

The *Most Valuable* Letter

by Jeffrey Dobkin

A letter is the least costly and most effective piece of advertising you can write, bar none. It should become a prime weapon in your marketing arsenal. There is a very special reason you should always send a thank-you letter to your customers: it pays well.

Back to basics: Is a thank-you letter really a letter? No, it is not. A letter is a personal piece of correspondence sent to one or two people. When you send it to a few dozen (or even a hundred) people, and when it is designed to get you more business, it is an ad. It is a highly stylized ad designed to look like a letter.

A thank-you letter is valuable because it makes the recipient feel good. This differentiates you from the silent majority who never expressed their appreciation in a letter. A call just does not have the impact of a letter. It is not even a close second. A call is nice, but to get the most leverage, write a letter.

A letter is a permanent record. You took time to write it. You cared enough to find an envelope and stamp, and you went that extra mile to put it all together and mail it. Now your effort will sit on the recipient's desk as a lasting memento of your appreciation. A letter endures.

A letter is an effective way to express appreciation. It is a personal and permanent record that lets the recipient know how kind it was of them to give you their business. It shows your gratitude. Their kind thoughts did not go unnoticed. You can say this on the telephone, but it never has this striking impact. In one



day, whatever you said on the phone fades into the horizon like the sun, whereas a letter has time to sink in. It

can sit on the customer's desk or be posted on a wall for a month or even a year.

Why is a thank-you letter so very effective? To begin with, it can help you make the recipient feel comfortable in doing business with you. You can use it to reiterate your intention to do the very best job you can for your customers. Your letter can convince them that you appreciate the trust they have placed in your products or services, and that their trust in you is worth more to you than anything else in the entire world. You can make your customers feel they should refer more people to you all the time. Therein lies the beauty, the value, and the monetary worth of the most valuable letter you can write: the receiver will remember it, and when the opportunity comes up again, he or she will refer people to you. Word-of-mouth advertising is the best (and the cheapest) form of advertising. Thank-you letters are one way to make it happen, again and again.❖

Jeffrey Dobkin is the author of *Uncommon Marketing Techniques*. He is a speaker, a direct mail copywriter and a marketing consultant in Pennsylvania. Copyright Jeffrey Dobkin.