To praise is an investment in happiness."*

*— David Dunn, Try Giving Yourself Away*

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We sometimes tend to unnecessarily complicate the issue of building business relationships.

One of the greatest human needs is the need to feel appreciated. We implement elaborate customer appreciation programs, but often forget to write a simple "Thank You" note.

This book is designed to make writing "Thank You" and other notes as effortless as possible. Most people get bogged down in the process of how to write a short and

appropriate message to convey their true feelings. Anytime you're stuck and need a little "magic", just refer to this chapter and reread the appropriate section.

## **Who's Writing "Thank You" Notes?**

For the last five years, I have been training sales and management executives in all the major cities in the US, Canada, and the UK. No matter where I was speaking, I asked this question, "How many of you write "Thank You" notes to your clients regularly?" Fewer than ten percent of the audience would respond affirmatively.

While I am surprised by the response, I find it to be true across companies, cities, and countries. To punctuate my point, I'd sometimes follow up my first question with a second one, "How many of you write "Thank You" notes to non-clients or associates or anyone who goes 'above and beyond' to serve you?"



To this question, even fewer people would respond. Why?

## Use Time You'd Otherwise Waste



Jay Conrad Levinson, author of many *Guerrilla Marketing* books, says that you can convert dead time into profit-producing time. He says recognize the immense power of “Thank You” notes to customers...For example, while waiting for almost anything... write a “Thank You” note...or maybe write ten. You'll soon know that it was incredibly valuable time.

In general, people complain more than they praise. Want to make an impact? Just reverse the above trend, praise more than you complain... and do it in writing!

## **Why Should I Write “Thank You” Notes?**

I've never had to convince anyone about the virtues of personal “Thank You” notes. You probably know them too — all the “should” reasons.

- ✓ They're good for business.
- ✓ They're great for sales.
- ✓ They're invaluable for getting referrals.
- ✓ They create a favorable impression.

Reasons aren't enough, or everyone would already send “Thank You” notes. People in general make decisions emotionally and then rationalize logically. Let me explain.

## **It's Relationships**

The quality of life comes down to the quality of relationships. Acquiring anything of worth takes time and effort.

“Thank You” is an investment in your relationship with the person you are writing to. It promotes growth and development. It nurtures new friendship. It fosters teamwork. It expresses your commitment and caring that you have taken the time to write. Any relationship grows and develops better when given time, energy, and attention.

The mail is available to everyone, and correspondence is not an intrusion compared to a personal

call on a stranger. There is no reason why, if you have something friendly to say, you shouldn't say it in a letter, even to an exalted personage whom you have never met. The results can be momentous for you.

Why anyone should deprive himself of a potential friend, even at long range, is hard to understand, with the postal department delivering once a day in most communities.



## **Written Magic**

The difference in impact between verbally saying “Thank You” and writing a personal “Thank You” note is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug! Neil Simon

in his famous play *Biloxi Blues* narrates through his lead role, “There is something magic about the written word.” People seem to embrace it more if it is written. There is a sense of permanency with a message that has been put on paper.

## **The Personal Touch**

Although the computer has made it easier to send form letters and respond to the masses, the handwritten note is still the most respected form of correspondence.

One survey showed that over 60 percent of the people surveyed preferred handwritten notes. With all the faster means of communications today, the personal note is still viewed as the most thoughtful and meaningful method of saying thanks.

Cards with pre-printed verses aren't enough. What you say in that note is not as important as the fact that you have made the effort to make your note a personal gesture of gratitude.

The effect of a personal, handwritten note is much greater than most people realize. A note recognizes and reinforces others. It gives the sender the opportunity to express his or her appreciation. The writing of a note can make the full impact of what has been done come alive for both parties. It subtly expresses a desire for an ongoing relationship.



## It's Proper Etiquette

Etiquette expert Miss Manners says the only proper “Thank You” note is a handwritten one:

*“Thank You” letters should be written by hand. Miss Manners, who does not consider acts of kindness subject to fashion, grants exceptions only to people with specific physical disabilities that prevent them from writing.’*



## **A Tiny Human Touch Goes a Long Way**

Miss Manners I'm not. But I still say, "Send your "Thank You" notes!"

