

# *Put the "Thanks" in Thanksgiving*

How to Write a Thanksgiving Letter to Employees



# Thank you

Your employees work hard for you all year. What better season to express your gratitude than Thanksgiving? Put the “Thanks” in Thanksgiving with a heartfelt note! Whether you’re handwriting a Thank You card to each member of your team, or composing a Thanksgiving message to your entire staff, be sure you’re communicating your appreciation in a way that employees will remember year-round.

## Why Employees Need to Hear ‘Thank You’

Your “thanks” reassures and motivates employees.

“People thrive on getting feedback. When people thank each other and recognize each other in a human way” — not bonuses — “retention goes up by almost 30 percent,” according to Josh Bersin of Bersin by Deloitte.

The enormous impact of recognition will transform the workplace of the future, as Bersin envisions it. But we have some catching up to do to get there. The workplace currently ranks last among places people express gratitude. In a John Templeton Foundation survey of 2,000 people, almost all said thanking colleagues “makes me feel happier and more fulfilled,” yet only 10 percent said they act on this impulse daily.

HR is responding to the call for more recognition. Nearly three-quarters of 300-plus HR pros surveyed at the 2016 SHRM Annual Conference said they “plan to expand their recognition programs over the next year.”

Employee Thank You notes are among the top three recognition initiatives having the biggest impact on engagement, the SHRM survey found. Not only do Thank You notes fill the need for low-cost recognition, *they work*. Employees who are regularly recognized stay at their jobs two years longer on average, according to **O.C. Tanner research**.

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## Leaders Are Responsible for Saying ‘Thank You’

Who writes your organization’s Thanksgiving Thank You note? Leadership! Recognition needs to start from the top. It’s up to leaders to model, train and reinforce recognition for it to be part of the workplace culture.

The key to great employee recognition is not how much a company spends but how the recognition is communicated — namely, “what makes it meaningful and memorable for the employee and who is doing the recognizing,” according to Gallup research analysis, **“Employee Recognition: Low Cost, High Impact.”**

Gallup asked employees in a recent workplace survey to recall who gave them their most meaningful and memorable recognition. By a wide margin, most employees named a manager, CEO or other company leader, reinforcing the importance of top-town recognition.

“Even a small amount of time a high-ranking leader takes to show appreciation can yield a positive impression on an employee. In fact, acknowledgment from a CEO could become a career highlight,” the Gallup analysis concludes.

Leaders hold the key to transforming workplaces with gratitude. When leaders model gratitude, employees follow.

Ideally, appreciation happens daily at your organization. We call this a “culture of gratitude,” where gratitude is the rule in all aspects of an organization’s structure and operation and, most importantly, leaders commit to it.

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This is not about handing out compliments. Compliments are well-intentioned but they create an emotional distance between the giver and receiver, according to leadership consultant **Lolly Daskal**.

In contrast, ***gratitude creates a bond between manager and employee.***

“Gratitude goes beyond the compliment to the intangible — why you are thankful,” Daskal writes. “People are always glad to have their work acknowledged, but to know that it matters makes it more meaningful.”

## Share in the Gratitude of the Thanksgiving Season

Everyday appreciation builds a relationship beyond a paycheck, but Thanksgiving gratitude is special. Employee Thank You notes and gifts like turkey are a workplace ritual going back generations. They send an important message of thanks at a time of year when gratitude is on everyone’s minds.

“Nearly 400 years after the First Thanksgiving, gratitude is still the byword of the day. On the fourth Thursday of November, most Americans...take seriously the custom of pausing to give thanks. This is the essential meaning of Thanksgiving,” writes **Melanie Kirkpatrick** in her book, **“Thanksgiving: The Holiday at the Heart of the American Experience.”**

Thanksgiving is an uniquely American opportunity for all workplace leaders, not just Fortune 500 leaders. After all, as Americans we are all family on Thanksgiving. As Kirkpatrick puts it, “Thanksgiving remains essentially a family holiday, but on that day, the definition of family extends to the wider community in which we live.”

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## Is Your Company Seizing the Opportunity to Share in the Gratitude of the Season?

Write the kind of Thank You note employees tell their families about and remember years later. It's easier than you think! Read on for Thanksgiving letter examples to inspire you, tips for composing your own Thank You, and best practices for sharing and presentation.





# Thank you

## Learn by Example: Write a Thank You Note Employees Remember

In 2012, **United States Postmaster General Pat Donahue** **wrote the textbook example** of a memorable Thanksgiving Thank You note. His note is thoughtful and honors the spirit of the season.

