

Thankfulness Today and Everyday  
By Andy Bailey  
Founder and CEO, Petra Coach

Today's the day we give thanks. We gather round a table, eat way too much turkey and reflect on who and what we're thankful for – that is, if we can find the time in between servings of sweet potatoes casserole.

The awesome thing about thanks, is that it's a two-way gift – it makes both the giver and the recipient happy. In MBA-speak, it's the often sought but rarely achieved “win-win.”

University of Miami psychology professor Michael McCullough says: "When you are stopping and counting your blessings, you are sort of hijacking your emotional system."

Meaning, when you take time to genuinely think about what you're thankful for, your mind turns off all of the negativity that's been bogging you down.

Unfortunately, we so often forget the power of thankfulness. Have you, in the last 90 days – today excluded – given meaningful and specific appreciation to another person? And just writing the word, “thanks” in your email tag doesn't count.

If you're like 99 percent of people, the answer is no. Very few of us regularly practice giving thanks. No wonder we need a day dedicated to it; we need to make up for all the thanking we've missed throughout the year.

I get it, though. Giving and receiving thanks makes many people uncomfortable. (It's probably because it's so foreign in our society.) I say, get uncomfortable! Personal growth requires moving outside your comfort zone.

Here are a few ways you can begin giving THANKS daily. These tips can, and should be employed at home *and* at the office. After all, you spend a lot of time with your work family. In 40+ hours every week, you have the opportunity to positively impact your team member's lives with genuine appreciation. Do it.

- **Roundtable.** Many families practice the Thanksgiving tradition of sitting around the table and one-by-one divulging what each person is thankful for. I have no idea why we don't make this a more regular table practice – at home and at work. We so often go through life without delving beneath the surface. Our conversations are often limited to small talk. You can't get very far with that. When people share what they appreciate, the group reaches a new level of communication and understanding. It's an awesome thing. This topic not only gets family-talk off to a great start, but it can launch an office lunch discussion that bonds your team.
- **Daily diary.** Everyday, I jot down one thing about my wife I appreciate. It not only

helps me focus on my wife's greatness, but one day she can glance at my journal and see just how wonderful she is from someone else's eyes. My appreciation journal is specific about what I appreciate about my wife, but your appreciation journal can be whatever you want it to be. This may not translate into an office-specific thankfulness activity, but when you practice thankfulness independently, it positively affects every aspect of your life. I know this may sound hokey, but it works. Big time. Try it and let me know what you think.

- **Gratitude jar.** An old blue mason jar sits on our dining room table. Nearby are note cards and a few pens. At our family dinners we each grab a notecard and write what we're grateful for that day, then add it to the jar. On New Year's Day, we flip the mason jar upside down and pour the notecards on the floor. We read them and remember what we were thankful for during the past year. It's become a little family tradition. You can easily make this your own at home and at the office.

For an office-specific jar, ask team members to drop a notecard of work-specific appreciation into the mason whenever they feel so inclined. You can pour out the notecards whenever appropriate. Maybe it's a monthly or quarterly activity to boost morale and reinforce a positive company culture. This activity doesn't require too much effort or distraction. I definitely recommend it.

- **Empty frame.** This idea is from one of my Texas friends, and it's one of my new favorites. I recently came home with a little picture frame —no picture — just the frame. It sits on the vanity in the bathroom I share with my wife. I take a whiteboard marker and write a little note of appreciation to her and just leave it on her side of the vanity. Whenever she feels so inclined, she can wipe off my note, write one back and place it to my side of the vanity.

This type of thing could easily fit in an office setting. Instead of vanities, place the frame on the team member's desk you appreciate. It'll brighten that person's day and he or she will pass on the gracious attitude.

Even if you don't insert any of these tips into your daily routines, at least do yourself and your loved ones a favor and be truly thankful today. Steer clear of any complaints or criticism. I guarantee, whatever you may be complaining about, there are thousands of people on their knees begging to have what you have.

Happy Thanksgiving! I appreciate you for reading my twice-a-month ramblings. #+10Khb.