



Leadership Tips and Tools

November 2004

As we enter this season of thankfulness and gift-giving, we experience the transforming nature of gratitude. We are heartily aware of our relationships.

“Leadership is a relationship,” as Kouzes and Posner point out. Relationships take work. As leaders, we must take personal responsibility for making relationships work. We nurture relationships by showing thankfulness and appreciation to others. We encourage others by recognizing and celebrating their contributions and successes. We sustain supportive teams by personalizing thankfulness and by encouraging an appreciative approach within the community.

In *The Leader’s Handbook*, Peter Scholtes reminds us that, “Understanding people requires understanding relationships. Leading people requires establishing personal relationships, nurturing these relationships on a daily basis, and encouraging others to form and nurture relationships as well.”

This edition of *Leadership Tips and Tools* is devoted to Thankful Leadership – Appreciating and Celebrating Others.

Appreciating and Celebrating Others

The following tips and tools are simple daily behaviors that can have a powerful effect on relationships. We each need to personalize our appreciation and recognition to meet the needs of the other person.



Personalizing our efforts will help build positive relationships and encourage others. The result will be an abundance of thankfulness and appreciation in our classrooms, offices, colleges, and communities.

- ◆ **Gratitude at Your Finger Tips!** Keep a stack of note cards on your desk where you can’t ignore them. Begin your day by writing a quick thank you note to one member of your campus community. Make sure it is in the morning mail.
- ◆ **Celebrate the Day!** Write notes at the end of the day. Take a few minutes before you leave your office for the day to write thank you notes to members of your campus community who made a difference that day. A gift of recognition for them – a chance to frame the day with appreciation for you!

- ◆ **Pass it On!** Whenever you hear positive comments, pass them on to the person about whom the comments were made. Take advantage of this opportunity to let others know you are listening and appreciating the contributions they are

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making! Whether it is a passing word of praise for a staff member by faculty, a student's complement about their teacher, or a published success about a student in the local newspaper—pass it on!

- ◆ **Make it a Family Affair!** Write a note recognizing, celebrating, and thanking faculty, staff, or students. Address and mail the thank you note to a member of their family. Husbands, wives, partners, parents, children - young or grown – will all appreciate hearing from you about the successes of their significant other. Just imagine coming home to cheerful teenagers who have received a note from a parent's leader recognizing the time, energy, and talent the parent devotes to his/her work place.
- ◆ **Pen a Note!** We have all grown too dependent on technology as the medium for our messages. Next time, write a handwritten personal note recognizing and celebrating the talents of others. Put the note in campus mail, send it home – don't worry about penmanship – it does not count! Recognition does!
- ◆ **Post It!** Carry a packet of Post-It sticky notes in your pocket. Write a quick thank you or positive affirmation and post it on the door of a colleague as you pass. Write a note and stick it to the desk blotter of your administrative assistant while he/she is on an errand. Post your appreciation on the stack of papers left behind on a teacher's desk. Secretly spread appreciation. Make appreciation "stick" with these colorful little notes! 
- ◆ **Out to Lunch!** Too often we spend our lunch hour at our desk trying to get a step ahead. Take a break to appreciate! Take a colleague to lunch to thank him/her for his/her contribution to the team. Have lunch in the student commons WITH students and thank them for choosing your campus for their learning opportunity. "Brown Bag It" with colleagues in the staff office. We each have five lunches a week to appreciate others. Don't skip the feast!
- ◆ **Appreciation Journal!** Keep an appreciation or gratitude journal. As you reflect on each day, take a few minutes to write down the names of people who have made a difference in your day. Note the person and a short comment to remember and appreciate the abundance that others bring to your life. Turn to your Appreciation Journal on the toughest days. By reflecting and remembering those that share even the smallest kindnesses helps us reframe and renew for a new day.
- ◆ **A Penny for Your Thoughts!** At the beginning of the day, put five pennies in your pocket. During the day, each time you praise a colleague or student, transfer a coin to your other pocket. It may sound corny, but it works. And soon, praising will become a habit and you won't have to rely on tricks like this one.
- ◆ **Surprise and Delight!** Use voicemail. Rather than using it only to assign tasks, make requests, or report progress, leave members of your community voicemail messages praising them for a job well done. Do it from your cell phone on your way home. They will be surprised and delighted at what is waiting for them when they return to work the next morning. 
- ◆ **Capture the Moment!** Use email. Be in the moment! Send off quick emails to show appreciation to those who have contributed to the team's success. Establish an email network with friends and colleagues like the listserv for each of the Academy classes. Use the network to share your appreciation for each other, your campus, and your own achievements. Bragging is welcomed among a community of like-minded friends who are connected for the expressed purpose of appreciation.

◆ **Roll the Credits!** Take a tip from Hollywood. We are all aware of the credits at the end of movies and television shows. The credits recognize the talented people who have contributed to the show's success. Take time to add credits at the end of email messages. Roll the credits and recognize the gifts of the talented people with whom you work.

◆ **Make Time!** Set the timer on your computer Outlook message system. Set the timer to go off just before the class passing period at 9:45, 10:45, 11:45, etc. Use this as a reminder to get up from your desk and walk around the office and the halls to meet, greet, and thank faculty, staff, and students. Your visibility will communicate powerful messages! Make it a point to stop and visit with at least one member of your campus community during each "time out."

◆ **Help Others Feel Heard!** Stop what you are doing. Give others your full attention. Show appreciation to others by helping them feel heard! When greeting others in the halls and saying, "Hi, how are you?" stop long enough to HEAR the answer.

◆ **Create an Appreciation Zone!** Hang a message board and include lots of colorful markers. Write notes on the board to members of the team thanking them for their contributions to the day. Encourage team members to recognize each other. Create a culture of supportive, affirming, and appreciative communication through the message board.



◆ **Wear Your Slippers to Work!** Have a "slippers" day! After a stretch of stressful days like semester start up and final exams, invite staff and faculty to wear their slippers to work! Wear yours, too. Have fun and enjoy the team's success.

◆ **It's the Thought That Counts!** Some campuses have well-established recognition systems of awards, plaques, coffee mugs, parking spaces, certificates, etc. Add your own rituals and gifts. Perhaps it's a "100 Grand" candy bar for the person who gave much to a project, a chocolate "Hug" or "Kiss" for those who are working hard for student success, a bag of "Smarties" candies for the staff member who figured out a creative solution, or a roll of "Lifesavers" to the person who "saved your life" this week. Large or small, it's the thought that counts!

◆ **Gift of Possibility!** Buy a lottery ticket. Give it in appreciation to someone who has made a significant contribution to your team. Enjoy the humor surrounding the possibilities of winning the lottery – and of sharing the winnings! In fact, they have already won and so have you!

◆ **Share a Good Book!** *How Full is Your Bucket?* This lovely little book by the grandfather of "positive psychology," Donald O. Clifton, and his adoring grandson, Tom Rath, is full of wise words and positive strategies for "filling each other's buckets." As Rath and Clifton write, "Everyone has an invisible bucket. We are at our best when our buckets are overflowing – and at our worst when they are empty."

◆ **Five a Day!** No matter how you plan to recognize, appreciate, and celebrate others on your campuses and in your communities, remember "five a day!" It's good for others! It's good for our campuses and communities! It's good for us!



Thank You