I'm always surprised at how few "Thank You" notes I get. I once interrupted a tense writing schedule to do a seminar for a CEO to whom I owed a favor. To top it off, I quickly sifted through a mountain of data to come to grips with his unique, competitive conundrum.

Hey, I was paid a ton for my efforts, so I'm hardly complaining. Well, actually I am. But all I really wanted was a "Thank You" note, just a couple of lines scrawled on a card saying, "Tom, I know you busted your gut to do this. It worked out OK. Thanks. Harry." (And he

needn't even include the modest "It worked out OK.")

## **Big Effect From Few Words**

By contrast, a fellow who attended a speech I gave to several hundred folks about three weeks ago just dropped me a line: *"Nice job! Thought you might enjoy the attached."* The "attached" was a clipping from his local paper about a company that had dramatically speeded up delivery of its products—a topic I'd gotten worked up about during my speech.

You know what, I've re-read his scribble a couple of times, and I'll probably put it in my save box. "Nice job!" No big deal? Well, it is to me.

We wildly underestimate the power of the tiniest personal touch. Of all personal touches, I find the short,

handwritten "nice job" note to have the highest impact.

## **Which Came First – “Thank You”s or Success?**

I think there's a strong correlation between the little “Thank You” notes I get and the busyness, fortune, and fame of those who send them. That is, the more busy, rich, and famous they are, the more likely I am to get a note. There's one very renowned, very wealthy entrepreneur I've seen professionally several times a year for seven or eight years. I don't think he's ever failed to send a handwritten little (or not so little) note afterwards.

Incidentally, I understand that George Bush is a master of this art.

Pithy personal notes (pecked out on a typewriter) have been his stock in trade — and key to network building for years. (Typewritten is OK, as long as it's an old typewriter, not a computer. And if you're an expert typist, make a typo or two.)

There are other twists. One pen pal scrawls brief handwritten responses on the backs of letters I send him. I love it, and have copied his habit. Again, it's hard to overestimate the number of people who have commented favorably on the personalization of the message.

## **Letters You Don't Have to Write, But Should!**

One of the reasons personal notes have such impact is that you don't

have to write them. They're an old-fashioned courtesy that is now largely ignored.

Maxwell Cross, a well-known sales promotion expert, listed fifteen ways letters and notes can be used to create goodwill — and eventually more business. "There's just one prerequisite," he said, "the person using them has to be a 'nice guy', courteous, friendly, and above all, sincere."

Consider sending a friendly, personal note on some occasion when you would not be expected to send anything. Such letters create a tremendously favorable impression with clients, colleagues and other contacts.

## **36 Reasons to Stay in Touch**

Not all the situations described here will apply to everyone. But take the appropriate ones and adapt the messages to suit your personal needs. The idea is to be different from others. This will give you an edge over competitors.

In many cases, there is more than one example per category. They range from earnest sentiments and genuine gratitude to one liners and humorous wisecracks.

Your relationship with the person, the occasion and your judgment will dictate which message will be appropriate. Adapt, edit, and combine these models to create your own personal messages. After a little practice, your own natural



eloquence will follow.

## ***Business Letters***

### *1. Letter To Follow Up Your Salesperson's Call*

Why not write a letter after your salesperson has made the initial call or proposal? As the president, head of the department, or the sales manager, you can write a wonderful letter of assurance to the prospective client.

Harvey Mackay, author and entrepreneur, is a class act in this regard. He will go as far as Guam or Sri Lanka just to tell the client in person, "As you may know, we're bidding on your contract. I just came here to tell you, as president of Mackay Envelope that we regard

your business as significant. If we are fortunate enough to receive your business, I'll take personal interest in seeing to it that you will receive the service and craftsmanship you have every right to expect."

If you don't want to go that far, you could write something like this:

*"John Davidson told me today of the pleasant visit he had with you about your insurance program. I know that John will do a fine job for you."* Then finish off in your own words.

## *2. Letters To Make Appointments*

Yes, you can write, instead of calling, to get appointment.

**Example:** *It's about time for me to sit down with you, Jim, and go over your investment in the light of the new tax*

*changes. I suggest that we get together late Friday afternoon. How would 4 o'clock be?*

You don't need to say much more. Just call to confirm or fix a different time.

