

Application Guide

LEADING WITH GRATITUDE



BOTTOM LINE:

Unexpressed gratitude is perceived as ingratitude. Leaders must express gratitude to build loyalty, culture, and emotional connection within their teams.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- I. Leaders are future-focused; always thinking ahead about goals, progress, and next steps.
 - A. Because of that, leaders often forget to look back and acknowledge what's been done.
 - B. Gratitude gets lost in the push for momentum, resulting in people feeling unseen or undervalued.
- II. Most leaders **feel** gratitude but don't **express** it.
 - A. Expressing gratitude is critical because people can't read your intentions and they often perceive silence as ingratitude.
 - B. A healthy culture depends on everyone expressing thanks, not assuming others "know."
- III. Many leaders think, *"They're just doing what I'm paying them to do, why do I have to thank them?"* But there's no **emotional connection** between hard work and a direct deposit.
 - A. People want to feel recognized and appreciated for their contribution—not just compensated.
 - B. The only way to fill that gap is to say thank you.
- IV. Gratitude has a ripple effect.
 - A. When the person at the top is quick to express gratitude, it encourages other people to express gratitude.
 - B. When you know the work you're doing is valued by the people that are employing you, it changes the way you show up at work.
 - C. People gravitate toward **acceptance**.
 1. In the workplace, **recognition = acceptance**.
 2. Gratitude is a powerful form of recognition—it tells someone, "I see the work you're doing, and I'm grateful for it."
 - D. Cultures without gratitude weaken emotional connection and belonging, but a culture of gratitude strengthens loyalty and morale.
- V. The higher you rise in an organization, the less gratitude you receive.
 - A. Gratitude typically flows downward, not upward—but leaders need appreciation too.
 - B. Gratitude works both ways and it impacts the culture both ways. So don't fall into the trap of thinking that your leader owes you, but you don't owe them. Everyone owes gratitude to someone in the organization.
- VI. Unexpressed gratitude isn't neutral—it communicates something harmful: "You're replaceable" or "You're not essential."
- VII. Three Habits of Expressing Gratitude
 - A. Be Specific**
 1. Don't just say "thank you." Name exactly what someone did and why it mattered.
 2. The more specific you can be the better. Specificity shows attention and authenticity.
 - B. Be Honest**
 1. Only thank people for things you genuinely value.
 2. Insincerity is easily detected and undermines trust.

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C. Go Public

1. Public gratitude multiplies impact.
2. Recognizing team members in meetings or company channels encourages a culture of appreciation.

VIII. Practical Ways to Start Building a Rhythm of Gratitude

- A. **Thank-you notes/cards:** Simple but powerful. Especially for behind-the-scenes staff (quiet contributors) who are mission critical but don't often get noticed.
- B. **Staff meetings:** Begin meetings with shout-outs to highlight team contributions.
- C. **Team platforms (Slack, Teams):** Use public channels for "shoutouts" and recognition.
- D. **Verbal appreciation:** Reminding people how vital they are.

IX. Small habits of gratitude communicate: I see you, I value you, and I couldn't do this without you.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR TEAM DISCUSSION

1. How would you describe the current "gratitude culture" on your team?
2. When was the last time you publicly recognized someone's contribution? When was the last time you were publicly recognized for your contributions?
3. Is there anyone on your team who rarely gets recognized but is mission critical to your success?
4. How can you make expressed gratitude a systemic habit, not a random gesture in your organization?
5. What barriers make expressing gratitude harder in your organization, and how can you remove them?

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