

Ten Ways to Show Your Gratitude & Grow Your Business HOW SAYING THANK YOU THE RIGHT WAY REALLY PAYS

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As the fall season quickly transitions into winter, business owners across the country are thinking about...or should be thinking about...those year-end greetings to clients, vendors and friends. Most companies send off cards and goodies in December. But, in today's politically correct climate many business professionals get stumped. Should they forgo any mention of "Merry Christmas" for a more generic, safer version of "Season's Greetings" or "Happy Holidays"? Should they wait and send "Happy New Year" wishes instead? When the goal is to boost client relations, the last thing you want to do is offend someone who might be sensitive to the issue. Well, this year, why not bypass the quandary altogether and tell everyone how grateful you are for their business and support during the time of year made for being thankful...Thanksgiving.

We all know it's vital to keep in touch with clients, but sending them an email or post card about your latest offer or sale isn't enough to keep people around for another order. The best way to increase customer loyalty is to be grateful...just thank your clients for doing business with you. Think about this, for every month that goes by when a client does not hear from you, you lose 10 percent of your influence with them. And, when clients don't hear from us, they assume we don't care (even if they don't consciously say it). So, that makes those annual greetings even more important...so why not make the most of it.

By saying thank you during November...the month of Thanksgiving...whatever you do will stand out from the crowd. That's because everyone else's cards and gifts will get lost in the flood of December mail. So act now to get more bang for your buck. And, when customers are thinking kindly of you - you may even snag a year-end order or two to boot. So, along with **Tip Number One – send greetings during November**, what else can you do to make the most of your thank you efforts? Here are nine more ways to show your gratitude and make an impact on your bottom line:

2. **Customize your cards:** Don't just get cards imprinted with a message, your company name and signature...write a personal note. Sure, it takes a bit more time, but it will get read rather than tossed aside with little more than a glance. And, customers really do appreciate the time and effort it takes to write that little note.
3. **Include special offers:** Prices going up the first of the year? Let your clients know that they can lock in current rates for their first order in 2008, or extend a special discount if they contact you before the end of the year. Remind them why you're so great to work with and give them a reason to give you a call.
4. **Personalize thank you gifts to your biggest clients:** Don't get all your customers the same gift. If you've got 'big clients' treat them special. Do you have a client that loves sailing? How about a gift card from the local boating supply store or tickets to the upcoming boat show. Think outside the box and show those important people that you really 'get them'. People love to work with people who feed, support and understand their passions.
5. **Remember the support staff or team:** If you work with more than just the owner, be sure to include all the players that make things happen. From the receptionist who always puts your calls through to the accountant who gets you paid in a

- timely manner – remember everyone who's a part of your business with that company. When you have a team of fans...you're more likely to keep clients.
6. Themed gift baskets: Work with a local gift expert to create fun, interesting gift baskets. It could be themed for your local pro sports team, feature lots of home-grown local goodies, or connect to your business or your client's business. Have fun with it and it will be remembered.
 7. Support a local cause: It's not about what you want to support; it's about what they care about. Do a little research to find out if your clients' support a specific cause or charity in the community. Do they always sponsor a little league team or donate to an annual auction? A donation to a cause THEY care about will do wonders in building strong business relationships.
 8. Throw a mini-party: Stop by their office with goodies for a coffee break or pizza lunch (plan it with the receptionist so you're sure everyone's in). First, people love to get food – especially during the work day and second, you're taking the time out of your schedule to visit. It's win-win – especially if you can stick around and eat with them.
 9. Host a night on the town: Provide tickets to see a game or event in town, pay for a night of bowling or miniature golf. This is a great idea if you want to get a group of your favorite clients together and thank them all at once. It doesn't have to be expensive...as long as it's fun. Plan this one well in advance so people can schedule it into their calendars.

No matter what, take Tip Number One and get your thanks and year end greetings out ahead of the crowd. Use the Thanksgiving holiday to say... THANKS! Then pick the ideas that work best for you, your customers and your business and go for it. You may even decide to combine a couple of these ideas! The only limit is your imagination, your time and your budget. Thanking customers in a real and personalized way will help you maintain great relationships and build a base of loyal clients. So show your gratitude and grow your business.

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