



The Raphael Report

**Observations on marketing,
advertising, sales and
promotions
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Whatever Happened To “Thank You?”

In the past few months I bought a car, a refrigerator, an air conditioner and a pair of shoes. I never heard from any of the salespeople after the sale. Except the shoe salesman. He wrote a “thank you” note and told me to call him if I had any problems.

Dorothy Lane Markets in Dayton, Ohio calls every person who spends \$100 or more in their store the same day to say, “Thanks for shopping with us.”

Why is that the exception rather than the rule?

What a simple, easy-to-do and extremely profitable return on the investment of a little time and a phone call or envelope and stamp.

Our sales people wrote four “thank you” notes every day. For shopping with us. To make a customer aware their favorite merchandise just arrived. To remind them about an upcoming season or special event when they bought before. One customer who owned a restaurant put a “thank you” postcard from the manager of our men’s shop on the front of her register for all her customers to see. She wanted to show that someone does care when you spend money with them.

We were able to trace a few who came in because they saw the card and wanted to shop with a retailer who appreciated their business.

All because of a “thank you” postcard!

On the night of the Academy Awards, individuals receive their winning trophies and begin their acceptance speeches by saying, “I want to thank . . .” They give a list of individuals who contributed to their success. They acknowledge the support, direction and criticism that contributed to making their work better than it would have been without their guidance.

Well, that’s fine and good and to be admired. We smile approvingly at their remembering those who helped them achieve their exclusive status.

The question for today is, “Whatever happened to ‘thank you’ in every day life?”

Stanley Marcus, the guiding force behind the success of the Neiman-Marcus specialty store chain, once wrote, “A ‘thank you’ may not be remembered, but a failure to say ‘thanks’ can be stored in a memory for a decade.”

EXAMPLE: It was after a seminar we did for art galleries in New York City. My presentation had a section on the importance of keeping in touch with the customer and how newsletters are an effective tool to do this.

A member of the audience asked, “Would you mind looking over my newsletter and telling me what you think of it?”

I agreed to give them a critical overview. There would be no charge because they attended the program.

They were thankful and a few days later, I received their newsletter.

I sent them a four-page letter giving suggestions and advice on how they could make their newsletter more effective.

They never answered. No “thank you.”

One more: A young man approached me asking my help in for a job with a local business. The young man was aware I knew the employer where he applied. Would I recommend him for the position?

I felt he would be an asset to this company and called the employer recommending this person for the position. I also wrote a letter telling my personal favorable experiences with him in the past. The young man got the job.

I never heard from him again. No letter, no phone call, no “thank you.”

Ask successful people the reason for their accomplishment and they will relate the bromides of working hard and enjoying their work. But if you press them further they will tell you of a friend, a relative, a someone who opened the door for them and said, “Come on in.” And, if asked further, most will admit this created an epiphany where they felt they were obligated, in turn, to help someone else. Their way of saying, “thank you.”

And then there is the local travel agency that asked me for help in their advertising. I obliged, sending them a critique of their current work. No reply. No “thank you.”

What makes this perplexing: When someone pays a fee for criticizing their work and consulting, they not only pay for the work, they also send “thank you” letters.

But when they receive similar work gratis, complimentary, at no cost, the response is overwhelmingly...nothing.

Now, at this point, if you feel I’m becoming cynical and developing a sense of indifference to future requests for help and assistance and wondering whatever happened to “thank you,” I am glad to report there are those who still remember.

Buy something from Neiman-Marcus and the salesperson who took care of you writes a handwritten “thank you” and asks you to call if there are any problems with your purchase. And so I called the salesmen who sold me the automobile, refrigerator and air conditioner and asked why they didn’t send a “thank you” message.

Their answers:

“I know I should do it but I don’t have the time.”

“We started that a few years back but somehow we just stopped.”

“Great idea. I’ll bring it up at the next sales meeting.”

Don’t have the time? Just stopped? Bring it up at the next meeting?

It seems to me it’s not a difficult task.

All each had to do was memorize and write two words:

“Thank you.”