

Thanksgiving is upon us again, reminding us of the many things we both recognize and take for granted in our busy lives. In this issue, we try to reflect both on big and little things that have made a difference in our lives. Let us know if you have anything to add. Happy Thanksgiving!

Grateful for You!

By [Lance Woodbury](#)

When I reflect on gratitude, it's easy to focus on you (our customers and supporters) and say "thanks" for the economic opportunities such service affords. But if I ask myself what are some of the deeper reasons I am grateful for you, the following come to mind:

You allow and enable us to fulfill our calling. The theologian Frederick Buechner describes "calling" as "the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." By working with family businesses in agriculture and hopefully helping you have meaningful discussions with peers and plan for succession, we have a chance to pursue our passion in a way that meets your need. (Many farmers and ranchers, who see their vocation as feeding others and supporting families, can also identify with the intersection of their passion and the world's needs.)

You help us broaden our understanding of success. Making money is one obvious measure of success for you, but success is also found in families having important conversations. If we can help you improve your relationships - whether together in business or apart, articulate your plans for ownership and management transitions, and help you pass assets *and* family values and stories to future generations, we understand something more about success and prosperity.

You teach us what effectiveness is in many ways. While we often get calls from family businesses that feel they are not being effective in family business management, we find lots of examples of ways they *are* being effective. We see rural business owners make significant charitable contributions in their communities. We see innovative approaches to helping employees with education, housing or medical issues in ways no large corporation would consider. We see hospitality toward immigrants, helping attitudes toward strangers, and even patient dealings with consumers who don't understand, or are even opposed, to your means of livelihood.

We have developed a deep sense of gratitude for all of the ways agricultural family businesses impact the people around them. Helping you helps us, and for this we are VERY grateful!

Relationships—The Binding Ingredients of Life

By [Davon Cook](#)

This Thanksgiving season, I am noticing my gratitude for relationships. I think of relationships like eggs in my favorite cookie recipe—they bind all the other ingredients of life together. Here are three that have brought me joy recently.

- We asked neighbors to feed our animals last week while we were visiting our son in college. After showing them the chores, I gave them (ahead of time) my precious home raised eggs as a thank you. Then I had to call them 12 hours later to beg back a few eggs to make bread for my son! How embarrassing. But they were thrilled both to feed the animals and nurture our family. Wonderful neighbors...



- A professional colleague I rarely see drove some distance to meet me while I was passing through the area, just so we could catch up. After three hours of sharing ideas, challenges, successes, and laughter, we have hatched plans for a new learning group to support each other. Wonderful colleague...
- A friend is going through very intensive cancer treatments. An entire “village” has sprung up to support her, and I’m honored to be one of the team. Seeing numerous people rally around her and her family during 80+ days straight away from home is moving. Ranging from food to caregiving shifts to financial support to caring for her kids...we’ve all seen it in our communities and marveled at the goodness of humanity. I treasure that. Wonderful village...

Last week at our gathering of [The Progress Coach](#), we examined how the skills to build and nurture relationships are critical for business and personal success. I count myself blessed as I reflect on these relationships, and I pause to identify others that need more attention. I encourage you to do the same.

Thankful—for the Little Things

By [Dr. Bill Long](#)

Thanksgiving season provides an occasion for us to celebrate the people and circumstances that make us grateful for our lives. These things are what I would call the “big things” in life, the things or people that never leave our mind and heart as we live our days. But lately I have been thinking of the way that several little things have transformed my life this year. They are so small as to seem almost insignificant. But here are three.

Several months ago, I began to develop some pains in my legs and back that hampered my life. The pains didn’t go away, either with gym workouts, walking or my own stretching. A friend suggested I attend a yoga class she also attended. I inwardly rolled my eyes, thinking of pretzel-bodied and mantra-chanting twenty-somethings who would shame me by their mere presence. But I went. Surprisingly, it was led by a fifty year-old woman who knew how older bodies worked (or didn’t). I can say this Thanksgiving that I am really grateful for yoga.

Then, a friend of mine, a retired judge, went to Europe with his wife. He prepares for a trip like he prepared for a judicial case. Thorough. They were visiting Portugal and he mentioned I might want to read Pascal Mercier’s *Night Train to Lisbon* to understand that beautiful but troubled land. The book was a godsend, opening me to elegant language and the sad but poignant history of a usually-ignored country.

Finally, I went on a retreat. While picking up registration materials, I noticed they gave me a spiral notepad and a pen. Good. Take notes. I took some notes, but then I realized I could take notes *on anything*. Over the course of the weekend, I outlined my next two books. My frantic scribbles were no doubt seen as great interest in the proceedings. Nope—personal planning!

Three small gifts: yoga, a book, a notebook. All have opened new vistas. I was glad I could see the little things.

