



The power of a simple “thank you”

By John A. Gentle, DLP

THE HOLIDAYS WERE ALMOST SEVEN WEEKS ago, and perhaps some of you still haven't sent thank you notes nor have taken the time to call and thank friends, family, and business colleagues for the gifts you received over the holidays.

My mother insisted my hand written thank you notes were mailed by New Year's Day. Didn't your mother demand you send notes? For a long time I saw this as a meaningless task until I bought something for someone and they didn't say thanks or send a note.

It was then that it dawned on me that we want to be recognized for the investment of time, and when we don't receive that recognition, we're offended and perhaps vow not to do anything nice for that person or group again. But when people say “thank you” in a very demonstrable way, we are happy to do it again because it feels good.

Transportation is an industry driven by relationships, but it seems that many have not learned how heavily we are influenced by our feelings. When the emotion of happiness is invoked, we react in a positive manner and carry that feeling for some period of time—reacting favorably to those individuals who created that emotion.

So, why don't more of us in logistics and transportation take the time to send a thank you? Have we come to believe that receiving business or personal gifts is a right of entitlement? Do we believe that the giver deserves no recognition at all? Or perhaps we have begun to subscribe to the un-charitable theory that it's better for suppliers to give than to receive?

Recently I went into a gas station and was startled when a mechanical voice said “thank you” after the cash register rang up the sale. I shot a puzzled look at the attendant who pointed to a little box on the counter and said, “Annoying, isn't it.” Apparently, companies have given up trying to get their employees to say “thank you” and now rely on mechanical voices to provide basic business etiquette. While it's

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pathetic that companies don't train and insist their employees be courteous, I have to at least give the company credit for being astute enough to recognize the need to thank its customer and, by implication, encourage customers to come back.

In stark contrast I know a locally-owned family hardware store where everyone smiles and says, “Thanks, come again!” I bought my lawnmower from them for that reason and because they service what they sell. Two months after buying my new mower, my granddaughter broke it and I had to take it in for repairs. Two days later the mower was fixed and I paid a nominal \$38 bill.

You are probably wondering where all this is going: Well, a week later I received a signed, hand-written card from that little store thanking me for the opportunity to service my lawnmower. I was blown

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away that someone cared enough to take the time to reach out to me and for such a small amount of money. It immediately reinforced my reasoning for shopping there.

Is there a moral to these stories? I sure hope you see one. Personal recognition will positively influence your business colleagues and indifference will draw disdain and make you just another one of “those guys.” In his book *The Magic of Getting What You Want*, David J. Schwartz suggests that people suffer from psychological malnutrition and that ego regulates one's mental state and shapes and modifies attitude towards other people.

Ego food, according to Schwartz, is the mental nourishment that enlarges the person's self worth, usefulness, and the sense of being needed. Schwartz says that ego food takes the form of praise, encouragement, appreciation, and respect.

So what can you and your team do to shape the attitudes of your partners in transportation? Having an appreciation for the good work of others is a start. Sending them a hand written note for work well done, and mentioning the contributors by name with a copy to their boss, is a great way to start. It will positively shape how that team responds to you in the future.

Just another of the lessons that Mom taught me that many of us in logistics and transportation have forgotten. She was pretty smart. Thanks Mom.