

1st Edition [V.1.0]

The Grateful Organization™

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For Software Business Leaders

A path to sales growth and innovation.

A low cost, low risk, and high value approach to next-generation leadership.

A measurable application of psychology and behavior that improves business outcomes.

*Now Available in
Generative AI
and ChatGPT*

Book Release Notes – V.1.0 – 01.15.2024

- This is version 1.0 of the book—I consider it beta software.
- The “code” was written in 24 hours (I program in English :) after 14 years of study and application to business at many companies.
- There are certainly editorial needs and bugs.
- If you would like to contribute, e.g., offer comments for improvement on grammar or similar, [here is a link \[TBD\]](#) where you can do so.
- Next Release Plan: Integrating ChatGPT with this book.
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Introduction

Hi, it is great to connect with you. I appreciate your time—truly it is a gift. If you are checking this book out, it is a primary part of my life’s passions and career, with 14 years of study and even connecting back to strong childhood interests.

To have someone delve in, learn from these life experiences, and improve a business? What an amazing thing! How absolutely beautiful...I am tremendously grateful for the opportunity.

In this book, I am going to explain how I was led to gratitude as a business practice and how it can create a massive ROI in business, impacting revenue metrics years AND with very little cost or risk. This book is for the C-Suite, founders, and other leaders of software companies.

OK, so you are skeptical about the ROI of gratitude, right?

I get it, it is hard to believe. Executives might say it sounds squishy and unmeasurable. They will almost always agree that cost savings programs are much easier to invest in than culture stuff. Well, there are big cost savings in here—just the cost of salesperson attrition alone can be greatly impacted. There is also very little to invest—it can be done on a dime. Lastly, it is all based on science—14 years of research.

Still not Convinced to Read?

Of course, up front credibility is important with such grandiose statements—I don’t like feeling egotistical by pitching myself—but I want to know who wrote something if I am going to spend time reading it. I imagine you do too.

So, here is a short summary to cover credibility. I’ve spent most of my 25+ year career in software—doing a lot of executive ROI pitches, extensively using business intelligence for all aspects of CRM/CX, and even evangelizing artificial intelligence at an executive level. The



departments I've worked in include sales, partnerships, marketing, product—and product led growth (PLG). I've loved leadership my whole life—my favorite leadership training program as a kid was, "How to Motivate for Superior Performance." My favorite training as a professional was, "The Executive Conversation," which I took at Siebel Systems.

Of course, we all must decide for ourselves if we want to skim or read a book. How much time is it going to take and what will I get out of it?

Is this Book Worth Reading?

This book is about 7500 words. The average reader will spend about 25 minutes reading it. You can skim it and read a few key sections in about 5 minutes. Is it worth your time? At the end of the day, there is a simple, singular question to ask yourself:

"Do you want to work at a Grateful Organization™ and for a grateful manager...
...or not?"

If your answer is yes and yes, then it is worth 5 to 25 minutes of your time.

As you probably have, I've worked for great managers and horrible ones...great VPs and horrible ones...great CEOs and horrible ones. I know my preference. What is yours? It is up to you to spend your life working for OR leading companies who DON'T appreciate their employees, customers, and partners enough.

Over the past 14 years, I've had over 200 one-on-one conversations with people on this topic. I've never met anyone who would choose an ungrateful manager or slightly grateful manager versus a completely grateful one. If you ask this question to a room full of 100,000 employees, will anyone raise their hand and say, "Yes, I want to work for a completely ungrateful company and manager? Please, I choose an ungrateful CEO to lead." No one ever said that. No one.

This book was a gift to write, and I look forward to hearing your feedback, especially if this book helps you on your life journey.

Gratefully,
Adam

Acknowledgements

With deep love and appreciation, this book would not exist if it wasn't for my dad, mom, step-parents, family, and close friends—for always being there to lift me up and loving me no matter how much I didn't love myself.

Who the Book is for



I wrote this book for technical business leaders in the software industry—whether a consultant, employee, or entrepreneur—especially those who lead sales and revenue motions or new product launches. This is where I have spent most of my 25+ year career. So, if you are a founder, VP of Sales and Marketing, CRO, CMO, CHRO, CEO, or work anywhere along the customer journey, this book is dedicated to you.

To subsegment this group behaviorally, I wrote this specifically for innovative thinkers. It does not describe a traditional or widely adopted business practice. However, if you are a change leader who “almost religiously” believes human capital is the most defining part of your business, my goal is to inspire you to change the world, one business at a time. The byproduct is a substantial impact to all growth metrics with far less human relationship headaches at almost no cost or risk. It will certainly make your life easier—happier employees cause far less headaches than unhappy ones.

Why did I write the book...how did I come to this topic?

Fourteen years ago, in 2010, I went through an outrageously tough time in life. Prior to that, I had worked at two software unicorns and several Magic Quadrant (industry leading) companies on the revenue side of the house.

Two unicorns and several market leaders? “That sounds like a wonderful career, Adam, at least from the outside.” Well, it wasn’t to me. Internally I couldn’t stop calling myself a worthless failure. In my personal life, about 8 “major life stressors” showed up in a one-year period. In cooperation with childhood baggage, I was deeply ashamed of myself for not being successful enough. This led to massive, clinical depression and anxiety—not something I wish on anyone. No one could convince me (including myself) that I was anything but worthless—and it took more than a year to get back into balance.

To bounce back from darkness, I started studying gratitude—through the lens of psychology, the science of the brain, and meditation. One of the most profound steps I took—was starting a gratitude blog called [365 Days of Thankfulness](#), which now is just shy of 3650 posts over about 10 or 11 years. If you take on this journey, it will totally change your perspective on life. As I made each short-form post. I kept searching for ways to apply gratitude in business. It was a journey of discovery—I’ve even written a draft documentary script about it.