### *3. An Apology*

It takes a big person to say I'm sorry. The only mistakes are those we never learn from. So take responsibility and correct the mistake.

**Example:** *Ooops! Whoops! Oh-oh! Sorry! I goofed! Forgive me!*

- or -

**Example:** *The devil made me do it. Be an angel and forgive me. Nobody likes to admit a mistake, but I was wrong when I said/did that to you.*

#### 4. Anniversary “Thank You”

**Example:** “Thank You” — *It is with warm regards that I send this note to say hello and again thanks for your patronage. We've now been doing business together since \_\_\_\_\_. We are continually changing and improving our products and services. If you would like an update on our latest advancements, please give me a call.*

#### 5. Letters On Holidays Other Than Xmas

If you only send holiday greeting cards to your clients during Christmas, it doesn't create as lasting an impression because they (your family, friends, and clients) were expecting it. Why not send letters and cards when they are

least expecting it to make that lasting impression?

Everybody sends Christmas cards, and you should too. But to stand out in your client's mind, send a card for Thanksgiving (in the US) or any other special holiday of significance in your country.

**Example:** *In this season of giving thanks, we'd like to express our gratitude for your continued support and for being our patron. We look forward to serving you for many years to come.*

#### 6. "Thank You" For Telephone Contact

**Example:** *I enjoyed talking with you on the telephone today. Thanks. In today's business world, time is*

*precious. I want you to know that I'll always be respectful of the time you invest as we discuss the possibility of a mutually beneficial business relationship.*

#### *7. "Thank You" After In-Person Contact*

**Example:** *It was a pleasure meeting you and hearing about your business. My "Thank You" is for the time we shared. I hope we will be able to work together. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call.*

#### *8. "Thank You" After Demonstration Or Presentation*

**Example:** *"Thank You" for giving me the opportunity to discuss our*

*possible relationship for the mutual benefit of our firms. We believe that quality, combined with first-rate service, is the foundation for a successful business.*

## *9. “Thank You” After Purchase*

**Example:** *“Thank You” for giving me the opportunity to serve you. I’m sure that you will be happy with this investment towards future growth. My goal now is to give you great follow-up service so that you will have no reservation about referring others to me who have similar needs.*

## *10. “Thank You” For A Referral*

**Example:** *“Thank You” for your kind referral. We value each one. You have my assurance that anyone you*

*refer to me will receive the highest level of service.*

### *11. “Thank You” After Final Refusal*

**Example:** *“Thank You” for taking your time to meet with me. I'm sorry that your immediate plans do not include our teams working together at this time. However, if you need further information or have any questions, please feel free to call. I'll keep you posted on new developments and changes that may benefit you.*

### *12. “Thank You” After They Buy From Someone Else*

**Example:** *“Thank You” for taking your time to analyze my services. I regret being unable at this time to*



*prove to you the benefit we have to offer. We keep constantly informed of new developments and changes so I'll keep in touch with the hope that in the years ahead, we will be able to do business. These letters leave a classy impression. They suggest that you are interested in building a relationship, rather than just a quick sale.*

### *13. "Thank You" For Offering To Give You Referrals*

**Example:** *"Thank You" for your gracious offer to give me referrals. As we discussed, I'm enclosing three of my business cards, and I "Thank You" in advance for placing them in the hands of three of your friends, acquaintances or relatives who I might serve. I'll keep in touch and be*

*available to render my services as needed.*

#### *14. Welcome Aboard*

When there's a new addition to your team, organization, or business, make them feel welcome with a special note.

**Example:** *It's great to have you as part of the team.*

- or -

**Example:** *Glad to have a new (potential, proven) superstar on our team.*

#### *15. We're Proud Of...*

My good friend Mark Pester says to try to be the kind of person whom people put down as assets on a bank loan application! Do you know

anyone like that? Why not let them know:

**Example:** *We're proud to have you as \_\_\_\_\_ (friend, colleague, representative).*

- or -

**Example:** *The way you represented our organization (department, association, team) was great. You did us all proud. "Thank You".*

### *16.A Job Well Done*

When a colleague or a friend or anyone has done an outstanding job, let them feel appreciated:

**Example:** *You are really a credit to your profession and the company with the service you provided to our association.*

- or -

**Example:** *Thanks for making the rest of us look bad. Do it again anytime.*

- or -

**Example:** *Anyone could have done what you did...if they had a whole year.*



### *17. Enjoyed Working With You*

When people are leaving or moving on to bigger and better things, let them know that they will be missed.