*As we prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving and count our blessings, I want to take a moment to express my gratitude to you for your hard work this year. You did a tremendous job in the face of significant challenges.*

*You kept the mail moving through several natural disasters, including the western wildfires, the summer derecho and Hurricane Sandy. In each of these instances, you provided excellent service on the job, even while many of you were dealing with disaster-related hardships at home.*

*You also played an essential role during this year's elections, when millions of voters cast their ballots by mail. Thanks to you, our work in this area went smoothly, once again demonstrating the power of mail as a communications channel.*

*I'm especially appreciative that you continued to pull together to help make the changes needed to move the Postal Service forward. No matter what challenge came our way — and there were many — you rose to the occasion and reminded everyone why the Postal Service is so important to America's future.*

*During the next few weeks, our customers will be counting on us to deliver their holiday cards and packages. This is another opportunity for the Postal Service to grow its business — and I know we're all eager to make the most of it.*

*So thank you again for everything you do. I appreciate your hard work and dedication, and I wish each of you a happy and healthy Thanksgiving.*

*Pat Donahoe  
Postmaster General*



### What does the Postmaster General do so well?

- Recognizes the big-picture impact of employee work, giving specific examples.
- Thanks employees for rising to significant challenges.
- Is genuine and heartfelt, not gushing or sentimental.
- Uses a friendly, “we’re in this together” tone of company pride.
- Reiterates his gratitude again with a final “Thank You.”

Keep reading for more inspiring examples of Thanksgiving Thank You notes from bosses to their employees.

## Lessons from Real-Life Thanksgiving Thank You Notes

### 1. Pause to reflect on gratitude. From the **Director of the CIA:**

*As we prepare for Thanksgiving and the holidays that follow, we should pause and reflect on the many blessings that we enjoy — our loved ones, our freedoms as Americans and the privilege of serving our country with a great organization. Given the demands of our work, we too often get caught up in the pace of everyday life and don't take the time to appreciate just how fortunate we are. This is a time for such reflection.*

*In my case, I feel extraordinarily grateful to be serving with you... As Director, I have seen first hand how you go about your jobs, exhibiting impressive ability, dedication, expertise and selflessness. Indeed, quiet service, faithfully and skillfully rendered, is the CIA's defining quality — and it is truly inspirational to observe...*



# Thank you

## 2. Use a familiar greeting. From the **CEO of Apple**:

*Team,*

*Apple is having another incredibly successful year, thanks to all of the hard work by you and your teams. Your focus and dedication to making the best products on earth is what makes Apple such an incredible place.*

*In a little over six months we've launched outstanding new products in each of our major categories, starting with the new iPad this spring. The response was incredible ...*

*To recognize the efforts that made this amazing year possible, I'm happy to announce that we're extending the Thanksgiving holiday once again this year. We will shut down with pay on November 19, 20 and 21 so our teams can spend the whole week with their loved ones. ...*

*Thank you for everything you do for Apple and please enjoy this much deserved break.*

## 3. Don't be afraid to show your pride! From the **President and CEO of NavStar**:

*We know that because of the efforts of our phenomenal team, we not only survived 2011 in a down economy, we thrived. We want 2012 to be even more successful for the company and for you. It's an incredible feeling to know that when I go out to clients — both existing and potential — that there's no way I can oversell the competency and commitment of my team.*

*Thank you for all you do. My door is always open to you.*



# Thank you

#### 4. Tell the “amazing success story” of your company, with employees as key players. From the **CEO of American Airlines**:

*Two years ago this month, we were at a critical moment in our company's history. We faced huge challenges. The skeptics doubted our ability to see our way through.*

*How did the people of American respond? You delivered! You proved wrong all those who questioned our future. On Monday, we will complete our merger with US Airways, one of the most important milestones in the 87-year history of this airline. In so doing, we will have completed one of the most successful restructurings in airline history, or in any industry. This two-year journey — which began under extreme conditions — ends with a win for all stakeholders: our people, customers and owners.*

...

*This all happened because of you — because you care deeply about this airline and our customers. ... Ours is an amazing success story — and the future promises to be even brighter. ... It has been a great privilege to be part of an extraordinary team at an extraordinary time. Thanks for all you do.*





# Thank you

## 5. Quote from a favorite book, poem, film or speech. From the **President of the University of Texas at San Antonio**:

*As we begin the holiday season, I think of a remark by American poet Ralph Waldo Emerson: 'I awoke this morning with devout thanksgiving for my friends, the old and new.' ...*

*Especially in tough times, Thanksgiving is an opportunity to realize that we have much for which we can be thankful. This truly American holiday allows us to focus on our blessings and the freedoms we enjoy. It's inspiring to see so many UTSA community members and groups working to help make the world a better place. Thanks to everyone for your contributions to the community and to UTSA.*

*Harriett and I wish each of you a joyous and peaceful Thanksgiving. Please enjoy the company of your loved ones, think about the importance of old and new friends, be safe and take time to reflect on our many blessings.*

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## 6. Always treat thanking others as an opportunity and privilege. From the **CEO of Park One**:

*It's that time of year when I get to thank everyone for all the wonderful support, commitment, and dedication of the past 12 months. At Park One, we have many things to be thankful for, as 2013 has given us new and exciting projects and contracts that have made us an even better parking solutions provider.*

*First, I would like to thank the employees of Park One. You have helped create premium parking services that have set us apart from our competitors. Your hard work and energy have shaped our company into a national leader in the parking industry. So, thank you for all that you do every day. ...*

*May you all have a blessed and safe holiday filled with wonderful memories. Happy Thanksgiving!"*





# Thank you

## How to Share Your Thanksgiving Thank You Note

You've written a note that conveys your Thanksgiving gratitude. Now it's time to present it to employees. How you share your gratitude is important, too!