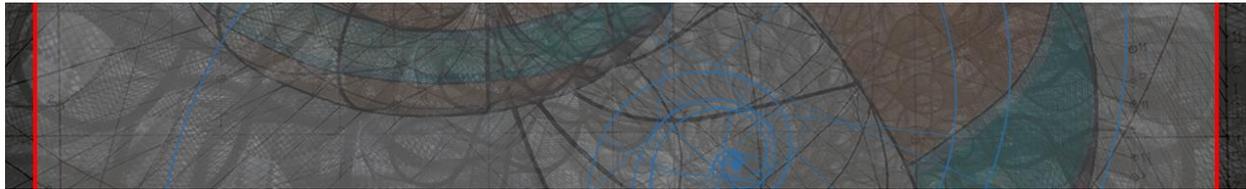
Since my 2010 turn-around, I’ve worked tirelessly to improve myself and gain knowledge in these areas—continuing to study and apply gratitude, meditation, and neuropsychology in business. As I’ve tried to implement gratitude programs in business, I have had some successes and many failures. But, the formula I am promoting in this book—it is real. The business case is real. It is grounded in science. The approach has undeniable impact. And, it can work for your company as well as in your personal life.

In the 2010s and early 2020s, I worked at another unicorn, two more market leaders, and a couple of “challenged startups.” Most recently, I spent 18 months at a low code, A-round



software startup and went deep into Generative AI (e.g. ChatGPT). Since 2010, I also attempted to start three businesses—an online training company, a big data company, and a fintech who gave B2B SaaS startups working capital for a fee—in lieu of giving up equity. I have also done advisory (C-level and board level) consulting work and currently advise a venture incubator with 5 significant exits and 5 more in the hopper. Yes, this is lots of chest-beating success, but there are more failures than I can count. I've failed to get buy-in and implement gratitude at a company at least 7 times since 2010.

Finally, as of 2024, I have reached the point of writing this book. Hard to believe it only took me 24 hours to type it. LOL.



The Summary

In terms of an outline, there are three sections and a couple of dots to connect through a background story.

- First, there is a section detailing my path to gratitude and recognizing it as a primary business value driver.
- Then, I cover research on the science of gratitude, why it matters, and how it changes the computer in our head (i.e. neurons).
- Lastly, there is explanation for building a business case and developing a Grateful Organization™.

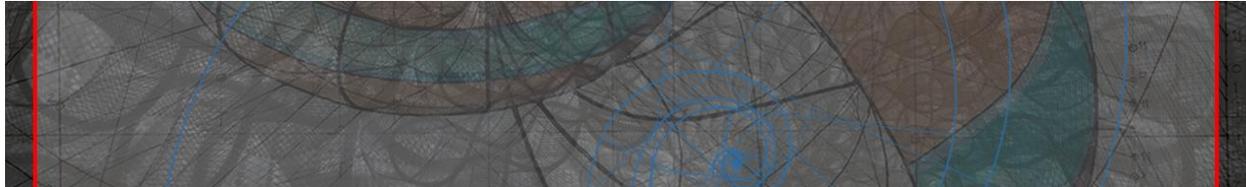
If you only have time to read one thing, this is it!

The core principles are threefold:

1. The brain will respond to habit forming practices—literally—you can program it to perceive the world in a different way and automatically take action. Also, there is a BIG difference between traditional training classes and fundamentally changing people's habits.
2. Habitual practices of gratitude—these do something to neuron structures that scientifically cause reciprocation. In other words, when you express gratitude to someone, you are firing their neurons. In fact, any time you communicate to someone, you are firing their neurons. With gratitude, receiving generates an automated response in humans—it is one of returning gratitude back to you. This leads to flywheel effects in all human relationships across your organization and outside of it. Flywheels matter, just click [this link](#) or search: Jim Collins.



3. With habits in place and a flywheel underway, gratitude can impact all types of business metrics—particularly in sales, employee turnover, and with interpersonal relationships. The cost to implement such a program can be close to nothing and certainly fits within existing sales, support, or leadership development training budget. With such a low cost, there is only one risk—will employees like it and do it or reject it? This is up to the leader—it always starts from the top down. Lip service won't achieve a result, it will likely reduce trust in leadership. And, measurement is very doable.



Why Gratitude? Starting with Back-to-Back Failures

In 2010, I experienced back-to-back-to-back failures.

Both in business and in my personal life, I experienced the top 10 life stressors about 8 times within one year. This was amplified by some lovely “childhood baggage,” which created a massive storm inside my skull. I was a failure in all aspects of life, and no one could convince me otherwise.

Now, if you have been through 1 major life stressor, like losing a job or a sibling, then you start to get the idea of the emotional stress and anguish. Try 8 of these at once. It is not fun. Not one bit. This type of experience will bring anyone on Earth to their knees. It led to extreme anxiety and horrible depression—as bad as we can experience as humans. There was a gigantic, negative voice in my head every minute—for hours and hours, day after day, for about 4 months. 120 days of struggle. I even used a stopwatch to measure how long it took before “the voice came back.” Early on, it was every 30 seconds. This is an example of “spiraling out of control” at its very essence.

When I couldn't take any more, and I mean that very literally, I had to understand why this was happening. I had to do something about it. This is what led me to study neuropsychology and eventually gratitude.

