

Different and Effective Ways to Say Thank You to Your Customers

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Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll... and Thank You Notes

"Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll", a 1977 single by Ian Dury, popularized the phrase. The song begins with the lyrics:

*Sex and drugs and rock and roll
Is all my brain and body need
Sex and drugs and rock and roll
Are very good indeed...*

The counterculture of the 'Swinging Sixties' celebrated new ideas and approaches to life with a focus on fun, mind expansion, and casting off the restraints of previous decades.

While Ian Dury correctly captured the tone of the 60's, the advice your mother shared with you is equally accurate though maybe not seemingly as exciting. Her message, 'It's important to write thank you notes.

The digital age brings far more changes to our thinking than imagined in the 60's. The number of communication methods we have today is the comic book fantasy of the 60's. We have email, texting, and video chat. We can message around the world in an instant with social media. All this power is in our pocket and on your wrist.

Along with this powerful convenience, these communication channels have greatly added to the number of tasks required to stay connected.

The solution: Simplify by dropping tasks deemed as no longer necessary

Unfortunately, one of the tasks we've dropped, is sending thank you notes to show appreciation for efforts by others for us. To many, thank you notes are more work than they are worth, and it's too easy to send a text or email instead.

Over the last few years, a few more articles have bashed thank you notes as passé. While it's common to find reasons for halting a practice, it's a shame writing thank you notes has received a bad rap because they no longer fit the lifestyles for some in our new world.

Fortunately, along with other technological advances, we have new tools to study our brains and the impact our activities and choices have on us.

Scientific research and experiments in neuropsychology show beyond a shadow of a doubt that writing thank you notes serves both the writer and the receiver. This is good news for those who enjoy writing thank you notes and those deciding which activities are most important. Those who write thank you notes already knew this.

Adding to the research is the work of Amit Kumar and Nicholas Epley of Booth School of Business, The University of Chicago. Their research findings were published on June 27, 2018 in an article titled: *Undervaluing Gratitude: Expressers Misunderstand the Consequences of Showing Appreciation.*

Expressing gratitude improves the well-being for both expressers and recipients, and an egocentric bias leads expresser to systematically undervalue its positive impact on recipients in a way which keeps people from expressing gratitude more often in everyday life.

When I first read the research, I flashed back to the 60's

In 1964, at the age of six, mom gave me \$1.50 for a \$1.45 haircut. Back then, it was common to send a 6-year old down the road and on their own.

The barber didn't think much of kids and the flat top I requested came out a buzz cut. Since I'd been taught not to complain, I didn't say anything. When I paid him, he looked disgusted at me and put the money in the cash drawer effectively taking a 5-cent tip. I left with a bad haircut, a glare, and robbed of 5 cents. To this day, I think he did it on purpose as a shop joke. In the end, I guess the joke was on them because they went out of business soon.

Still, I was embarrassed and stuck with a buzz cut.

As Ms. Avery, my new second grade teacher, called our names on our first day, I couldn't help flushing bright red when she called my name. She seemed to be having trouble spotting me, so I raised my hand. She said, "I'm sorry Jeffrey, I didn't recognize you." The entire class laughed.

It took everything in me to hold back the tears.

The next day, I dragged myself to class with the enthusiasm of a cat to a dog convention. As I opened my desk, I found a thank you note from Ms. Avery. She thanked me for being brave and wrote she was thrilled to be my teacher.

That note made all the difference in the world to me though I never told Ms. Avery.

I wished I'd told Ms. Avery what her note meant to me. I wish I'd told her how I'd avoided everyone on the playground during the day and left school as soon as possible. I wish I'd told her my parents wondered why I didn't talk much during dinner. I wish I'd told her, right up to the moment I read her note, I didn't want to be at school anymore.

It was good to read the new research about thank you notes benefiting both the writer and the receiver and made me feel less remorse for not telling Ms. Avery how much her note meant.

Her note gave me a personal experience on the value of thank you notes. Because of her note to me, plus the often prodding from my mother, I've been pretty good through the years about writing thank you notes.

Here are a few things I've learned:

- Notes need to come from the heart
- While a text or an email is better than nothing, a phone call is better, and a written note better still
- Research shows hand-written notes (make sure they are legible) have a higher impact than typed notes
- Notes don't have to be long to be effective – just thoughtful

Yes, things have changed from the 60's. It's rare a 6-year old is sent out on their own, a haircut is far more expensive than \$1.45, children are encouraged to speak up, and science brings us better tools to understand our brains and their responses: We can make better choices about the activities we invest our time on.

Speaking of the 60's, a joke I heard my mom tell my dad one night was...

You know why southern bells don't go to orgies? Why? Too many thank you notes to write.

That joke says a great deal about the 60's and how times have changed in so many ways.

Thank you notes impact people in ways you cannot predict, and know you know from science thank you notes do as much for the writer as the receiver.

Do something good for yourself today – and write a thank you note to someone.

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