



## 10 Ways to Feel More Grateful This Thanksgiving

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**Can gratitude create more success? As you approach your 2009 business planning with understandable anxiety, consider adopting a glass-half-full attitude. Here's how to do it.**

"With all this horse manure, there must be a pony here somewhere"  
-- **Ronald Reagan**

Believe it or not, you can feel grateful in a crisis. Even now, with historic turbulence in the financial services sector and market forces threatening your livelihood and your clients' retirement safety, it's possible--and beneficial, even--to count your blessings.

And what better time to do so than Thanksgiving? Last week I received this topical e-mail from a financial advisor:

I am blessed to have chosen a career where I can surround myself with the finest people in the world. Many of them have called in the recent weeks to ask me how I'm doing. I have the honor of assisting my clients in accomplishing their dreams and have watched most of them come true. As I approach this Thanksgiving season I am thankful for my faith, family, profession, and my clients.

-- Clyde Wyatt, 32-year veteran financial advisor

### Gratitude as a business strategy

The appreciative attitude displayed by Mr. Wyatt is a virtue, but it may also be a contributing factor to his business success. So contends Edward Jacobson, Ph.D., in a new book, *Appreciative Moments: Stories and Practices for Living and Working Appreciatively*. Jacobson asserts that through a process he calls "appreciative inquiry," we develop a greater capacity to live fuller, more successful lives. As we radiate positive appreciation, we attract and help more people.

Jacobson's theory echoes the wisdom behind *The Secret* and *Think and Grow Rich*, which maintain that whatever we focus on will grow. Thus positive thinking begets positive actions that lead to positive outcomes. Jacobson claims that a fundamental "attitude of gratitude" makes us more alert to the positive possibilities in our lives--and

actually changes the way we interact with others, causing them to see us more favorably.

How can we experience more gratitude? Here are 10 tips from Dr. Jacobson.

1. **Look for the good each day.** Looking for the pony amid the manure like Reagan is not Pollyannish. It's just good business sense to find the good in a bad situation. Give your negative a holiday to test this theory. For one day, be completely open to seeing the good in each person, in each situation, in the wider world, and in yourself. Stop judging new ideas so harshly. Reconsider relationships or alliances that you dismissed previously. Ask yourself this question: What is good here, how can we get more of it? "Build upon that sense of possibility to create the best experience and tangible outcomes you can," Jacobson says. (That's not a bad idea for approaching battered portfolios, either).
2. **Turn your job into your life's work.** When you contemplate your job, how often can you say, "Today I was doing my life's work." Some people have that feeling every day. They are on track. For others there may be gaps between those times of feeling fully in sync.

Reflect on the times when you have felt, "Yes, this is the work I was meant to do in the world." Maybe it was when you were cold walking, talking to business owners about their retirement plan, or presenting your investment ideas at a seminar. What memories of "flow" arise in your mind? Jacobson recommends these questions to jog your positive recollections:

- When have you felt totally immersed in and excited by your work?
- When have you used your gifts to make a difference that truly mattered to yourself or to someone else?

Let these questions help you develop a clear picture of your life's work. Honestly assess what you like and don't like about your situation. Talk to others pursuing your desired path, and consider how your current work situation can better track into your life's work.

3. **Stop asking people, "How are you?"** Most of the time, we mindlessly ask this question. We ask coworkers or clients how they enjoyed their holiday or how their day was. But we rarely listen to their equally automatic response. Dr. Jacobson contends that to get more than the standard robotic reply, we should try these more provocative questions:
  - What's been the best part of your day so far? (This really perks up phone conversations)
  - What's brightened your day thus far?

- What did you especially enjoy today?
- What's making you happy today?
- What was a highlight of our holiday?
- What are you looking forward to this weekend?

Giving people a chance to focus on good moments puts them in a better mood. It can even put your clients in a positive frame of mind to tackle the tougher items on your meeting agenda. Reflecting on the bright spots of our days simply makes us all more grateful and, therefore, more happy.

4. **Don't rush through the day.** How often do you rush from activity to activity without letting anything from the day really sink in? Dr. Jacobson recommends trying the following technique before your next appointment. Take about 10 minutes to clear your workspace. Arrange what you need for the upcoming meeting. Close your eyes and take several long deep breaths. Stretch your arms and legs, and begin to visualize the positive features of the client or prospect you're about to see or talk with on the phone. Focus on this person at his or her best and on working together toward a positive outcome.