While neuropsychology is a fancy-sounding word, just think of it as a marriage between psychology and biology. For example—if someone scares you, your body chemistry changes at a rapid pace. It starts with your brain, which triggers the release of chemicals to orient your body for a stress response. As another example—if you haven't eaten in a while, you may feel “hangry” and act angrily towards someone without meaning to. Or, if you just had a wonderful time with someone you love, you may feel elated and joyful. In this case, your brain dumped a



bunch of serotonin or maybe dopamine into your blood stream. Watch grandparents play with their grandchildren—a grandparent’s joyful smile is proof that psychology and biology are linked.

To focus in, I specifically studied the biology of the 100 billion neurons and 13 trillion synapses located inside our head. This 3-pound organ defines who we are, what we feel, how we behave, our logic, what we communicate, and much more. Our gray matter is both biological and psychological. And, I had to understand the triggers and underlying processes around self-image, stress, anxiety, and depression.

Scientifically, I studied what was happening to me. By grace, I was motivated to learn. And, I drilled into study like someone who wanted to get three PhDs in one year.

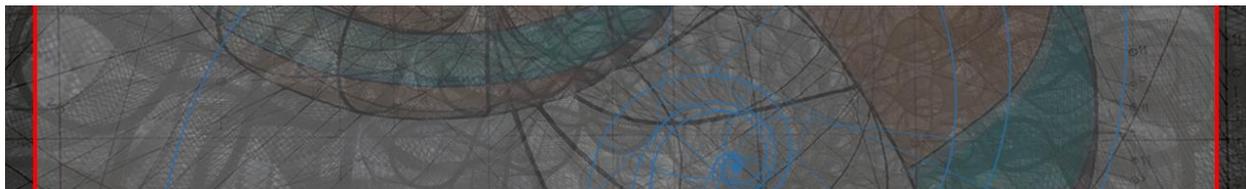
Searching for an Answer and Finding Gratitude

For me, and many others, the core way out of depression is—learning to change the habit of how we think about ourselves AND often others.

This was what needed to change—my habit of self-perception. We all quietly talk to ourselves—every single human—across every personal and professional endeavor—across every race, religion, sexual orientation, and age. While I pursued my study for personal reasons, the business and leadership part of me couldn’t help but identify parallels. How many salespeople, business leaders, and employees work on self-perception daily? How many deal with heavy stress? Stress and self-perception are tied to business in so many ways.

My study of biology and psychology led me to dozens and dozens of sub-topics—mood and sentiment, molecular biology, cognitive bias, decision science, meditation, critical thinking, motivation, and much, much more. But, the one that stood out with me was gratitude. Why?

Scientifically, I found that this particular behavior is much more powerful and unique than virtually any other type of human behavior. One day, I tried to list all the benefits on a single PowerPoint slide—it filled two columns with an 8-point font size. I stopped after I ran out of room.



Applying Gratitude and Neuropsychology in Business

What research on gratitude led to its application in business?



It was a surprise to find out I had been studying the brain longer than 2010. Although, I knew I had studied business and psychology for what seemed like forever.

The Life Background Connecting Brain, Psychology, and Biology

For the longest time, I didn't realize that psychology was something I have been fascinated about since I was 14.

At some point, I realized that I've been reading self-help, sales leadership, and relationship books since I was a kid. Back then, I was familiar with everything from How to Win Friends and Influence People—to Think and Grow Rich—to The Five Love Languages—to the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. By the time I graduated high school, I had consumed more than 100 books and recorded speeches on these topics. To this day, I am an information velociraptor—a voracious consumer of media in this space.

The Life Background of Business

Business-wise, I grew up in a family of entrepreneurs and started studying business early.

To be honest, proud, and vulnerable, I would steal Harvard Business Reviews from my dad's bookshelf—and had collected at least three years' worth before I graduated high school. I started a business in high school as well as in college. The Georgia Tech industrial design program taught me to design products that people love and appreciate. When you design a product or service in this manner, those products and services have a high CLTV, like one that lasts for decades. This is what cash cows are made of.

At the time of my dark depression and relentless anxiety, I had a 13-year career in software, working for some of the best and most innovative companies in the world. In software terms, I had worked at two unicorns and for many "Magic Quadrant" products. This was the background of my life as I fell into the abyss.

The Research Begins

My research on gratitude started with the neuropsychological study of depression—my own.

Of course, this also means a study of emotion. After all, psychology is defined in Wikipedia as "the study of mind and behavior." From the science view (biology and neuropsychology), I largely studied the amygdala and neuroplasticity. These were very big in scientific circles because fMRI (brain scanning device) was being widely referenced in scientific journals at the time. On the mainstream media side of research, Dr. Daniel Amen was introducing the world to a new way of thinking through SPECT scanning. And, countless media outlets were talking



about how “the amygdala was the reptilian part of the brain” or “rewiring your brain,” and topics of that nature. This was sometime in late 2010 and early 2011.

The Conclusion—Overcoming Depression and Anxiety

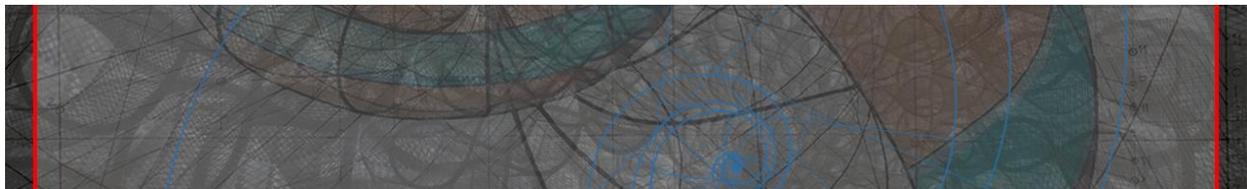
It took about 6 months to overcome all of this. At the core, I had to change how I perceive the world around me, practice a different way of thinking about myself, and form a different habit of self-perception. It was the same with the perception of others. This “behavior change” is how most therapists help others—which is a multi-hundred-billion-dollar industry if not a trillion. I also saw a big opportunity to apply this in business—in a multitude of ways.

