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New York, NY – During this holiday season, Americans are thinking about how to best tell their friends and family how much they mean to them. Despite challenging economic times, the one gift valued most by consumers costs nothing – expressions of gratitude.

According to a recent Ipsos poll sponsored by Citi's ThankYou Network, there is a near unanimous agreement – 95% of Americans stated they feel “really good when others thank me for something I have done or accomplished.”

Nearly all respondents (94%) stated a belief that “more than anything else, getting a genuine thank you from someone is the best kind of reward that you can get.” In fact, when asked about the most meaningful reward they have ever received, the most common unprompted answer is a “sincere thank you.”

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted August 7-18, 2008. For the survey, a nationally representative random sample of 1,000 adults aged 18 and older residing in the United States were interviewed by telephone. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate within ± 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire population of adults in the U.S. been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population, such as those who know how their taxes are prepared. These data were weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/gender composition reflects that of the actual U.S. population according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Identifying the Most Meaningful Rewards

Other rewards – such as a simple, spoken thank you (65% very meaningful) or receiving a hug or a kiss (69%) – were ranked as some of the meaningful ways of expressing appreciation, suggesting that it is the more simple, genuine gestures that can provide the most emotional benefit.

Still, many (63%) often struggle to find ways to express their appreciation to others. Beyond a simple expression of thanks, Americans often use material rewards, such as jewelry, gifts, trophies or certificates, or money to recognize the accomplishments of others.

Family Lies at Cornerstone of Rewarding Life

While being thanked is the most commonly named reward across most demographic groups, some groups were slightly more likely to say that a rewarding life is enhanced by the most personal of relationships – their family. One in five Americans (21%) name their family as the single most meaningful reward that they had ever received. Grandparents (30%) and parents (26%) top the groups that are most likely to feel this way.



It may be no coincidence that those people who are identified as the most rewarding are also those who are deemed to be most appreciative. Majorities of Americans feel that various members of their household or relatives express a great deal of appreciation for what they do or accomplish. As with rewards, it is one's immediate family that tends to show the highest levels of appreciation.

Husbands are much more likely than wives to say that their spouse shows them a great deal of appreciation (78% vs. 59%). Men (62%) are also more likely than women (56%) to say that their family in general shows them a great deal of appreciation. At the same time, women identified that they are more likely to feel appreciated by their friends.

Getting together with friends and family has become one of the more common ways for Americans to reward themselves. In fact, more than half (56%) have celebrated an accomplishment with family and friends in the past year.

Businesses Can Strengthen Connections to Consumers

With so many Americans placing great value on genuine appreciation, businesses can tap into this sentiment to expand the ways they thank customers to enhance relationships. Nine in ten respondents (90%) agree that it is more important than ever for businesses to reward loyal customers.

At the same time, 72% of Americans said they are surprised when a company thanks them for their business, indicating that there are opportunities for businesses to engage customers by showing more appreciation.

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