

The Power of Appreciation

Handwritten Notes Can Increase Influence and Trust

by Vanessa Lowry

Little things matter – a lot. Especially little things that touch your emotions and make you feel appreciated. William James said, *“The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated.”*

The impact and power of a handwritten note is that you're putting your heart on paper. Sharing a personal experience of gratitude, appreciation and caring through the handwritten word captures attention and is remembered. Think of the last time you received a handwritten note from your boss, someone that you purchased from, or a personal friend. How did it make you feel?

You become successful in any area of life by increasing your circle of influence. This is true in business, volunteer or personal arenas. Life flows most easily when you are able to influence the people with whom you have contact with the least amount of effort. **People are more easily influenced by someone they know and trust – someone they believe is looking out for their best interests.**

Trust is also a key component of effective leadership. A study of 200,000 employees outlined in the book, *“The Carrot Principle”*, shows there is a much greater level of employee commitment in organizations where leaders are trusted. The survey goes on to show an undeniable strong correlation between trust and recognition. **The moment you publicly recognize someone for their contribution, the trust meter shoots off the scale.**

The most effective leaders know they have to forge relationships with their followers or employees in ways that feel personal even if they are not able to spend face time with each individual.

Many employees leave companies because they feel unappreciated for their contributions. **A handwritten note is an invaluable tool to encourage, motivate and say “Thank You” for the efforts of the individuals within your workforce.** Southwest Airlines has built a reputation for strong employee relationships with long-term employee retention. One of the recognition tools they use is handwriting thousands of notes and birthday cards that go out every year to employees. They have established a network of contacts at each Southwest office to report on “life performance” of employees such as personal accomplishments, new babies and weddings, among other occasions for which they send congratulatory notes. A little thing like a handwritten note can make the difference between a merely satisfied employee and a dedicated, passionate one.

Little things make a difference in sales. Mark Higgins with Clear Choice Telephones, called to share how the “little thing” of writing one “Thanks for the Referral” note card — in advance of getting a referral — generated a quick referral and closed business in the same week. He commented that 2 - 3 minutes of time, including the time to put the note in the mailbox, resulted in a closed sale where even one visit would have been a minimum of 30 - 45 minutes.

Another client, P. Scanlon, a personal fitness trainer, had the experience of **a handwritten note turning a “No” prospect into a “Yes” client, resulting in an 87% boost in her business for the month.**

Nancy Sfameni, a residential real estate professional with Coldwell Banker, had this to say about the notes she writes:

“I use the Note-working Success System cards for everyone — including my car repair man, vendors and clients. I even sent one to the teller at my bank that helped me one day.

Weeks later when I went back to the bank she called me over and she still had the card at her station. She was still excited about receiving it. At that moment I realized the power of that note. I was still in the forefront of her mind.

Today I spend more time thanking people with a short note. I have noticed a positive difference in the way people talk to me when I run into them or call them on the phone in their warmth and smiles. I have to say it makes me more aware too. I have even used some of my cards as sympathy cards. One of the things I like with this system is that you literally are given sample messages to write. Plus, I keep my notes short, which take no time at all.”

Individuals love to be noticed. Because of our need to be appreciated, anything that is done in a personal way naturally solicits a positive response.

The most successful sales professionals are masters at building relationships with the contacts they make. Handwritten notes are highly effective in getting a sales professional in the door for a cold contact.

This story from Robert Middleton's *“The More Clients Blog”* illustrates the impact of a handwritten note with a 90% effectiveness rate:

“Geoffrey Bellman carefully selected a list of 20 HR directors and sent them a series of 4 articles; each mailing was personalized with a handwritten note. His final mailing was a letter asking for an appointment.”

“In his follow-up calls he was able to get 18 appointments. That's a 90% success rate! Bellman pointed out that he wasn't trying to sell, but establish credibility and develop relationships. Several of these connections ultimately turned into clients.”

“Some of the keys to his success were: a) personalization – he really knew who he was making contact with; b) value – the articles were not sales pitches, but contained information useful to those who received them; c) a focus on relationship, not an immediate transaction; and d) great execution and follow-up.”

So, how do handwritten notes fit in your particular situation? Whether you are currently in a position of leadership, in sales or customer relationship management, **you can expand your influence through the regular habit of handwriting notes.**

- Handwritten notes create an atmosphere of intimacy that is unique and powerful.
- Handwritten notes show a level of sophistication and caring that sets the note writer apart.
- Handwritten notes tip the scales in favor of the sender when other qualifications are equal.
- Handwritten notes touch your emotions and are memorable.

Start your habit now of handwriting personal notes. Set aside 10 - 15 minutes every day and measure the impact of the notes you write. You will be amazed.

Find out more about the individuals and companies referenced in this article...

“The Carrot Principle” by Adrian Gostick and Chester Elton, www.Carrots.com

Southwest Airlines, referenced in book **“Wear Clean Underwear, Business Wisdom from Mom”** by Rhonda Abrams, www.planningshop.com

Mark Higgins, Clear Choice Telephones, www.clearchoiceinc.com

P.Scanlon, Fitness, Image & Lifestyle Consultant, President of Roswell Healthy Lifestyle Advisory Board

Nancy Sfameni, Coldwell Banker

Robert Middleton, **The More Clients Blog**, www.actionplan.blogs.com

Start your habit now of handwriting personal notes — measure the impact and be amazed!

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