

# How to say thank you

**In the first of a series of articles equipping you with a toolkit of techniques, methods and thinking patterns to move your business forwards, Mark Oborn explores the benefits of a targeted 'thank you'**

A technician did a great case for me today, with fantastic carving and brilliant morphology... obviously I wanted to say thank you!

There was a great paper published in the *Harvard Business Review* nearly 10 years ago on this subject (full reference given at the end of this article), in which Teresa Amabile discusses this issue of giving praise – she says that saying thank you too often becomes a great demotivator and loses all of its true meaning.

'Thank you' becomes a bit like 'How are you?' when we speak to someone on the phone – a rather empty and frankly

meaningless statement to which we don't really expect nor want a reply other than the mandatory 'Fine thanks, how are you?'

I caught myself doing this today, saying thank you that is, a few too many times. I know that I meant it but it did sound a bit cursory!

So what can we do? Teresa Amabile suggests this: engage with the feedback and take a genuine interest. Rather than saying 'thank you for that nice case', say 'this case is great because the way you have formed the cusps is perfect' or 'you managed that case well by the way you diagnosed the problem of [detail the problem] before it happened'.

This shows a real interest in the person and their task, it engages them and shows you have genuinely taken what they have done seriously.

“Engage with the praise, be specific and see the person's face light up because you took such a real interest”

So, no more 'thank you' from me. What about you? Go on, try it tomorrow, engage with the praise, be specific and see the person's face light up because you took such a real interest.

### Reference

Amabile TM (1998) How to kill creativity: Keep doing what you're doing. Or, if you want to spark innovation, rethink how you motivate, reward, and assign work to people. *Harvard Business Review* (September-October): 77- 87

---

Mark Oborn is a director of SBO Dental Laboratory in London. He has had many articles published on aesthetics and CAD/CAM dentistry, and has had lectured world-wide on both subjects. He works as a technical expert in the UK for the Vita range of products and is a certified Sirona trainer for the inLab system. Mark's latest venture is the launch of his dental business blog ([www.markoborn.blogspot.com](http://www.markoborn.blogspot.com)).

This is a sample of a dental business blog posted by Mark Oborn at [www.markoborn.blogspot.com](http://www.markoborn.blogspot.com). Please visit to subscribe (free of charge) and to comment on this article.