**Example:** *Though I'm sorry to see you go, I understand your need for a*

*bigger challenge. If there's anything I can do, I hope you'll call on me.*

## ***Combined Business and Personal Letters***

### *18. Letters to Congratulate any Promotion or Job Change*

It's a nice gesture to send a letter like this:

*Congratulations on your appointment to District Sales Manager. This is fine news, and I know you'll do a great job.*



### *19. "Saw You In The News" Letters*

When you read about a customer in the newspaper, send him/her a letter. Clip the article, send it to him or her, and write:

**Example:** *I don't know whether your children keep a scrapbook of the nice things about the work you've done, but just in case they do, here's an extra copy.*

- or -

**Example:** *I really enjoyed reading about your success in the paper the other day.*

## *20. Letters Congratulating Special Achievements*

When a client is elected or honored in some way, perhaps you could say:

*I've heard some nice things about the work you've done for the Chamber of Commerce, so I was not surprised to*

*see that you have been elected vice-president.*

### *21. Letters After A Favor*

When someone has done you a favor he/she will appreciate a note from you.

**Example:** *“Thank You” for those two extra tickets. I hope I can repay the favor soon.*

### *22. Thanking Others For Great Service*

I was riding in a bus one day when there was an accident. Women and children, bruised and cut with flying glass, became panicky. The driver took charge of everybody and everything at once, helping the injured, marshaling witnesses, sending someone to telephone for

the ambulance, and keeping calm under the unjust abuse of the truck driver who had run into him.

After the ambulance had come, the driver got into his seat, wiped some blood off his eyebrow, and started to finish his run with his battered bus. A man next to him said, "I'm going to report you!" Indignantly, I began to intervene, but he hastened on: "For efficiency and courtesy. If you'll tell me where to write, and give me your name, I'll tell your company you're the best man in a pinch I ever saw." "Gee, mister," said the driver, letting out a long breath, "I wish there were more in the world like you." How often someone performs unusual services for us that we allow to pass unpraised?



Don't take courtesy and helpfulness for granted!

### *23. Letters Appreciating a Great Product*

When some product pleases you, take time to write about it.

**Example:** *I wanted you to know how pleased I am with our new office system, and the courteous and efficient way your men installed it.*

### *24. "Thank You" To Anyone Who Gives You Service*

**Example:** *"Thank You" — It is gratifying to meet someone dedicated to doing a good job. Your efforts are sincerely appreciated. If my company or I can serve you in any way, please don't hesitate to call.*

## **General Thanks**

### *25. Special "Thank You"*

**Example:** *I feel doubly blessed; first I had the benefit of your help, and now I have the pleasurable duty of thanking you.*

- or -

**Example:** *Just when I thought I had no debts, I find myself deeply in yours.*

### *26. Thanks For Time*

Time truly is the most precious commodity we have. So when someone has given their time, be sure to thank them.

**Example:** *I know how valuable your time is, and I want you to know how*

*much we appreciate the time you gave us the other day.*

- or -

**Example:** *Now I know why your time is so valuable. Thanks a million!*

### *27. Regrets*

It is courteous and good manners to let people know if you can't make the engagement, especially when they sent you a written invitation.

**Example:** *I never wanted so much to be in two places at the same time. Sorry we cannot attend your function.*

The Prince of Wales, Edward VII was known by his friends for his sense of humor. One friend, relying on the prince's joviality, declined a dinner invitation with the following telegram: *"Sorry cannot come. Lie follows."*

Edward was immensely amused.

## ***Personal Letters***

After I graduated from high school, my English teacher gave me a book as a present called Write Better, Speak Better: How Words Can Work Wonders For You by Readers' Digest. At 730 pages it almost buckled my knees. It was full of sample letters of personal correspondence. They were short, sweet, and of a nature we all love to receive.

