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## Practice Gratitude By Dean Savoca

*“Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, confusion into clarity... it turns problems into gifts, failures into success, the unexpected into perfect timing, and mistakes into important events. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today and creates a vision for tomorrow.”*

- Melody Beattie, author

Gratitude is the state of being grateful or thankful. While it's easy to define, it's often hard to live. Practicing gratitude increases fulfillment. If you don't want any more *wants* in your life, then want what you have. Gratitude is about appreciating what you do have. Many of us live with the “grass is always greener” mentality. Why is it that we don't enjoy the NOW and much prefer the THEN or WHEN? We are HERE and we'd rather be THERE. We choose to complain or depreciate rather than appreciate. We live in the past rather than live in the present. Being aware of this human tendency is the first step towards changing it, and living a happier and more fulfilling life through being grateful.

Practicing gratitude leads to less worry and more success. When we worry, we focus on our negative perception of the future. When we're grateful, we focus on what we appreciate in the past and the present. Worry never serves us. Worrying about something we *can't control* is futile. Worrying about something we *can control* is futile too. If we can control it, then it's an opportunity to stop worrying and taking action. I have a client who is a real estate investor who recently lost many deals due to the economy and other issues beyond his control. During this tough time, he chose to not worry and practice gratitude. He was patient and focused on preparing for future opportunities, which ultimately paid off with nine closings in a few short months. Often we worry and then look back after the event or situation and find that it never turns out as badly as we thought.

Worry comes from fear (*false evidence appearing real*). As my client experienced, practicing gratitude can turn worry and fear into success.

Practicing gratitude enhances relationships. Successful relationships are built on trust and appreciation. Those who are thankful and appreciate what others have done for them enjoy stronger relationships. Relationships are strengthened when we show *and* receive appreciation. Think of a time you were appreciated by your boss, co-worker or client. How did it make you feel about that person? Employees who are appreciated feel more fulfilled and are more engaged with their work. There is an abundance of research that shows how employee engagement is directly related to employee retention and productivity. For executives and managers in organizations, appreciation takes little investment and pays huge dividends.

Gratitude is a muscle to be built, just as we build a physical muscle. It takes practice and exercise. Practicing gratitude increases fulfillment, lessens worry and strengthens relationships, all creating more success.

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Here are a few ways to build your gratitude muscle:

**Before going to bed, ask yourself, “what are three things am I grateful for today?”**

This shifts focus to things you appreciate increases relaxation for a better night sleep. Writing them down also reminds you of what you appreciate about your life and increases your fulfillment.

**Use the philosophy of CANI (Continued And Never-ending Improvement).**

Whenever I complete a speech or training, I always ask myself two questions. “What was great?” and “What are opportunities for continued and never-ending improvement?” This helps me worry less about what I should have done and reinforces what I did do well and identifies areas where I can learn and improve. The philosophy of CANI helps me to keep an attitude of gratitude. I appreciate what is great and learn and grow in a way that supports my future success.

**Think about someone who has helped you in your career, business or company.**

Write them a thank you note, visit them or pick up the phone and call them and let them know how much you appreciate them. Think about how this will make them feel. Practice gratitude and unlock the fullness of your life.



**Dean Savoca, M.Ed., BCC**, spent his early career in the hospitality industry as a Travel Director and Account Manager for Maritz for nine years, and as a general manager of a Colorado-based destination management company. Now a performance management and results expert, Dean works at the company and association level as a **keynote speaker and conference facilitator**; at the team and department level as a **management and sales trainer**; and at the individual executive level as a **coach**. Whatever the format – conferences, sales training, leadership development or strategic planning -- Dean guides people through processes that focus their attention on core issues, and rallies them to action, *often right there in the room*. **The result is a better bottom line** – boosted by improved performance, higher productivity, and more cohesive teamwork.

In addition to managing his national speaking schedule and thriving executive coaching practice, Dean is a member of the editorial advisory board for *Colorado Meeting + Events* magazine and the Director of Programs for the Meetings Industry Council (MIC) of Colorado. In 2014 Dean was distinguished as a national “Best in Class” speaker by the Professional Convention Management Association. He served as the 2012-2013 President of the National Speakers Association – Colorado; the Chairman of the Cherry Creek Chamber of Commerce, Denver in 2009; and has been on the Board of Directors of Destination Colorado. Dean holds a Master’s Degree in Organizational Performance and Change and is a Board Certified Coach.

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