The Connection to Gratitude

My big question was, which was the best thing to do? To practice? What formula works best?

It ends up that psychologists, at the time, had categorized human emotions in 96 categories—the core 6 were anger, fear, sadness, surprise, love, and joy. Go search for: emotion wheel. This scratches the surface—the multitude of psychological phobia, or whatever psychological disorder, goes much deeper than merely naming an emotion. By unpacking myself, I realized the need to be less ashamed, disgusted, angry, displeased, and disappointed with myself—and replace these feelings with positive ones. I realized this applied to virtually every human, in business and in life, just not in such a severe way.

This is where gratitude popped out—and more so than any other emotional and biological healing mechanism. And, this is when I decided to start posting to [365 Days of Thankfulness](#)—now with 3650+ posts over 11 years. I wanted to practice being grateful every day to make sure neuro-sculpting or neuroplasticity would occur. I took the best I knew of industrial, product, and UI design (part of my undergrad thesis) and applied it at well. Literally...I did this to survive...I committed to it to survive...and...I committed to help others. Today, you can search and find a tremendous amount of research on these topics.



What makes Gratitude so Powerful?

The uniqueness of gratitude stood out for me in 5 core ways.



The 1) definition, 2) science, 3) behavioral reciprocation, 4) humanitarian view, and 5) practice of gratitude were eye-opening.

1) The Definition of Gratitude

The definition of gratitude is clearly about positive emotions in psychology terms—most humans know the meaning. To a neuropsychologist, this also means that certain neurons are firing more than others. This means different body chemicals are being released. To sum this up, I found this to be the absolute most important, scientific definition—the act of gratitude fires electricity through very clear neuron structures, which produce amazing results.

And, there are many more definitions of being grateful or thankful. One is being appreciative of benefits received. Another is finding pleasure in comfort supplied or discomfort alleviated. Third and a favorite—a positive emotional response that we perceive on giving or receiving a benefit from someone (Emmons & McCullough, 2004). Gratitude is a very positive behavior. This applied to my life—personally and in business—in a big way.

2) The Science of Gratitude

Many researchers and scientists were uncovering the benefits of gratitude in 2010 and many more are today—just search: gratitude science research.

At a brain scan (fMRI) level, sending or receiving gratitude lights up the brain's reward pathways and generates positive emotions. Here, the brain boosts serotonin and dopamine—doctors and scientists call gratitude a natural anti-depressant ([citation](#)). Countless neuropsychology researchers were (and still do) relate gratitude with feelings of joy, happiness, peace, compassion, and love. These are all very positive emotions.

I also found out that people who experience chronic and acute stress—they have a very difficult uphill battle. Stress releases cortisol—which creates horrible effects on the brain when there is too much over a long period of time. This type of stress leads to post-traumatic stress disorder, dissociative identity disorder, alcoholism and drug abuse, poor heart conditions, and more. Chronic or traumatic stress makes EVERY single disease much worse on the human body. Some stress is healthy but too much can basically break your body, mind, and spirit. Again, this applied to my life—personally and in business—in a big way.

3) The Behavioral Reciprocation of Gratitude

This was a big aha—in terms of applying gratitude to myself and particularly in business.

I needed to be grateful for who I am, how hard I've worked, and what I've accomplished. Then, I applied it to others, especially when comparing myself. Fundamentally, I needed to learn to



love myself—nowadays, people call it a version of self-care. Importantly, this concept came front and center for me—being grateful for others in business.

Back in 2010, there was a very limited set of research on the topic of gratitude and reciprocity.

Now, there are many areas of research—search for: gratitude research reciprocity. The research is now analyzed at the top universities and graduate healthcare programs. While some researchers continue to look for the antithesis and deny the reciprocity of gratitude, it is truly impossible to deny. In short, people respond to gratitude in kind. This is a big deal because there are NOT many human behaviors or emotions that trigger the same positive response in others. You get what you give.

Imagine being able to communicate something that you almost always get back. Imagine that your grateful words to another human result in that human being grateful to you—you have that power, in your possession, at any time and in any situation in your life. Here are three excellent, scientific references. Again, this applied to my life—personally and in business:

First, the practice of gratitude increases positive emotions in a multiplicative or exponential way ([citation](#)). It is a simple “do more to get more” phenomena. In the software business, we refer to this as a flywheel effect. In industrial revolution terms, this makes for a very efficient and effective way to change human perception, behavior, and mood.

In a more recent viewpoint from the [Wharton Health Care Management Alumni Association](#), “Current research has established the cultivation and sustainability of gratitude practices have a multiplier effect on building quality relationships and promoting more pro-social behaviors, often called the “social glue.” Foundational to much of the research is the finding that gratitude triggers several forms of reciprocal gratitude.” In my view, is social glue helpful? For certain.

Third, other research ([citation](#)) points to the evolutionary biology of the human brain. I will try to sum this up in the simplest way possible. For humans to survive, we needed to help each other—and the help was appreciated. This has happened for millennia and is completely wired into human DNA. In fact, it is part of the DNA of many animals, insects, and plants. The core operating system of the human brain is survival—if someone helps you survive (or thrive), are you grateful? Who isn't? Who doesn't want to help someone who helped them? No one, unless you are a complete prick.