*28. Thanks For A Social Invitation*  
When I came to the United States in 1981, Write Better, Speak Better was one of the books I brought with

me. An American lady hosted a party for all the new foreign students at her house. While we all enjoyed the festivities, I was the only one who took the time to write a personal “Thank You” note.

Needless to say I immediately became her favorite. Within a very short period of time, the entire staff of the International Student Center knew about the letter. At the next party at her house, she showed me the letter beautifully kept in her scrapbook under cellophane to immortalize my action - a pretty impressive reaction to something that took me three minutes to write.

Up until then, I had no idea that words could work such wonders. I began to realize how many other

such opportunities I missed to make someone happy.

I once wrote a personal “Thank You” note to my friend's mother after spending a weekend at their house in Bangkok. The next time I saw her was in my place a decade later, and guess what?

She remembered me and thanked me for that simple gesture of appreciation. It made me realize the kind of lasting impression a personal note of thanks can create. I'm sure you can think of many such incidents where you were the receiver or the creator of such an experience.

Now I'm not saying all of your personal correspondence will have this kind of impact. But if you write

personal “Thank You” notes regularly, you will impress the recipient more often than not.

Do I write everyday, every time and to every person who deserves my thanks? No, I get lazy too. But I am never lazy when success is at stake.

### *29. Get Well Cards*

When a customer is ill all you need to say is:

**Example:** *I'm certainly sorry to hear that you are laid up. I hope it won't be many days before you're back at your desk.*

### *30. Letters Of Condolence*

When there is a death in the family, a short message of sympathy, tactfully done, can mean a lot.

**Example:** *We are so very shocked to hear of the sorrow that has come to you. If there is anything we can do, I earnestly hope that you will call upon us.*

### *31. Letters To Congratulate*

#### *Newborn or Any Marriage*

These letters make no tangible effort to sell; they are simply goodwill builders—the kind that someday will bring something nice to you because you went out of your way to do something nice for somebody else.

### *32. Letters To Congratulate On New Home*

When people buy a home, write to them. Your letter doesn't need to be long or fancy. Perhaps: *I hope you*



*are enjoying getting settled in your new home.*

If you have something to sell, tell these folks you'd appreciate a chance to call when things are squared away. In some cases, an inexpensive gift like a rosebush or a young tree helps to create goodwill.

### *33. Birthday Greeting Card*

Quite a few successful salespeople make a practice of keeping birthday lists and sending cards or letters. If you use a pre-printed card, write something in longhand on it.

### *34. Letters For Those in Service*

When a member of the military comes home, write to the person or to their parents. That's a small way

to show your appreciation of all he or she has done for your country.

### *35. Letter Of Welcome*

When people move to your town, a letter of welcome is an excellent source of new business. They don't know where to go for dry cleaning, laundry, or groceries. They don't know what service station to trade with, where to do their banking, or the nicer places to eat. So you write:

*Welcome to Clearwater. We know you'll like it here. If there's any way we can help you get settled, please let us know.*

As a nice gesture you could include a local restaurant guide or coupon book from local merchants.

### 36. *Keeping In Touch*

Go out and renew a friendship today.

**Example:** *It's been so long that I can't remember who owes whom a letter. This puts the ball in your court, but a phone call will do. I'd love to hear what you're up to.*

- or -

**Example:** *We're still here and we'd love to hear from you.*

### 37 *And Counting*

I've given examples of 36 different types of letters you can write. But there are many more. There are many more reasons besides thanks.

In your business, there are specific times when it is logical to send

people notes. For instance, if you were a car repair shop, a series of notes might include one to welcome them as a customer, one every quarter for an oil change, and two a year for other maintenance.

If you don't have a reason to contact people at least every quarter, create one. Have an open house or a sale. Invite them to a ball game. Fax them a cartoon. Send them interesting information by e-mail. There are no limits in showing you care about a relationship.

## **Good Writing: A Skill You Can Learn**

The ability to communicate clearly in writing is one of the most important skills we will ever master. It helps us to get our ideas across effectively and to get the results we want in our business and personal life. Fortunately, it is a skill anyone (even you and I) can learn.

