

Having Gratitude Is Just the Beginning to True Success



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Experts throughout the business and personal development spaces have been focusing on “gratitude” as a significant factor for a successful mindset for years. And they are right. Being thankful re-orientates our minds towards the positive. It brings peace by calming the mind and shifting us out of fight-or-flight mode. Perhaps most importantly, gratitude adjusts our perspective by helping us realize there is something “bigger” than us. With tremendous irony, this humility (whether personal or corporate) can lead to greatness.

As important as gratitude truly is, alone it is simply not enough. We need to go beyond gratitude. If our gratitude

remains merely a mindset, then we are missing out on the real power of gratitude to positively affect other people and our world. Instead, we need to grow from a gratitude mindset to a gratitude lifestyle. Beyond gratitude means SEALing gratitude into our lives (yes, it's an acronym... Stretch, Express, Act, Look).

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While it is definitely a move in the right direction for me to be grateful for the opportunity to work with my clients, if I stop with that, I am missing other opportunities. My mindset might be in the right place, and that may even lead to a lasting impact on the world around me. However, living "beyond gratitude" will allow me to impact the world by directly and positively affecting peoples' lives right now.

Doing so is simple yet difficult. It is simple in the fact that it merely requires us to show our gratitude and build that into a regular part of our daily lives. The difficulty lies in getting out of our comfort zones and actually following through, creating the necessary habits. So, I recommend we all SEAL our gratitude.

First of all, it is important to Stretch our gratitude mindset. It's easy to appreciate the good in life. How about hardships? Are we thankful for those too? If we are going to make gratitude an integral part of our lives, we must be intentional about finding the silver lining in everything. Every difficulty provides opportunity; every bad decision yields something to be learned; every heartache contrasts the beauty of life and relationships we still have. One personal example... When Covid hit and I was furloughed from my job, rather than be angry at the universe or succumb to self-pity, I chose to be grateful for the opportunity to pursue writing a book and building the business I have wanted for decades.

Very few (if any) experiences in life are unique to an individual. We all experience newness (birth of new life, new jobs, new relationships); we all experience loss (death of pets or loved ones, jobs that have ended, or relationship that have fizzled). The meaning we assign to those experiences, however, is very personal. Two people can experience the same set of circumstances and respond very differently. Imagine two people diagnosed with terminal cancer and a prognosis of 6 months to live. One of them might spiral into depression, isolation, fear and regret over all of the things that will never be accomplished. The other might live their remaining life to the fullest, checking off bucket-list items and creating joyful memories with friends and family. Same circumstances but very different responses. We get to choose our response. I'm suggesting that we choose gratitude.

In order to truly embrace gratitude, we have to get it out of our heads. We need to Express that gratitude. If you are thankful for your employees, tell them. When you close the deal that completes your quota for the month, express gratitude to the new client. If you appreciate your parents, let them know. You may never see the impact a sincere expression of gratitude can have. Bill Murphy, Jr. talks about "praise preambles" in his article "Want to Pay Someone a Life-Changing Compliment? Start With These 6 Words. They're Pure Emotional Intelligence". Beginning with a phrase like, "I don't know if anyone ever told you this..." or "I'm not sure if you realize this, but..." gets the person's attention and helps them be prepared and receptive for what you are about to say. He tells about how he used this method to compliment a guest speaker, and how a long-term professional relationship was born from that sentence. She later relayed how powerful his feedback was for her.

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The same technique can be used to express sincere and meaningful gratitude. "I don't know if you realize this, but I

really appreciate all of the hard work you put into this project.” Do you see how that is much deeper than, “Thanks for all your hard work on this project”? So, express your gratitude to others, but do so with sincerity and meaning.

The next step to go beyond gratitude is to Act. Without minimizing the power of words, there is something unique about taking a thoughtful action of gratitude. It can be as small as sending a card or as significant as a customer appreciation event/day. Whatever action you take, it also needs to be sincere and thoughtful.

Recently, I decided to try a relatively new, free web app called Dokkio. It consolidates all of your online storage accounts into a single, searchable location and also organizes everything more intuitively. It looked like it might solve some of my issues with files and documents being dispersed across multiple platforms. Within a few days of setting it up, I was invited to a call with a Dokkio rep to see if there was any way they could help me make the most of the tool. At this point, Dokkio is free, so I have not paid them a penny. I scheduled the call, and at the appropriate time, I jumped into a video chat with Matt. He asked me if it was OK to wait a moment; the CEO, Jim Groff, wanted to join the call.

So, I discussed my Dokkio experience with Matt and Jim. They listened. They offered suggestions. They took notes. They told me how valuable my feedback was. Then when the call was just about done, they told me they would be emailing me a \$50 Amazon gift e-card. Not that I expected a gift card at all, but a \$10 or \$20 gift card would have been generous in my mind. This was \$50, and for a free service that I am using to make my life easier! What an amazing example of gratitude in action.

Finally, as we grow in a beyond-grateful mindset, we need to actively Look around us for opportunities to be grateful. This is where habit formation begins to take place. Being grateful

puts us in the right mindset; expressing and acting in those moments keeps us there; but actively looking for experiences in life for which to be grateful, shapes a lifestyle of gratitude. If budgets are tight, find ways to express gratitude anyway*. If you are frustrated with a situation, find ways to be grateful anyway. If you feel the weight of many of life's challenges, find ways to show gratitude anyway. That is how we live beyond grateful every day. It's about being proactive and mindful. Doing so will benefit your life, your work, and the lives of everyone for whom you are grateful.

*For those of you who might be struggling to think of ways to be grateful, I recommend the book, *The Gratitude Challenge: 41 Days to a Happier, Healthier, and More Content Life* by Stephanie Jones.

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