Trust is Everything

Become the Leader Others Will Follow

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Think “Thank-You”

I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought, and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder. - G.K. Chesterton, 1874-1936

Think and then say “thank you.” This sends a message to others that they are important, that what they did was important, and that you appreciate it. We cannot say thank you enough to the people in our life. Never take anyone for granted.

Thinking thank you requires a sense of humility, in this case the idea that whatever successes you’ve had to date, you haven’t achieved them on your own. Even before those successes have been achieved, it is worthwhile to thank people who are contributing to the
potential success of any project, customer relationship, or goal. Often the people that help you have thankless jobs or tasks which are nevertheless critical. It’s not the big people that you need to remember to thank as they’ll probably remind you themselves! It’s your peers and subordinates, who rarely get the recognition or appreciation they deserve for contributing to a team effort.

When Aneil first started working at General Motors full time after college, he quickly learned to appreciate the clerical staff who worked with him in the Salaried Personnel Department. As a newcomer, Aneil had a hundred questions about what to do, where to go, and who to ask, and these clerical employees were invaluable in the information and assistance they provided. Having been a clerical worker himself during one of his two summers working for the State of Michigan’s Department of Licensing and Regulation, Aneil knew how tedious but important such work was. He remembered to thank each of the GM clerical employees whenever they completed a word-processing assignment for him, or answered one of his questions. Unfortunately, one of his new colleagues did not. One day, Aneil witnessed what can happen when someone forgets to think (and act) thank-you. All word processing assignments were placed in an inbox, and work was drawn from the bottom of the inbox. When Aneil’s colleague, “Steve,” had a word processing project,
Aneil saw the clerical supervisor take it from the bottom of the inbox, and move it right back to the top, which resulted in the work being done much later! People who may have little formal power or authority can nevertheless have a significant impact on your job performance, even when you don’t know it.

Karen once started a personal thank-you campaign at work. She did not have direct authority over many co-workers but required their cooperation in making their customers happy. Whenever someone attended a meeting, devised a solution to a problem, or went out of their way to get an answer for her or their customer, she wrote them a quick “thank you” note. Even though she was the relatively new person at the company, Karen was amazed at how many people said thank you back. They had never been thanked before, and that small act that took a minute to say or write was a valuable gift.

More recently, Aneil needed to see Dr. Bruce Rubin for an appointment, but couldn’t wait the several weeks it normally would take to see him for a “well appointment.” He emailed Dr. Rubin’s nurse, Kay, to see if he could be seen sooner, describing his symptoms. Kay called him within a few minutes, and managed to work him within the week. When Aneil got there, it seemed about as busy as usual in the main waiting room, but when he finally was brought into the inner waiting room, Bruce’s other nurse, Barbara, let Aneil know that it was one of the
busiest days they had had recently, with Bruce splitting his time between seriously sick in-patients who had been admitted to the hospital, as well as regular sick patients like Aneil who were in the out-patient clinic. Since it was around lunch time, Aneil asked if she had gotten the chance to eat lunch yet, and Barbara remarked “no,” and also stated that on busy days like this, sometimes they didn’t get to eat lunch at all. She also stated that once Bruce had worked from 4:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. without ever eating anything.

It was at this point that Aneil decided he should do something to thank these great people for always being there for him, and thank them in a way that might make their busy day a bit easier. He called up one of his favorite lunch spots in Winton-Salem, The Golden Apple, and ordered a lunch tray that would be enough to feed not only Bruce, Kay, and Barbara, but a few other staff people as well. It was around the restaurant’s busy lunch time, and so he was told it would take a couple of hours to have the lunch delivered, but Aneil knew it would still go to good use when it did arrive. As he drove home after his appointment, Kay called him to tell him that the lunch had arrived, and that several people had been able to get something to eat as a result. Here is what Bruce emailed to him later in the day.
Hi Aneil

I have to write and tell you what a lifesaver that lunch platter turned out to be - both for body and spirit. We had some really sick kids in today both in hospital and in clinic. By 3 PM none of us had eaten and we were running nearly 2 hours behind. The sandwiches, fruit, and cookies were fantastic and plentiful. In fact, plentiful was salvation.

I hate it when I show up on time for an appointment and then have to wait forever to be called on. Most of the time we get our scheduling just right but on days like today when stuff happens, everything gets out of whack and we are all stressed. By 3 PM some folks had checked into my clinic 2 or 3 hours earlier and were going crazy waiting in tiny exam rooms with busy kids. I went into each room and said "I know that you have been waiting for a long time and I am deeply sorry. We have had some emergencies with sick children this morning and never caught up so I am hours behind schedule and I feel terrible about it. I will see everyone and take whatever time it needs to help you but please be patient just a while longer. If it would help you and you are hungry after all this waiting, one of our patients saw how busy we were today and knew that we would not be stopping for lunch today so he surprised us by ordering delicious sandwiches, fruit, and cookies for our clinic staff. We have grabbed our lunch on the run but we have a lot of great sandwiches and cookies left over and we
would be very happy to share some of this with you while you wait."

Some patients and families were really hungry and took up the offer. They were really grateful. Others weren’t hungry but after hearing this story, they all smiled. Despite having a bunch of patients wait hours to be seen, we did not have a single complaint and everyone was polite and thankful.

Aneil - you saved us again!

Bruce

Trust Tips Dos and Don’ts:

Do:

• Be generous in thanking others for their help.
• Find useful ways that go beyond the ordinary to thank others.
• Recognize that everyone has an important part to play and appreciates being remembered.

Don’t:

• Forget how easy it is to put a smile on someone’s face.
• Fail to thank people regularly.
• Forget that others have hard days, too.