Throughout my life I've always been amazed by people who could write. I've always considered myself a good speaker but never a good writer. I am still working at it. In the process, I've discovered a few simple things that help with the process of composing a personalized "Thank You" note.

Today's good writing has less and less to do with punctuation, grammar, and style. I follow the same primary rule one wise traveler passed on for both speaking and writing:

**"Do It To EXPRESS Not To IMPRESS!"**

When you sincerely want to communicate, you are other-centered. When you try to impress people, you are ego-centered. Every time I got in trouble writing it was because of trying to impress, as opposed to expressing my sentiment simply and with sincerity. My ego got in the way.

Like anything else—how good a writer you will become depends on

your desire, commitment, and how much time you're willing to devote. Most of us are not looking to become Shakespeare. We simply want to communicate effectively and easily in writing.

### **The A-B-Cs of Good Letter Writing**

**A**ccuracy: Make sure you say what you mean. Make your point clearly and early.

**B**revity: Shorter is better in I today's busy world. It was Ben Franklin or Mark Twain who wrote someone a long letter and apologized because he didn't have time to write a shorter one! Brevity

supports the other two rules and helps your reader get your point.

**C**larity: The best rule for clear writing is to use short words, short sentences, and short paragraphs. Sometimes the attempt to write in a "fancy" way confuses our meaning and the reader. If you try to impress others, your writing suffers. Clear writing makes sure your message gets through.

### **Express Your Personality**

You can write the kind of personal notes and letters we all love to receive. This is the one that carries the writer's personality. He or she should seem to be sitting beside us and talking as if we were together



instead of by proxy. That's what your note is, a proxy for you in ink-made characters on paper.

The best “Thank You” notes are those where the words make it sound both personal and appreciative. Make each note sound like you. Don't use words that make you feel uncomfortable, or use words you wouldn't usually say. You don't have to use formal stilted language. Just be yourself.

A note doesn't have to be long. A few lines that are brief but sincere are all that is necessary. Reading it should make the receiver feel as if you were writing to them personally. This isn't always easy, especially when you are writing a lot at a time. Just make each note sound like it is the only one you are writing.

## **Give Your Letters the Right Look**

"Every job is a self-portrait of the person who did it. Autograph your work with excellence."

Yes, you took the time and made the effort to write a personal "Thank You" note, but what will make it stand out from the pile of mail? What will get the letter or the card opened?

A good part of the impression your letters make depends on their appearance. The letter you write, whether you realize it or not, is a mirror that reflects your appearance, taste, and character. A sloppy letter—the writing running

up and down, badly worded, poorly spelled, paper and envelope unmatched, smeared—proclaims a sloppy person. It contradicts the caring of the letter.

Conversely, a neat, precise, evenly-written note portrays an organized person who cares. A messy letter is discourteous, clearly implying a lack of interest and care on the part of the writer—which invites a similar reaction by the reader.

Writing letters by hand is more difficult, but it is possible to make graceful notes, to space words evenly, and to put them on a page so that the appearance is pleasing. You can make yourself write neatly and legibly. You can, with the help of a dictionary if need be, spell correctly. If it is difficult for you to

write in a straight line, use the lined guide that comes with some stationery, or make one yourself.

All business letters—from home as well as office—should be typed. However, some forms of correspondence must always be written by hand.

1. Never type personal letters of congratulations or thanks.
2. Never type letters or notes of condolence.

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*"It took me fifteen years to discover I had no talent for writing, but I couldn't give it up—because by that time I was too famous."*

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*— Robert Benchley*

## **Creating Your Own Personal Notecards**

In your personal and business life, you will have plenty of opportunity to send personal notes. Consider creating a personal card for your use.

Notecards designed specifically for you and your business with a personal photograph (or other professional images) give a very professional and successful image to your correspondence. Personalized cards are an easy, convenient, and quick way to communicate with others. Besides the obvious value of communication, these personalized notecards are a visual reminder of you and your business.

If you want to play in the big leagues, give yourself the stature, credence, and pizzazz that personalized notecards will add to your correspondence. This will give you an added motivation and you will find yourself more eager to send out notes to your clients, colleagues and other contacts.

