

# **Article Group Newsletter Issue 7 - Corporate Gratitude, Storytelling Beyond Marketing, and Finding Humanity at Work (December 2023)**

ISSUE 7 — December 2023

Exploring the messy, contradictory, and festive side of creativity

A row of nine green dots with a hand entering the frame and removing one of them.

\*It's the holiday season\*

A time for peace, love, light, and gratitude, some say. But how do you do that when you're a business looking to thank others for their business, employees for their work, and the universe for allowing you to write another day?

This month, we went on a jolly journey to uncover ways to express our appreciation that don't involve holiday one-liners with a snow globe background (we don't do light whimsy), an office party (festive, but a minefield), or branded cereal (we've done that before , and we're not sorry). What we really want in the new year, above all else, is to find joy in our day and be reminded of our own humanity. A tall order with the world at large, but these things may help.

Gratitude in action

Gratitude is surprisingly difficult to define: emotion? virtue? mood? behavior? Putting this together, we started circling around a central, known truth: gratitude, this elusive thing, is often fleetingly felt but not expressed.

We want to live in a space where gratitude is something we can trip over on our way to lunch — not in the form of public performance like a pay-it-forward Starbucks chain, but something smaller, more honest, less irritating.

We vow to vocalize the that was so good, I really couldn't have done that without yous when they occur, say them loudly, and not wait until the end of the year to do it. Maybe we'll buy them a coffee, too.

Tell a story

We've been telling stories since the dawn of humanity, yet school teaches us writing is for 3 reasons: to persuade, entertain, or explain.

Storytelling is the lifeblood of marketing, and we often tell stories to do one of those 3 things. And, for millennia, humans have done so for much bigger, more noble purposes: to

connect, comfort, empathize, warn, woo, dream, understand, find purpose, make meaning, change perspective, grieve. We like those things even better.

In the spirit of storytelling for something more than product marketing, here's a short one by Lydia Davis called Fear.

Nearly every morning, a certain woman in our community comes running out of her house with her face white and her overcoat flapping wildly. She cries out, "Emergency, emergency," and one of us runs to her and holds her until her fears are calmed. We know she is making it up; nothing has really happened to her. But we understand, because there is hardly one of us who has not been moved at some time to do just what she has done, and every time, it has taken all our strength, and even the strength of our friends and families too, to quiet us.

#### Celebrate something small

Part of the allure of the holiday season is that it brings its own set of rituals, from carving a grand, golden turkey to unknotting long strings of lights while the family looks on with steaming mugs of hot chocolate. At least, that's what Norman Rockwell depicted.

The reality is that most families have their own traditions that span from heartwarming to absurd, and we don't have to wait until this time of year to force celebration.

Here are some small things that have made us want to celebrate lately: public libraries , buying endangered tomato seeds , actually getting sleep, the Beverly Hills Cop 4 trailer , solidarity.

#### Learn (a little more) flexibility

There's pilates in your living room while your dog judges you flexible, and then there's adapting to the unexpected without losing your cool flexible. We want more of the latter and we want to do it in service of our business, our teams, our clients, and ourselves. To start, we're going to stop clinging to the routines we might've outgrown by now. Chaos in small doses brings creativity, and we've been needing a reminder that the unexpected doesn't always have to be a bad thing.

We also want to practice giving the people around us more latitude along the way. This might be the thing that helps us sleep better at night.

#### Do something useful with our time

They say that people who volunteer lead longer, healthier lives. And while it'll be impossible for us to measure the veracity of that statement, we're interested in testing it out.

In January, all of Article Group is gathering in New Orleans to volunteer with Habitat for Humanity, where we'll work together on something far more precious than a campaign.

This isn't about team bonding or self-righteousness or being able to write that we did this. It's about getting outside of ourselves and knowing that we're connecting with other humans in a way we should be connecting with other humans. It hasn't happened yet, and we're already missing it.

---

Did we do our job here? Maybe. We'll keep trying. But in the meantime, thank you. Cheers to more of what's good in 2024.