

# The Power of a Simple Thank You Note



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During a break at the conference where I had just spoken on “Connection, Empathy, and Leadership Presence,” a man from the audience told me this story: “When one of our leadership team members suddenly died, I told his wife that I’d clean out his office and make sure she received all his personal effects. In

doing so, I opened one of his desk drawers to find dozens of note papers, neatly stacked. He had worked at our organization for over 25 years, and this drawer was filled with the handwritten 'thank you' messages that our CEO had sent him during his career. My colleague had saved each and every one. It was a touching example of the lasting impact of this simple gesture of gratitude."

Saying "thank you" is simple – and powerful – but too often it's also underrated and underused. Displays of gratitude can lay the foundation for a positive relationship with bosses, subordinates, and co-workers. Whether it's an appreciate email, a praise call, a note of thanks, or an in-person acknowledgment, empathetic leaders keep finding ways to point out a person's strength, compliment them on their accomplishments, and thank them for their support.

In most cases, regardless of the medium, the content can be the similar, and timing always matters when saying "thank you." In this case, the sooner, the better. Don't wait days or weeks after an event to express your appreciation. Do it right away – and you'll greatly increase the impact of your appreciative comment.

Here are a few ideas to get you started. You'll note that none of these are generalized, "thanks for all you do" statements. It is much more effective to refer to a specific behavior, event, or occasion:

"I appreciate it when you . . ."

"I've been noticing how well you . . . "

"Your advice helped me realize . . ."

"Our conversations mean so much to me because . . ."

"You displayed real leadership presence when you . . ."

"Thank you for . . . "

Authors of a study published in Psychological Science asked people to write a short “gratitude letter” to someone who had affected them. They found that the writers overestimated how awkward or insincere those letters might sound – and greatly underestimated the happiness their recipients would feel.

In these techno-savvy times, it can seem almost quaint to find an actual pen, write a physical note, stamp, and mail it. When you try this (and I hope you do), you may never know the positive impact you’re making – but I guarantee that someone will be saving your every note.



**About the Author:** *Carol’s passion for showing audiences how to develop the verbal and nonverbal habits of leadership presence, has helped thousands of leaders in 32 countries reach their next-level career goals. She is an international keynote speaker and seminar leader, executive coach, creator of LinkedIn Learning’s best-selling video courses, Body Language for Leaders and Collaborative Leadership, and author of the award-winning book, STAND OUT: How to Build Your Leadership Presence. To book Carol to speak at your next in-person or virtual event, contact her at Carol: [Carol@CarolKinseyGoman.com](mailto:Carol@CarolKinseyGoman.com) or through her website: <https://CarolKinseyGoman.com>*