### **Create a Special Card**

There are several ways you can go about getting your personal notecards. With many of today's computer graphic programs, you can create your own and take it to the local print shop. I must warn you that unless you print a lot of cards (1000 or more), the economy of scale is not in your favor and it might be expensive. The cost is not

so much in the paper but creating the templates and setting up the press for such a small run.

My advice would be to find a specialty advertising company and let them take care of the design and printing. In the long run, the higher price of the cards may be negligible compared to the goodwill and additional business they will generate.

### Unique Stamps Grab Attention

Jay Conrad Levinson, author of *Guerrilla Marketing*, suggests another way to make your cards interesting and unique: Buy unused older stamps at stamp shows. They are often available for about face value. When your card arrives

covered with five 14-cent stamps, it gets noticed. Also, many people enjoy giving the stamps to their children.



## **The Real Reasons People Don't Write "Thank You" Notes**

***"What's Easy to do is also easy is also easy not to do."***

-Jim Rohn

Why do individuals who are intelligent, highly educated, and not particularly lazy not write? Perhaps they don't know and understand the true meaning and value of writing personal notes.

A few years ago, I began to study this phenomenon. I surveyed hundreds of people and asked why they didn't write personal "Thank You" notes.

The most common answers were:

1. I'm too busy.

2. I don't have the time.
3. I'm too lazy.
4. I don't know how to write well.
5. It's too much trouble.

*Do you know how much stamps cost these days?*

*I don't have the discipline.*

These are what I call superficial answers. They're the first answers that came to mind and didn't require much thinking. So I started digging deeper for the real reasons. The three core reasons follow:

### **1. They Just Don't Get Started**

Many people don't have a strong reason. They like the idea, but a good idea doesn't move anyone into

action, let alone form a habit. They haven't internalized the concept. It's a “should”, not a must.

The fact is, they aren't compelled enough to do what they know is right. I hope you will find enough inspiration throughout these pages to create some compelling reasons of your own.

## **2. They Get Distracted By Details**

Another reason is task related. It is how people view what needs to be done. If you ask me about the task, I'll say—sit down, write the note, and post it when you go out next (period).

Let's take my wife as an example of how most people look at writing notes. She knows how I feel about

the subject and she's absolutely sold on the idea. I often asked myself why she is hesitant. One morning she decided to answer my question and share all the things that go through her mind when she thinks about writing a note.

*There are too many other things  
that are more urgent.*

*I can't find the time.*

*I'm not in the mood.*

*There are so many letters I  
haven't replied to.*

*I don't have the proper address.*

*Oh, it's been too long.*

*Why don't you write it from both  
of us?*

*I'm too tired now, I'll write it  
tomorrow.*

*I'll have to get dressed; carry my  
big heavy purse; get out of the*

*house; walk to the car; get into the  
hot car and almost burn my  
fingers on the leather steering  
wheel; fight the traffic; stand in  
the crowded, slowest moving line;  
get my checkbook out, and buy  
the stamps; I hate licking stamps  
and envelopes, but I do it  
anyway; I get back in the car;  
fight the traffic again; and finally  
get back home.*

(OK, OK, maybe I'm slightly  
exaggerating.)

**Getting It Done.** Are you still with  
me or have you gone into major  
"overwhelm" like she does? That  
long list of tasks will drive anyone  
crazy. I want you to do this  
regularly and form a habit of

sending notes? Am I nuts or what?  
Don't I have a life?

The fact is, not doing little tasks is a problem we all face. It isn't uncommon to make a mountain out of a mole hill. When we do, we've put ourselves in a position that makes the task appear more difficult than it actually is.

One thing you must understand is that most people do not consciously throw up barriers to accomplishment. The brain is the fastest computer and it processes information so quickly that we only feel the effect, which can be a feeling of being overwhelmed, fear, and some degree of pain.

We follow our body's built-in instinct which is to avoid pain and thus avoid the task and procrastinate. If we could slow down the computer and run our brain in slow motion we could see how our mind works to put us into inaction.

**Just Do It.** For any activity in our life that we dread and procrastinate about, it is because of the way we think about it. To stop the procrastination and do the task, we must change what we associate with doing the task (i.e., the way you think about it) and change the way the task is broken down.

