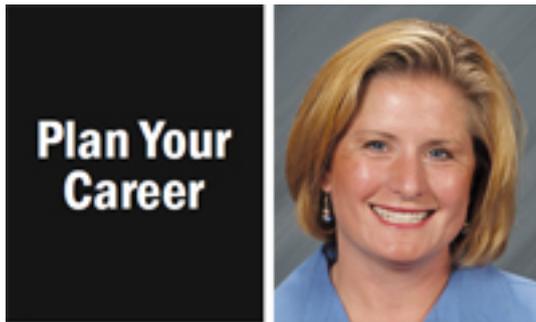


Gracious ways to say thank you

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'Tis the season for shopping, spending, wrapping, ripping open, returning and regifting. It's a time of wondering what someone else might want or need and then making an effort to provide it. And it's as good a time as any to say, "Thank you."

Thank you. Two little words that really pack it in. Saying thank you lifts someone else up by recognizing that he or she invested time, energy or money to lift you up. But thank you is also humbling: it is an acknowledgement that you had a need, that you required or desired something and that someone else was in a position to give it to you.

Is that why people forget to say thank you? If I found a twenty dollar bill on the sidewalk, I would remember it. Every time I walked by that spot on the sidewalk, I would smile to myself, remembering. I might tell my friends about it. I might look around in case there's another twenty the next time I pass that particular location. But if you do me a favor, I might forget. A wrapped gift? I might unwrap it with some excitement, discover what it is and appreciate it. But I might forget to give my gift in return: a sincere and simple, Thank you.

Motivator William Arthur Ward describes that disappointed feeling that creeps in when the Thank You gets missed in the excitement of getting. He says, "Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it." The transaction is incomplete. And yet, how difficult is it, really, to express gratitude?

If you find the phrase Thank You tends to stick to the roof of your mouth, you can start now to practice gratitude. The right expression might be a genuine smile and, "Hey, thanks." Or it could be more interesting. An appreciative houseguest might say, "You treated me like family; thank you, anyway." A gift of money deserves thanks, of course. Try, "Thank you for the check. It was the right color and just my size." And some gifts are too big for words, in which case one might say, "I'm speechless. Thank you."

Thank you can be an elaborate letter or a meaningful look into someone's eyes. It can include a handshake, a smile or a hug. However you express it, give thanks with zeal, remembering the gift and give the way you regard that spot on the sidewalk where the twenty dollar bill smiled up at you. This is it! You remember with a smile. You might tell your friends. You remember the conversation you were having when you received the gift. Gather up that thrilling feeling and keep it in mind when you tell someone, Thank you.