4) The Humanitarian and Spiritual Point of View

At the start (and since then), the scope of my research on gratitude expanded.

As I posted to my [365 Days of Thankfulness](#) page day after day, I explored all aspects of the science, art, and process of “being grateful.” Part of this included research on religious and



spiritual practices. Back then, I deeply studied Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism—these covers the beliefs of about 5 billion humans.

Since then, and because I am addicted to learning, I have also delved into Islam, Atheism, Rastafarianism, Druze, Catholicism, Baptist, Evangelical, Mysticism, Taoism, Shinto, Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroaster, Kabbalah, Stoicism, Confucianism, Yoga, Shamanism, Paganism, many ancient religions, and more.

Guess what I've seen as the most practiced behavior in every single one of them?

It is practicing gratitude.

Gratitude is also a form of prayer or meditation. How can billions and billions of people, over 5000 years, be wrong about the importance of gratitude and what it does for humans? The proof also comes from the science of anthropology, sociology, and behavioral science. Some people might say love is stronger—isn't being grateful an act of love?

5) The Practice of Gratitude and Neuroplasticity

When I started my [365 Days of Thankfulness](#) page in 2010...

I knew what the research said about forming a habit.

However, all I had was a compass. I didn't have a map. Perhaps the most profound, unexpected experience I had is because I decided to take a specific approach to my gratitude practice of daily posts. The goal was—to do my best to never, ever post the same thing twice. My goal was to be thankful for something different every day, even multiple times per day. Why? Because, if you are just thankful for the same 5 things every day, then you aren't growing in your perception.

You've done amazingly well though. $365/5$ is 73 times in a year that you were thankful for the same 5 things. You achieve strong re-emphasis, but you are limited to 5 things. That is fantastic work that deserves applause. But, it is totally different than 365 posts for 10 years, for 3650 separate things. Going wide and longitudinal is quite different. Instead of being thankful on automatic pilot, you can apply executive function (reasoning) and stretch your perception. You reinforce it in a more comprehensive way.

Here is the biggest lesson from this practice.

When you have to pick something new every day, you start with the big ones. Monday, I am thankful for family. Tuesday, I am thankful for food. Wednesday, I am thankful that I have a roof over my head. Thursday, I am thankful that I have a good job, Friday, Saturday, etc., etc. But what happens after you get through two weeks? You start to run out of the big boulders.



So, you look for rocks.

I am thankful for my kids' teacher—she is awesome. I am thankful that I made it to work on time—traffic was a bitch and someone almost ran into me. I am thankful for football games. I am thankful that our VP is a good human. The point is, now you have to start looking harder. Perhaps you can get through 45 rocks before you start looking for pebbles. This starts a big transition in your perception of the world—personally and in business.

Now, you look for pebbles.

Pebbles are things like, you walk around your house and say, "I am thankful for my couch because I've had so many great naps on it." I am thankful that I didn't have to spend \$1000 dollars to fix my car window. Yesterday, I am grateful for the kindness of my manager. I am thankful for toilet paper—actually that's probably a big boulder (LOL). The good news about pebbles is, they are everywhere. The hard thing about pebbles is that they are much harder to see—at least at first. The best news is that you are changing your habit of perception—pebbles can be found 450 times or more before it gets even harder. Try doing a gratitude journal for 3 years straight. Yes, you forget all the unique items, but it matters less and less because you are in the habit of looking everywhere. At this point, your habits are pretty strong.

After pebbles, you have no choice but to look for grains of sand.

This takes a lot of self-awareness. And, you become more creative in your view of life. I am thankful, in this moment, that didn't step in that huge puddle—this is one heck of a rainstorm. I am thankful my child can learn math—some kids have major disabilities. I am thankful I woke up today—because yesterday could have been my last day on Earth. I am thankful to be able to run—some people have no legs. I am thankful for a big, relaxing breath—some people have trouble breathing. I am thankful that person DID NOT treat me well—now I realize how much I appreciate when someone treats me well.

Eventually, you see sand everywhere you look. I realized this one day when I looked at a single, fallen leaf—I was thankful because it represented oxygen, which we all need to live. At that moment, I realized you can find sand everywhere you look. You can be grateful for anything in your path—good or bad.

Before I get into the application of gratitude in business, there are a few questions to ask ourselves. My general approach to business case analysis is to shoot holes in it, find all the risks to mitigate, ensure your team has the capabilities to evaluate and deliver, then really beat up the product or service and plan until you can't beat it up anymore. Then, it's either a go or it isn't. I've taken this approach with leaders in all customer-facing departments, CEOs, CFOs, VC, and M&A people:

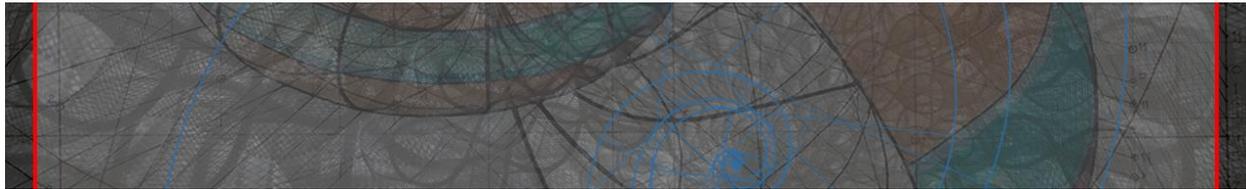
1. Do you believe in the science for applying gratitude in business? Do you believe that 5+ billion people have it wrong about the power of gratitude? Do you believe it will



create greater outcomes than other elements of culture? Scientifically, the case is very hard to argue. But if you don't believe it, the rest of my "pitch" doesn't matter.

