
Make America Grateful Again

By [Lance Woodbury](#)

Much has been written about the way in which the political atmosphere of the last several months increased the sense of division between us. Within families, between co-workers, in our churches and our neighborhoods and towns, we were often at odds. Many were disheartened by the tone of the discussion and the negativity. No matter the side, contempt for the alternative was often visible and visceral. Our choices as a country seemed inconsistent with our potential as people and as practitioners of faith. It was a difficult time intellectually, emotionally and spiritually, and I, for one, am ready to move forward.

As I thought about the divisiveness of our public discourse – which, by the way, permeated many family meetings and peer group gatherings throughout the spring, summer and fall – I considered this Guiding Principles column. I thought about how the principles described by [those leaders we profiled](#) had propelled their families and their companies to make a positive impact on so many, and had created a legacy of which to be proud.

I wondered, if I had to choose one principle that might help us approach the future after a difficult period, which one would be most fruitful? The more I thought about it, the more I came to see Gratitude as that principle. Let me offer three reasons why:

Gratitude makes us more aware. Recalling what we appreciate cultivates a mindfulness of the events and people in our lives. We tune in to what is happening around us, in a world where distraction via technology and entertainment is too often the norm.

Gratitude creates a positive foundation. After taking stock of your many blessings, it is hard not to look at your future in a more positive and abundant light.

Gratitude includes others. Seldom do all of one's good fortunes and lessons learned come solely from within. God, family, employees, customers, partners, and neighbors are part of our thanks-giving. Recognizing their contribution draws us closer together and moves us beyond a focus on ourselves.

[G.K. Chesterton](#), a writer and Christian apologist, suggested that "...thanks are the highest form of thought, and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder." What a fulfilling prescription for the future. May your Thanksgiving be filled with gratitude.

Thanks...to YOU!

By [Davon Cook](#)

On a long driving trip with my dad, somewhere in the grasslands of southeastern Colorado, the conversation led to updating each other on our business lives. He asked, "So what exactly do you do with these families?" The term 'family business consultant' isn't all that descriptive. After providing a few examples, it made me think further about why our services are needed. What is the essence of the family business challenge that we try to address?

Based on my experience with many of you, I came up with the following:

Who You Are

Though strong personalities and confidence among the principals of your business have contributed



to your success, those same strong personalities make the “vulnerable” conversations (mortality, repairing relationships, and the future of the business ‘baby’) difficult. You are:

- Entrepreneurial, and you are always planning for growth. With that growth comes new challenges: the need to delegate, managing more employees, estate planning realities, preparing the next generation for the business, etc.
- Willing to admit what you don’t know, or what you’re not good at. You are willing to invest in the right expertise for a given problem.
- Happy with the family aspect of your business and simultaneously worried about how to continue that legacy in a manner that’s sustainable for both the business and the family relationships.

What We Do

We are the quarterback that provides accountability and continued focus on topics that you know are critically important, but not daily urgent. We are a part time member of your team tasked with the special project of “succession planning” or “talent development,” or we carry the title of “communication czar” or “family mediator” or “strategic planning coordinator.” We help you and your loved ones have the hard conversations. We transplant the benefit of others’ experiences so you aren’t reinventing the wheel. We convene groups of your peers in a non-competitive environment to share ideas and challenge each other.

And we consider the work an honor. I am truly humbled by the people I work with—you have built some very impressive businesses! And sometimes, I lie awake at night worrying about your family just like you do! While we try to bring professional service, there is no doubt we’re in a personal business—and that’s why I love what I do. Thank you for sharing your family and your business with us—we are grateful.

How is Your “Gratitude” Doing?

By [Dr. Bill Long](#)

A few months ago, while waiting for the waitress to take my order at a local restaurant, my eyes wandered to the line we now expect to see at the bottom of the menu: “18% Gratuity Added on Parties of 6 or More.” But instead of reading that way, I noticed that it said, “18% Gratitude Added on Parties of 6 or More.” I checked and re-checked and then broke into a broad smile. Someone had unknowingly mixed up two words—“gratitude” (thankfulness) and “gratuity” (tip) — and made one word out of it: gratitude.

As I thought about it for a moment, however, I said to myself, “What a brilliant error!” They had unwittingly taken a term that increasingly is a mere calculation (“You ought to give XX percent gratuity”) and had returned it to its root in gratitude or thankfulness.

Then I realized that in English we lack one noun that expresses the rather cumbersome phrase “an attitude of gratitude.” We can say “gratefulness,” but that word is starting to fade from our vocabulary. In fact, that word mistakenly given on the menu has become my way of trying to capture, in one word, my “attitude of gratitude”—my gratitude.

Each day, as I think of how to face the day, I ask myself the question, “How is your gratitude doing today, Bill?” Are you mired in the many things that easily bog you down, or are you able to be thankful to God for blessings large and small? And, the question is one we can all ask, in our families and family businesses, at this Holiday season: How is your gratitude doing? It’s often easier to complain than express gratitude in life. But now that we have a new word for our attitude of gratitude—gratitude, I wonder if gratitude can surge ahead of complaints. Now that would be quite a Holiday present!

