

# Art of the written word

## ► Survey suggests handwritten notes mean more to employees than other forms of communication

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Whenever my former boss wrote comments like “Good!” and “Nice work” on stories I edited, it had the same effect as a gold star in school: I felt proud and determined to do a good job again. I’ve kept her thoughtful handwritten birthday and Christmas cards; I can’t say the same for equally lovely e-mails and e-cards.

Turns out I’m not the only one who feels this way. According to a recent survey commissioned by BIC, 61 per cent of Canadians believe receiving a personalized form of praise, such as a handwritten note, has more value than other forms of workplace communication.

“A note of recognition can produce an immediate and positive reaction and is a proactive way to appreciate employees,” adds handwriting analyst and BIC spokesperson Elaine Charal,

Positive feedback is as important to future employees as it is to seasoned pros. University of Prince Edward Island undergrad Kristen Lockett received a confidence booster and valuable addition to her portfolio in the form of a note highlighting her personal strengths and the specific things that impressed the supervisor at her recent internship.

For Karin Vollmer, who has been teaching at the same Toronto-area high school for 10 years, kudos for extracurricular activities like producing a student talent show and organizing and fundraising for a class trip to Costa Rica have added to her job satisfaction.

“I love the acknowledgement, the fact that my principal takes the time to sit down and write a message about how I’ve touched people’s lives,” she says. “It makes me feel that I’m not going unnoticed.”

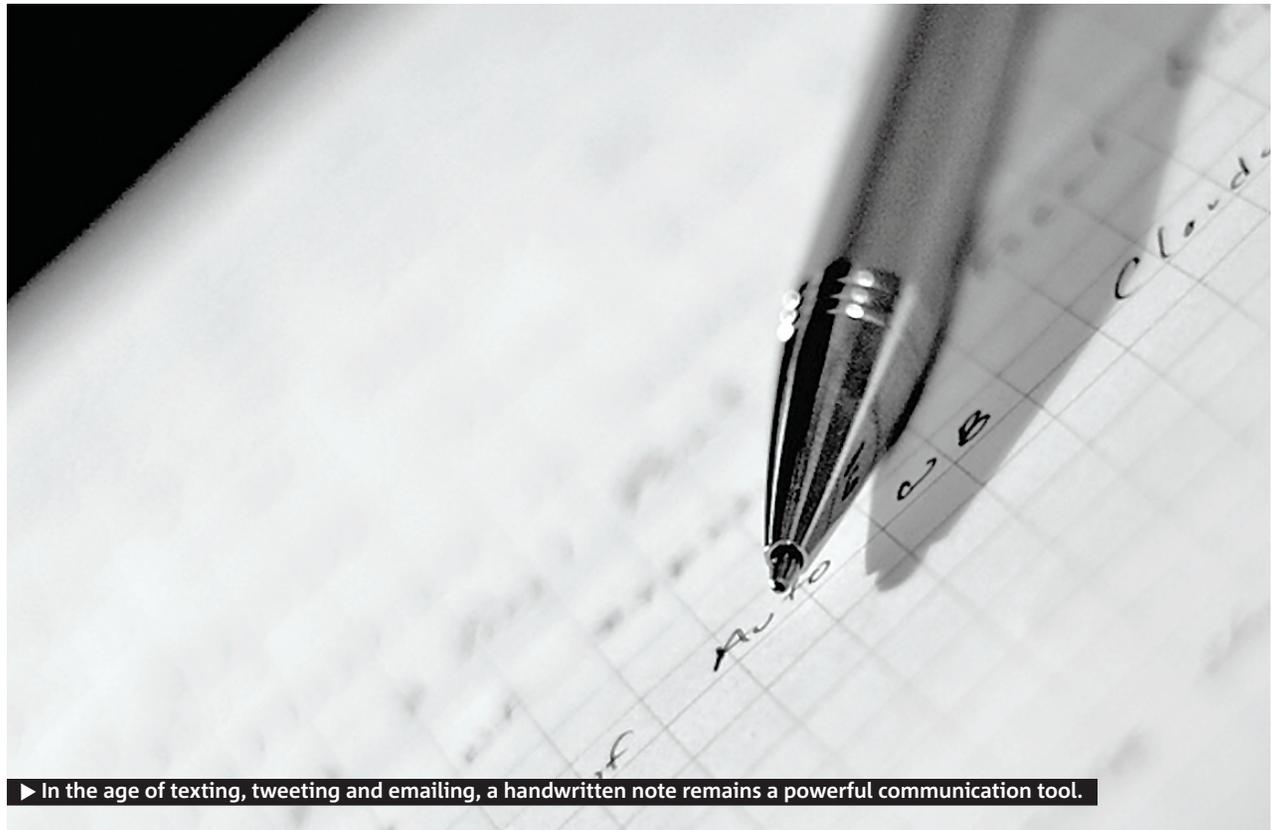
Handwritten notes make good business sense for other reasons. In addition to recognizing team members, Chad McAlpine, RBC Capital Markets vice-president, quantitative and global research, sends small holiday gifts with notes to those who have

### communication 2.0

Looking for other ways to go that extra mile when communicating with managers and colleagues? Here are three tips from Options Personnel senior consultant Zoe Mandel, and career specialist and corporate trainer Colleen Clarke.

- **1. Provide testimonials** for social networking sites like LinkedIn, says Mandel.
- **2. Compliment co-workers** test and managers in front of each other, suggests Clarke.
- **3. Improve your listening skills**, Clarke advises. That means turning away from the computer when someone’s speaking, making eye contact, leaning forward and actively listening.

contributed to his franchise’s growth. His inspirations? Business Notes: Writing Personal Notes that Build Professional Relationships by Florence Isaacs (\$18, Clarkson Potter), a guide to writing the perfect message to engage employees, win new clients, deepen customer loyalty and more. Plus,



► In the age of texting, tweeting and emailing, a handwritten note remains a powerful communication tool.

**“Each day at work, I receive 600 to 800 e-mails, and on occasion important messages are overlooked. When someone takes the time to write a note by hand and deliver it, I will pay much more attention to it.”**

CHAD MCALPINE,  
RBC CAPITAL MARKETS VICE-PRESIDENT, QUANTITATIVE AND GLOBAL RESEARCH

personal experience: a year ago, his former boss-turned client sent him a publication he thought McAlpine would enjoy, along with a note.

“It was a very nice touch, and I sent him a let-

ter thanking him for thinking about me,” says McAlpine.

Proof that even in the age of texting, e-mail and Twitter, a handwritten note remains a powerful communication tool.

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