

## Whatever Happened to “Thank You”?

by Lillian D. Bjorseth

I grew up thinking that “thank you” is an automatic response when someone does something for you. It shows appreciation, consideration and respect for the person who goes out of her/his way ... whether it is a small thing, medium or huge.

What’s happened to this simple gesture that is such a vital part of the relationship-building process? It generally doesn’t cost anything except a few seconds or minutes of your time.

Being in the networking and communication business, I have ample opportunities to connect people and pass on referrals and leads.

What blows my mind is that with the immediacy of email, texting, LinkedIn and, yes, the telephone that I don’t hear back from one or sometimes both of the people I connect or those to whom I gave referrals. I do my homework so I know my recommendations have a good chance to succeed.

I keep asking myself, “Why?”

One of the reasons could be that emailing or texting is colder and more impersonal than speaking in person ... and people aren’t as compelled to be gracious since they don’t see the whites of your eyes.

It’s not that people expect you to spend money to say “thank you.” What they would appreciate is gratitude for the time and effort they expended. Simple, occasional updates if the process is ongoing like a job referral or a sales lead are also a really nice touch.

These guidelines may remind you to say “thank you” more often:

- Immediately follow up with a short note of thanks when you receive a job or sales lead or any other referral that eliminates another step in the six degrees of separation.
- After your first interaction or after the first meeting, again send a short note to inform the person who made the referral that you have connected with your target.
- If the process is prolonged, occasionally inform the person making the referral of your progress. That person, by the way, may be just the right one to intervene on your behalf and get the wheels moving again.
- Absolutely, unequivocally inform the person who gave you the lead when the sale is made or the job is offered/accepted! It’s hard to think of any reason that would keep you mum at this point.

- If you landed a job or the sale is substantial (and depending on your arrangement with the other person), consider sending a small gift such as flowers, a box of (good) golf balls, a restaurant gift certificate etc. It is vital that the gift match the other person's interest ... so do your homework. Suggest breakfast or lunch if you know the person well enough and think s/he would be comfortable. Generally, don't suggest dinner as that can have a questionable connotation, particularly if the person is of the opposite sex.
- Optional: If the referral never pans out, you might after several months wish to notify the person giving it that nothing conclusive happened.
- Also, send a short note to every LinkedIn request you accept. Stand out from the crowd!

One of the prevalent themes at an IT seminar I attended was that technology people are usually far better at dealing with data than with people. One of the panelists recalled how in graduate school he was given an assignment that assumed he had been promoted and had to prioritize his new inbox. He recalled being soundly reprimanded for choosing to put three congratulatory notes at the bottom of the list and not respond to them.

Aren't you glad you don't do that?!

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**Lillian Bjorseth helps you build a new kind of wealth – social capital – by improving your face-to-face and networking and communication skills. She's an acclaimed speaker, trainer, coach and prolific author and certified DiSC trainer. She was named 2009 Outstanding Chicago Speaker and 2010 Member of the Year by the National Speakers Association-IL Chapter. Contact her at [lillianspeaks@duoforce.com](mailto:lillianspeaks@duoforce.com); [www.duoforce.com](http://www.duoforce.com), [www.lilliancommunicates.com](http://www.lilliancommunicates.com); [www.greaterchicagonetworking.com](http://www.greaterchicagonetworking.com)**