

Why Gratitude Is As Important As Revenue

By Lior Arussy - November 23, 2017



In business, there are two things you can't have enough of. The first one is obvious and known to all: revenues. Ask any business owner or salesperson, and they will share with you this harsh truth. It seems like an endless pursuit of an ever-increasing revenue target with very few breaks in between. Just as they meet their target, a new, higher one is set. The constant pursuit of new customers distracts companies from the obvious truth facing them every day. This "hamster wheel" type of business operation distracts people from the other thing you can't have enough of in business.

The second thing you can't have enough of in business—yet is the most neglected aspect of most businesses—is gratitude. We take existing customers for granted and think that once we have delivered the promised product or service, we are done. We don't stop to express our appreciation for the fact that they chose us over the competition. Instead, we opt to try to sell them more. "Why not," we think to ourselves, "they are already customers."

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When it comes to employees we repeat the same crime. Great performance is often met with more tasks and assignments and very little gratitude for a job well done. It seems as if getting paid is the ultimate confirmation of acceptance. Similar to how we expect more business from our loyal customers, when employees do a great job they are met with requests for more output, not greater gratitude.

So why is it that we fail in such a basic relationship aspect? There are several reasons for this “failure to appreciate”:

1. **The focus on the new** – We are always busy with acquiring new customers or employees. They seem to be more interesting than the ones we already have.
2. **Busy and rushing** – It seems like we are always in a rush and have very little time for small things like saying “thank you.”
3. **Lack of prioritization** – We never made gratitude a priority. It’s always an afterthought and the last item on our checklist. We hardly ever get to it.
4. **Fear of creating new demands** – “Well, if I will share appreciation with my employees, they will ask for more money,” a manager told me. The rationale he presented was that it was “better keep them hungry and unfulfilled, and they will work harder.”
5. **Feeling uncomfortable** – Yes, some of us find expressing gratitude uncomfortable. Let’s face it: if you have never received expressions of appreciation, you may not know how to give appreciation.

In a recent study of employee engagement at one of our clients, managers pushed back and claimed that it was a pointless study because all employees will ask for more money and more staff. In analyzing the employees verbatim responses, we discovered an interesting finding. While 13% of employees did raise compensation and benefits issues, 36% of the employees simply asked for expressions of appreciation. During a focus group, one employee shared with me that he was the employee of the month in his company. As I congratulated him, he told me that he found out about it in the company’s newsletter.

“Did you at least get a check?” I asked.

“Yes,” he replied, “but I didn’t get the handshake.” It was clear that the handshake was much more meaningful to him than the check.

It is time to place gratitude on the same level as the other things in business we can’t have enough of. It’s time to appreciate the revenues we create through employees’ efforts and customers’ choices and do the most human thing of all. It is the same thing we would expect if we were on the other side of the equation. No one wants to be taken for granted or feel “bought.” People do business with people. People work for people. It is time to let humanity prevail and create appreciation-centric working relationships.

Here is my recommendation for taking the first step: start your day by calling a customer and thanking them for the business they already do with you. Try the same with great employees. Start your day with appreciation.
