

## Appendix 5: Easier, Faster Thank Yous

It's "thank you" time and once again you're facing a blank page and the task of writing yet another note of appreciation. You want your words to sound genuine and personal. You're stumped and frankly, uninspired. What to do? Give these tips a try and writing thank you notes will become faster, easier and ultimately, better.

### 1. Why re-invent the wheel?

What was it about a thank you letter you received that touched you? Was it handwritten? Did it share something personal or special between you and the writer? Was it a little rough around the edges which made it even more personal and memorable? Or was it obviously a form letter?

If you received a thank you letter or note you can't forget or you might even have saved, use it as a template and inspiration for the letters you write. If it touched you, chances are it will touch someone else.

### 2. It's not the great American novel. It's a thank-you letter.

What's wrong with beginning a thank-you letter with a simple, sincere thank you? The key is to be specific and to mean what you say.

*Thank you for your gift to the Department of Nutritional Sciences. Your investment means a great deal to me and everyone in the department.*

*Your gift to the Great People Scholarship Fund means so much to us and even more to the students who will be able to attend the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Thank you.*

*I am writing to extend a sincere thank you for your generous gift to the Department of Life Sciences Communicaiton.*

*As director of development for the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, I have the privilege of writing to thank you for your gift to support research in the Department of Dairy Science.*

Sure, you could come up with a hundred wonderful openings, but you don't have to and your letter will probably be better if you spend your time on step 3.

### 3. When I say your gift is important, I'm not just blowing smoke.

Prove that your gratitude is genuine. Again, it is not necessary to invent the wheel, just share some excitement/news/basic facts/pride/goals with the reader.

If you are blocked—and it happens to everyone—say these words in your head: Ms. Smith, I want you to feel good about your gift because... Now just write.

*You may not know that the Department of Botany has been ranked first nationally and third internationally. It is the home of the first lettuce breeding lab in the United States. Your gift will help us maintain our position and advance our goals. [Insert a few goals here.]*

*Just this year, two of our outstanding faculty received recognition for their work. Professors Jack Bucket and Jill Pail were inducted into the National Academy of Science. They also received outstanding teacher awards. Their work in the lab and the classroom is touching many lives. Thank you for supporting this extraordinary faculty member.*

*Your gift will enable the department to recruit a new faculty member to teach two new undergraduate courses in South East Asian history. This means we are not only able to offer a comprehensive program in Asian history, language and culture, we also will have the largest such program in the country.*

*Your gift to support lung cancer research at the Cancer Center will enable researchers, led by Dr. Smith, to continue their study of the HIP-12 protein as a pre-cursor to tumor growth. The implications for treatment and cure are extremely promising. Your generosity has the potential to benefit the thousands of people diagnosed with lung cancer.*

*The Great People Scholarship will keep the doors of the University open to students to qualify for admission academically but cannot afford to attend. The first Great People Scholarships were awarded in 2009 to three promising incoming freshman. Thanks to you, they can now begin turning their dreams into reality.*

#### **4. Keep the communication channels open.**

A closing is a closing. Why overstay your welcome? Provide contact information and the offer to be of further assistance. Of course, this also is a convenient opportunity to reinforce existing “hooks.” For example:

*Again, thank you for your gift to the College of Letters and Science—the heart of a great university. (the last phrase is the College’s identifying hook). If you have any questions or if I can be of any assistance, please feel free to contact me at:*

*The Arboretum is where ecological restoration began (the last four words are the Arboretum’s identifying hook). Thanks to you this important work will continue. We are grateful for your support. Please feel free to contact me at \_\_\_\_\_ with any questions.*

#### **5. P.S. The most frequently read part of a letter is the P.S.**

The Direct Mail Marketing Association, or some such organization, discovered that the first and usually only part of a direct mail letter people read is the P.S. And, if it is handwritten, your chances of getting read are even better.

*I am planning a trip to Cincinnati in June and hope we can meet then so I can thank you in person. The next time you are in Madison, I would be happy to arrange a tour of Dr. Smith’s lab. I know she would love to thank you in person.*