2. Do you believe that gratitude fits into existing budgets? What about in sales? Customer service? HR? Leadership training? Employee satisfaction and lack of turnover? What about across all employee interactions and communications, especially in relation to turnover?
3. Do you believe regular practice forms a habit—can you get one or many people to behave in a more grateful way and automate the behavior like Pavlov's dog?
4. Are the mix of benefits, costs, and risks for behavior change financially doable in your company?
5. Can you measure the results in a clear way?

Again, if you answered no to any of these, then you can stop reading. Sorry to waste your time. I am very grateful you took the time to learn more. If you said yes, then let's unpack the business case.



Going deeper—How Gratitude Applies in Business

“Culture eats strategy for breakfast,” as Peter Drucker said.

“If everyone wants to eat, someone has to sell—it isn't the CEO who pays our paycheck—it is the customer,” was an often-used quote in my family's business.

“The magic formula that successful businesses have discovered is to treat customers like guests and employees like people,” as stated by Tom Peters.

Let's start with the qualitative view. Think about how important behavior is for sales and support teams. Customers will go to competitors if they don't have a good or great experience. Revenue and NPS or CSAT are all measured. You cannot afford to have poor behaviors in these departments—it will eventually screw with your cashflow and operating capital. If you don't appreciate your employees, they will go somewhere where they are more valued. Turnover is quite expensive, especially in B2B sales.

However, most of the companies I've been with—they give lip service to culture—except in a sub-culture way within sales and customer service departments. Those companies who do a good job actually live their values. A good sign is when the CEO talks about it at every company meeting, it is reinforced with training, and people are evaluated on it in their



quarterly reviews. This is how I experienced it at Siebel Systems CRM—at the time, it was the fastest company to grow to \$1B in the history of the world. Sales was number one, customer satisfaction was number two, and employee satisfaction was number three. The culture was truly embedded in the hearts and minds of all employees.

Then, there are those companies, sales departments, and service organizations who take culture to the “ethos level.” Some call it brain-washing or a cult. Here, I mean that employees don’t just practice it. They don’t just bring it to work every single day. They embody it as part of their essence—it is in their DNA. It is automatic or default behavior applied everywhere they go. A great example of this is Delta Airlines “family values.” Delta hires for people who naturally treat others well. And, the company forces habit change (in a good way). This makes “treating people like family” part of every employee and customer interaction. Habits matter. You know a culture is full of crap when there is no widespread, observable habit in people that represent the cultural norms and values.

The ROI on Gratitude is NOT Questionable

Still, many executives have a hard time making the case for an ROI on culture—and this applies to gratitude in business as well as sales, service, and management training. Many have a cognitive bias and knee-jerk reaction—perhaps confirmation bias or status quo bias. So, let’s talk about a business case here. From doing external and internal sales over decades, I’ve experienced three types of business case decisions.

- 1. Formal, Deep, and Precise:** You see this when there is a detailed, complicated spreadsheet. It has risk-adjusted projections for investment returns. It often needs the analysis and support of a controller or VP of Finance. Depending on company and investment size, there might also be 10 slides or 100 to go with it. There is a business leader or leaders who are driving the investment.
- 2. Less Formal Benefits, Costs, and Risks:** In this approach, the leaders of the decision believe in the expected outcomes 100%. There is a simple spreadsheet. The leaders often pick apart the benefits on 5-10 slides but can’t or don’t want to spend much more time in analysis mode. The big risk question—is this doable or are we overzealous and likely to miss? Do we agree that this is leaning us in the right direction no matter what?
- 3. Intuitive Decisions:** This is where a leader just knows it is the right thing to do. Perhaps they just lead with their heart. Or, they do the financial math and see the vision in their head. They know the risks from experience. The decision is made without documentation. Some founders and CEOs can do this well, others make really poor choices.

What is the Business Case for Gratitude?

A very talented and successful CEO once told me, they don’t care as much about the spreadsheet until they understand the assumptions for the numbers.



The Assumptions

1. If product and service designers and developers are more grateful for customer insights, the products and services will be more successful. These are the cash cows—deep customer empathy matters here because a failed product or service launch is very expensive.
2. If sales, partnership, channel, support, success, and supply chain employees are more grateful for external relationships, the relationships will be more successful. While this leads to high NPS/CSAT scores, the more important thing is the revenue and profit tied to customer lifetime value (CLTV).
3. If employees are more grateful for each other across and within departments, they will be happier and have greater employee satisfaction. One of the top reasons people stay at companies is because of their co-workers—which reduces turnover.
4. If managers and employees are more grateful for each other, they will have a better relationship with each other—reducing HR problems and turnover while improving communications. One of the top reasons people leave a company is because of their boss (or bosses)—which increases turnover.
5. If gratitude is a reciprocal behavior, the resulting flywheel will increase and reinforce itself—it will add value far longer than the cost to implement and maintain.
6. The company can introduce this mindset in a way that people take seriously—becoming habitually grateful at work (and in life). And, the company believes gratitude trumps many other culture or values topics. This is expanded below.
7. The company can figure out an affordable way to get started.
8. As a scientific fact and supported by books on habit forming (like *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, *Atomic Habits*, or *Tiny Habits*), is that this practice will change neuron structures and the associated habit. As neuropsychologists say, “Neurons that [wire together fire together](#).” Here is a [science citation](#), a more [practical one](#), and a [video](#) on it. This change in behavior is guaranteed to happen if you take the time to make it a regular practice.