Doug Conant, former Campbell's Soup CEO and the architect of a successful turnaround there, has this **advice for workplace leaders**: "You're on display 24/7. It's not the words on the wall; it's how you show up in every interaction."

Your Thank You at Thanksgiving is one of the most important connections you'll make with employees all year, so don't throw your note on the company website and hope employees see it. Make it stand out:

- Deliver in person, with a smile and a handshake.
- Include in a holiday mailing.
- Wrap it up creatively, with a bow.
- Have the CEO, regional manager or other leader read their Thank You note aloud to employees at the holiday office party.
- Post it publicly on social media, so employees can share with family and friends (and brag about what a great company they work for!).

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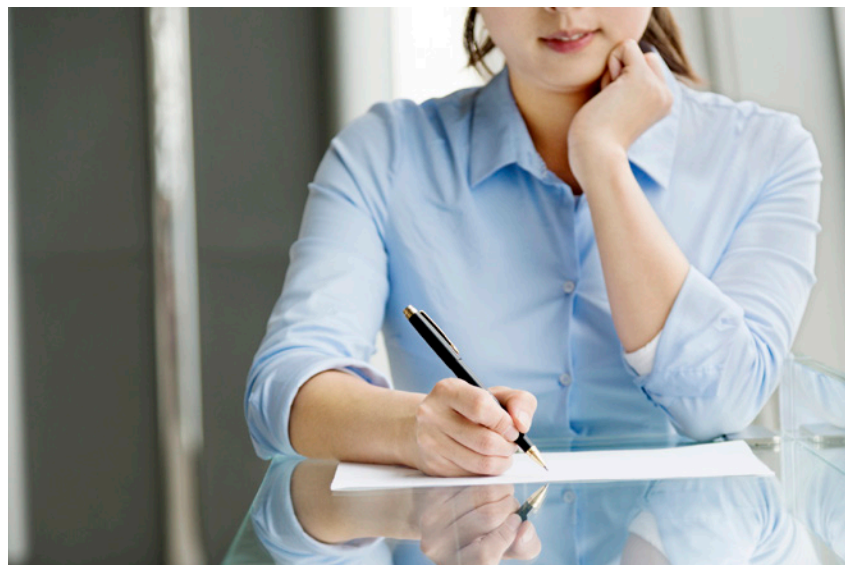






## Bonus Tip: Handwrite your note

The **handwritten Thank You note is making a comeback in corporate culture**. Long banished from the business world as outdated or quaint, thanking employees with a handwritten note is gaining traction because it cuts through the digital noise. As one business expert puts it, “The more crowded our inboxes, ever-greater the impact of the letter or card.” Employees will appreciate the extra effort and care you put into your Thank You!



## Build on your Thank You: Share a Gift

Your heartfelt appreciation is what matters most to employees, period. It motivates excellence, builds a lasting bond and lets employees know they’re valued.

But if budget allows, a Thanksgiving gift can be a great accessory to your Thank You note. Build on your gratitude with a gift that’s meaningful.

When given a choice between a workplace gift or a cash bonus, research shows **employees value gifts more**. The impersonal, unwrapped nature of bonuses actually drives employee motivation and satisfaction less than a thoughtful, personalized gift accompanied by “Thank You.”

“Even the smallest gesture of kindness that shows they’re part of an organization that actually cares can give them purpose — and that leads to motivation,” writes behavioral economics professor and “The Inner Lives of Markets” author Ray Fisman for Harvard Business Review.





# Thank you

Business thrives on making and strengthening connections, and Thank You letters are a powerful way to go about it. Be inspired to start your own Thanksgiving Thank You tradition this year!

## Share a gThankYou! Turkey Gift Certificate this Holiday Season

Here at **gThankYou**, we believe nothing says “Thank You” like the gift of a Thanksgiving turkey. An employee turkey gift is meaningful, appreciated and affordable. Still not convinced? Read **“10 Reasons to Give Employees a Holiday Turkey.”** Our **gThankYou! Turkey Gift Certificates** are easy for you to share and loved by recipients.

gThankYou! Turkey Gift Certificates can be redeemed for **any brand** of turkey at **virtually any major grocery store in the U.S.**

We offer Certificate personalization and customizable “Thank You” **Gratitude Cards** – all FREE with any purchase. Virtually all orders ship the same day, meaning you can have them as soon as the next business day. That way you can focus on what’s really important: **sharing your gratitude with employees!**



Thank you for all your  
contributions to our success!  
Wishing you and your family  
a most Happy Thanksgiving!



Happy Thanksgiving!

There are many words to express our appreciation,  
but “Thank You” still does it best.



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LEARN MORE**