"Having in mind that positive image of the unique individual (you're about to meet) puts you in a wonderful place of welcoming, of positive anticipation," Jacobson says. "The 10 minutes devoted to this ritual are a great investment."

5. **Fill other people's buckets.** Think back to the last time you received an honest compliment. Maybe someone praised your investment prowess or a financial plan you worked hard to develop. Perhaps someone commended you for your intelligence or integrity. It felt nice, didn't it?

Jacobson reminds us we can have that same powerful effect on the people we meet each day. "All of us know life-affirming people who always seem to fill others' buckets with praise, smiles, acts of generosity, and speaking well of others. Sadly, we also know people who deplete others' storehouses of positive emotions."

So, which will you be? A bucket filler or a bucket depleter? Try the former, and see what that does for the confidence of those around you, as well as your own. Have you tried honestly praising your clients?

6. **Imitate your heroes.** Heroes are born in calamity and thrive in disaster. And since right now probably qualifies as a calamity more than any other period in recent financial memory, it's a great opportunity to reflect on and emulate those heroic individuals you admire.

How have your heroes handled adversity? What would they do if they were in your shoes? Think of Lincoln during the Civil War, Roosevelt during the Great Depression, Warren Buffett during a stock collapse, or Michael Phelps during a goggle mishap.

"A good deal of psychology research supports the notion that a vivid image, including an image of someone else handling a situation effectively, can be a powerful guide to our own effective handling of that very situation," Jacobson says. "Think about our most powerful role models when it comes to behaving effectively in a challenging situation."

Role models don't have to be famous. Maybe your role model is the advisor in the corner office who radiates happiness and success. So much better! You may be able to meet with your role model in person and ask for their advice. If your role model is not someone you can contact, you can still read an article or book about that person for inspiration and insights.

7. **Tap into your ideal self.** In addition to looking outward for ideas, look inward as well. Who are you when you're at your best? Dr. Jacobson says that answering that question goes to the heart of living and working appreciatively.

To better define who you are when you're at your best, think of a time when you felt as though you were doing exactly what you were meant to be doing, he says. "How did that feel? How can you arrange conditions so that you can do those things more of the time?" This goes beyond just your life's work or career, volunteer work, and charitable giving.

The line of questioning all work great in teams, branches, and even families. Try this at your next team meeting or family council: "Who are we when we're at our best? How can we be at our best more of the time?" The idea is to envision the ideal, and then reverse-engineer to determine what steps are necessary to achieve that vision.

8. **Relish a childhood memory.** In times of stress and turmoil, nothing works more effectively than taking some time to appreciate happier moments. Dr. Jacobson often begins his coaching sessions asking his clients, "Can you tell me about a happy memory from your childhood?"

Whether the answer reveals a story about ice skating with dad, learning to draw, preparing for the holidays, or winning the state championship with the high school football team, the answer always tells Dr. Jacobson what is important to his client. "It helps me form a vivid, positive picture of this person, and what makes him (or her) happy."

Try asking clients about their favorite childhood memory. It will likely catch them off guard, and it will communicate that you're interested in getting to know them

better. Jacobson says that if you as an a advisor can access your clients' "home base" and have a clear picture of what that means to them, you can give them courage in difficult times. Reliving the memory also puts client in a relaxed and more trusting mood.

9. **Keep a gratitude journal.** For one week, each night before bed, write down three or four kind turns that others gave you during the day -- or that you gave others. Jacobson believes that keeping track of the good deeds you've done or observed will reduce negativity in your life and make you less inclined to be judgmental or to lose your patience.

In addition to the evening journal, consider keeping a morning gratitude journal where you write down at least three things in your life that you appreciate. "As you write down each one, summon a vivid mental and emotional image of what you are grateful for," Jacobson says.

10. **When someone asks you, "Got a minute?" give 'em 10.** We all hate interruptions, but never having a free moment to share with another human being is no way to live. Jacobson suggests that part of the way we open ourselves up to more good in our lives is by sharing our time willingly and with the intention of blessing someone else's life. The next time someone asks you for a moment of your time, reply, "Sure," and then give the person as much time as is needed. "Keep your hand from reaching for the doorknob, and keep your eyes from glancing at your watch," Jacobson says. "See how giving the minute enriches them and enriches you."

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