Example Metrics Improvements

Given those assumptions, let’s forecast metric improvements in a few sales examples. Note, this case is more informal, but it is tied to metrics.

Can you tie gratitude habits to sales metrics like daily sales activities? Yes, especially with sentiment and communications analysis—which every business now has cost-effective access to via the cloud. If you want to tie it to deals or customer relationships, then look for the situations where a customer communicates their appreciation for the employee. Reward employees for these situations. Analyze correlations where those who show the most gratitude close the most deals or have the best support ratings. Yes, there are many other variables to closing deal—gratitude alone doesn’t do it. However, qualitative feedback will



speaking for itself. People do business with people they like, people like those who are grateful for them and for each opportunity to help.

Can you tie gratitude to sales metrics like employee turnover? Turnover and training of salespeople, especially in B2B scenarios, is extremely expensive. It is the same for marketing leaders in B2C. Bad managers can destroy a sales department quite quickly, crushing morale. This opens the realm of quiet quitting. Again, you can track appreciation in interpersonal communications until you see the behavior in place then correlate to job satisfaction and employee turnover. Well, what if people game the system? That is up to leadership—go read Brene Brown's business leadership view of authenticity and vulnerability. If you are a great leader, employees will be willing participants. If they aren't going to really embrace it fully, are they the right person for the company?

Can you tie it to successful product launches? This one is hard—because there are so many variables and the life cycle is so long. It would be impossible to do at a micro level. However, you can judge the amount and quality of customer intimacy then tie it to the product launch and results.

The Cost of a Grateful Organization

When it comes to costs, there is a wide range of approaches—low, medium, and high.

Low: At the least costly part of the spectrum, there are many things you can do—virtually for free.

- You can ask people to always write (from scratch) a genuinely grateful statement in every appropriate email or similar communication—inside and outside the company. The cost per employee is about 15 seconds per email. For 20 emails per day and 15 seconds per email, it is 1% of an employee's time for a normal 40-hour week. At a \$50,000 salary, it costs roughly \$2 per day in employee time. For the cost of a soft drink. Annually, that is about \$521 per employee. Now, most companies don't analyze time at this level of detail, but it is a real number. For most people, the cost is totally hidden. If an employee puts in 41 hours per week on average, it is 2132 total hours per year. The extra 52 hours a year is more than double the time needed for the above example.
- To kick off a program, you then have the cost of training on gratitude (and being genuine about it). This can be done through existing videos on the internet. How much do you need to spend here? Nothing—here is a [solid, curated list for free](#). Of course, you can hire a consultant too or get your training department involved.
- To add another almost-zero-cost approach, take the employees who are great examples of being grateful, and have them share stories about how they think and what they do to take action.
- Another possibility is to open certain team meetings with 30-60 seconds for each employee to say why they are grateful for something that happened at work.



- The lowest cost way to measure **Low** is simply through basic, qualitative feedback on a weekly basis.

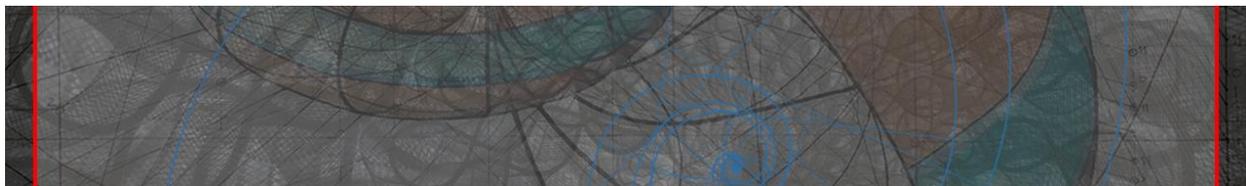
Medium: In the middle of the spectrum, you can perform sentiment analysis on call transcripts, emails, and tools like Slack or MS Teams.

- This means you can track and count grateful events like writing the key phrase, “I am grateful for...” If you don’t have the tools to automatically do this, it may take more money. But, the tools are available in both Microsoft and Google email servers as well as Slack and MS Teams.
- Call transcripts are dependent on your video and audio call capturing technology. And, sentiment or word-tracking tools are available from many vendors. These days, they are built more and more into sales and support software. Depending on the size of your organization, of course it will cost more to store and process more and more data along with needing more and more employee or consulting time. Of course, there are ways to cut down costs here as well. To measure **Medium**, you can correlate behavioral output with other metrics in a manual or automated way. For nerdy IT or data scientist types (which I consider myself), this is longitudinal data, unstructured analysis on behavioral event streams, and algorithmic correlation to metrics in traditional BI, ETL, and data warehouse data.

High: At the most expensive level, you still do all the low and medium stuff above.

- If you are a public company, then you will have more hoops to jump through with compliance, security, etc.
- Of course, you can do more training and coaching—which costs more.
- You track progress at an employee level across lines of business.
- If we really wanted to measure the change, we would have to do an ongoing FMRI scan on every employees brain—a stream of gratitude data much like an IoT system or Apple Watch/Health.

If you are still questioning the cost, here is a question to you—how much do spend on IT and shadow IT? It’s likely 10-20% of revenues, depending on how technology-oriented your company is. Now, how much are you spending on the computers inside our skull? Are you upgrading the human software? Are you monitoring it? Are you managing it? Do online, “talking head” training programs with PowerPoint slides really change behavior or do they just give people new knowledge one time? Guess what the average leadership training costs? 1-5% of total payroll costs, not 1-5% of revenues.