The lesson is to watch how you break down a task in your mind. The goal is not to break anything

into too many sub-tasks at the start. When you want to begin something, focus on the goal and the benefits of accomplishing it.

The marketing people at Nike understand this dilemma. That's why they created the slogan "JUST DO IT!"

### **3. Set Up A System**

The third reason is why most of the well-meaning people don't write personal "Thank You" notes. It is because they don't have any system. They have the I-will-write-it-later syndrome.

We all intend to write letters, of condolence, of congratulation, of appreciation, and friendship—tomorrow, or next week.



**Any System Will Work.** Remember that a poor system is better than no system. What I mean by a system is a device, a step-by-step process or arrangement of units that function together to make the job of writing personal “Thank You” notes easier. This is what Dr. Stephen R. Covey calls a quadrant II activity, that is, important but not urgent. Most people will not do it unless it is easy or doesn't require much effort. Create a simple system by buying in advance all the things you need.

The easier you make it on yourself, the greater the probability that you will do what you know you should do. The quicker your letter flies out the door and into the hands of the recipient, the sooner you will have

made an impact.

Yes, it does take some time and effort on my part to write the personal “Thank You” and other notes, but the result it creates far outweighs the effort. *There are very few activities in life that take so little effort, but make such an impression.*

## **Summary**

In conclusion, I can only tell you from personal and professional experience that sending notes is one of the most satisfying and rewarding habits you can form. I get a large number of referrals from my clients. I have the highest percentage of repeat sales. As a result, it also shows in the bottom line of my company.

Every day before going to sleep I ask myself is: Who can I write a “Thank You” note today? Ask and you shall receive. I always find someone who has gone above and beyond the call of duty.

## ***Personal Benefits***

On a personal level, I always get better and personal service from the reference librarian. My car is always serviced with promptness even though my mechanic is busier than ever. I always get the best service from my personal clothier. My dry cleaner takes extra care of my clothes. Why? Because I'm one of the few who has taken the time and care to appreciate their extra efforts and express my gratitude through a personal "Thank You" note. I let people know that I've not taken their business or their efforts for granted.

### ***Be Sincere***

I also want to point out that

someone could very easily interpret my habit as manipulative behavior.

Just remember that the difference between manipulative and non-manipulative behavior is one thing—the intent! If your heart is in the right place, you'll never have to worry about that. I don't write (and I hope you don't either) to get anything in return. I do it because it is the right thing to do. If you do it for the right reason, you cannot help but get back many times in return.

Before you write one personal “Thank You” note remember Maxwell Cross's one prerequisite, “the person using them has to be a “nice guy”, courteous, friendly, and above all, sincere.”

## Action Agenda

Start your engines and begin your journey by writing a personal note to someone now. It could be to:

- a customer
- a relative
- a supplier
- a past teacher or mentor
- a friend
- your boss



- ✓ Make your own list of people you could write to now.
- ✓ Buy stamps or any other material you'll need to write.
- ✓ Look for unusual note cards at the store.
- ✓ Write your three best customers a note today.

If you leave this chapter thinking that it was a good idea, but take no action, then you'll fall in with the vast majority of dreamers, not doers. I call them the "talkers." I know you are not in that category, otherwise you wouldn't have picked up this book.

Don't worry if you don't have your own personalized cards or stationery yet. Take out any piece of paper or a blank card and start writing.

A journey of thousand miles begins with a single step, as the Chinese proverb goes.

The first single step in this case is commitment. Nothing good happens in the long term if one is

not committed.

Great minds with no action lead to nothing. The world is full of talkers and my challenge to you is — Be one of the few who does, versus the many who talks.

**Enjoy the process!**

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## Notes

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## **Building Relationships through Gratitude**

**W. Raj Salam** is the founder and CEO of The Winner's Circle. Raj is also the Best-Selling author of several books on Sales & Marketing. He was awarded the "Thought Leader of The Year" by the National Academy of Best-Selling Authors. He has delivered over 3700 professional talks to various corporations, nonprofit organizations and educational institutions in North America, Europe and Asia. He is most passionate about sharing knowledge and empowering people to reach financial freedom and higher levels of performance & success!

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