

How To Say Thank You To Your People

Gratitude doesn't have to be complex to be powerful. Dr. Bob Nelson, author of 1,501 Ways to Reward Employees, offers seven simple tips.

By **Dr. Bob Nelson** - July 21, 2021



For more, read our special report, “[The Remarkable Power of Gratitude.](#)”

1. It isn't about money. “Money is compensation,” says Nelson. “Compensation is a right, recognition is a gift. Part of why recognition means so much is you don't have to do it.”

2. Timing is everything. Nelson urges leaders to lose no opportunity to praise swiftly, sincerely and proactively. “You can do a great praising in 10 seconds in the hallway. The sooner you can catch people doing something right, the more you reinforce it, the more likely they'll be repeated. So, if you see something, say something.”

3. Be sincere. “It has to come from the heart to be sincere, which sometimes is a difficult thing to teach someone. Some of the sincerity comes from specifics. Use specifics. Tell them what you heard, what you saw, what came to your attention. That gives it more credibility.”

4. Make it personal. “Which of course is tough because you can’t be everywhere all the time. But when you can add the personal touch, when you can do it face-to-face or with a direct phone call, that’s going to have more power.”

5. Praise, then stop. “A lot of executives...they’ll say something nice and then, they’ll take it away with what was wrong with the project, that there were typos or whatever it might be. My advice is to just stow that for now. Keep it 100 percent positive. Managers and leaders do this so infrequently—so don’t mess it up when you do it, keep it pure.”

6. Make it a habit. “I like to think of ways you can work it into your daily pattern, for instance, at a staff meeting Monday morning, that type of thing. You can use that initial start time to call out recognition of good things individually for the team, for the company. That’s very powerful.”

7. Be proactive. “You’ve got to actually look for opportunities to acknowledge and be grateful for people. If you’re just reactive, you end up being reactive around the mistakes. If you’re an executive, it has more punch, more power. Often it’s more symbolic, and it sends a message to other people that this is something we all need to do.”