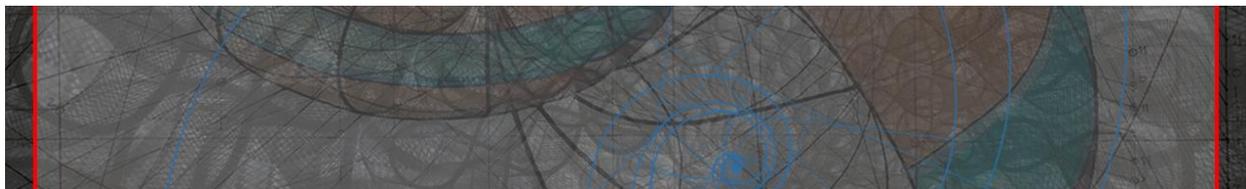
Summary and Conclusion—the Grateful Organization

Over my 25+ year career, “go to market” is the thing I’ve done most—including dozens and dozens of business cases and product launches for dozens of software companies—and alongside all customer facing departments—the entire customer journey and related processes. It is almost all in the area of CRM, which applies directly to employees in many ways as well. Blah, blah, blah.

The goal in writing this book, is to help your company become a Grateful Organization. The challenge is to achieve an ROI on gratitude—that beats any ROI you’ve ever seen. It is doable. I’ve thought about how to apply this in business for 14 years. It applies to your personal life as well.

Much has been covered in 6000 words (at least for version 1.0), and here are the core take-aways:

1. The brain will respond to habit forming practices—literally—you can program it to perceive the world in a different way and automatically take action.
2. Habitual practices of gratitude—they do something to neuron structures that cause reciprocation, leading to flywheel effects in all human relationships across your organization.
3. Gratitude can impact all types of business metrics, particularly in sales, with turnover, and employee relationships. The cost to implement a program can be close to nothing and certainly fits within the existing sales, support, or leadership development training budget. With such a low cost, there is only one risk—will employees like it and do it or reject it? This is up to the leader of such a program—it always starts from the top down.



So, what do want to do?

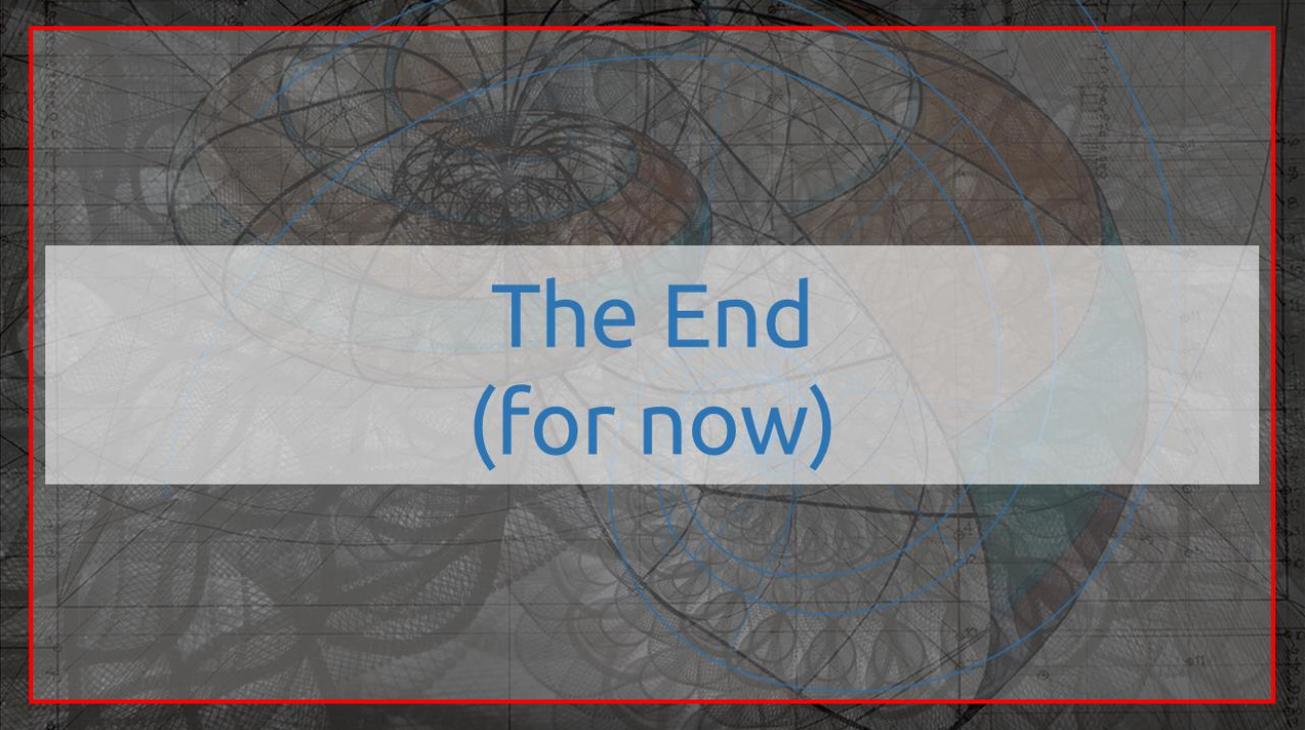
There are three quick, final questions.

1. Do you want to work for a Grateful Organization?
2. Do you want to be known for contributing to or building a Grateful Organization?
3. Which way do you want to live your life?



I'd grateful if you want to connect and discuss this book or related seminars, training, consulting, and advisory hi@adambloom.me.

Gratefully,
AB



The End (for now)

The Grateful Organization™

A path to sales growth and innovation.

A low cost, low risk, and high value approach to next-generation leadership.

A measurable application of psychology and behavior change to business outcomes.

A way to build something that lasts.



An example of Generative AI for software companies

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