THE EMIGRANT EDGE

HOW TO MAKE IT BIG IN AMERICA

“REORIENTS YOUR VISION FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE.”
—SHAWN ACHOR, New York Times bestselling author of The Happiness Advantage and Before Happiness
Real estate industry expert Brian Buffini is a classic American rags-to-riches story. Born and raised in Dublin, Ireland, Brian immigrated to the United States in 1986. After becoming one of the nation's top REALTORS*, he founded Buffini & Company—an organization dedicated to sharing his phenomenally successful lead-generation systems with others.

Based in Carlsbad, California, Buffini & Company is now the nation's leading small-business coaching and training company. It has trained three million professionals in 37 countries and currently coaches more than 25,000 businesspeople across North America.

Today, Brian travels the world teaching people how to live the good life and realize the American Dream. He speaks to over 250,000 people at live events every year and thousands more via webcasts. His wit, wisdom and motivational style make him a powerful speaker, author, mentor and coach who has impacted and improved the lives of many by helping them to tap into their full potential and achieve their dreams.

On the cover: Brian Buffini at Doolough Valley in County Mayo, Ireland.
WHY IT’S SO EASY TO MAKE IT BIG IN AMERICA

BY BRIAN BUFFINI
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They say a fish discovers water last. In other words, you can be surrounded by everything you need to succeed, but still be oblivious to it. That’s exactly how it is for many Americans today. Every year, millions of people battle to move to this great country of ours, but many who were actually born and raised here seem to think they have it hard. I sometimes think the only people who don’t know how great America is are Americans!

Now I’m not saying that people don’t experience genuine hardship in this country, because they do. But, for many of us, life is far easier than it is for people living under repressed regimes all over the world. We have little to complain about, but we still manage to find fault with plenty! We grumble when the Wi-Fi doesn’t connect, we moan when our caramel macchiato is too frothy and we whine if our fast food is too slow. Talk about first world problems! In many corners of the globe, people would love to have these sorts of issues. So why is it that, even though we have so much to be grateful for, we can get hung up on such trivial irritations? The truth is, our mindset has become skewed. We’ve forgotten how lucky we are, how much good fortune we have and how much opportunity is at our fingertips.

There are those, however, who haven’t forgotten any of this. They
see this country with fresh eyes. They recognize the opportunities, benefits and value that our society offers—and they’re ready to work hard and take advantage of them. Who are these people? Immigrants.

I know something about this because I’m an immigrant myself. I emigrated from Ireland to America as a broke teenager and went on to become a wealthy businessman. (As an aside, many Americans aren’t aware of the term emigrant; only the term immigrant. A person is an emigrant upon leaving their homeland and an immigrant upon arriving at their destination. So on June 4, 1986, I was both on the same day.) In many ways, I’m the classic American rags-to-riches story, but I haven’t just acquired material wealth since I came here. My life’s work has been to teach and train people how to realize the American Dream.

Just what is the American Dream? In essence, it’s an idea. In his 1931 book “The Epic of America,” historian James Truslow Adams defined the American Dream as, “…a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement.” He went on to say, “It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely…” but, “…also a dream of being able to grow to fullest development as man and woman, unhampered by the barriers which had slowly been erected in the older civilizations, unrepressed by social orders which had developed for the benefit of classes rather than for the simple human being of any and every class.”

Over the past 20 years, I’ve presented to three million people at seminars and events all over the world. American audiences have always been the most enthusiastic and ambitious. However, in recent years, I’ve begun to notice a shift. I’ve found myself working harder and harder to convince people that a better future lies ahead, that their children can have more than they did and that the sky is still the limit when it comes to opportunity in America. Instead, I’ve been spending a lot of my time reminding Americans who they are, where they’ve come from and how great they can really be!

This shift in thinking and attitude isn’t just cosmetic or on the
THE EMIGRANT EDGE

surface—it’s deeply profound. Many Americans now believe the ideal of the American Dream is out of reach, or doesn’t even exist. In fact, according to a recent survey from Harvard’s Institute of Politics, nearly half of Millennials no longer think the American Dream is possible at all. My advice to those folks? Travel the world. Gaining perspective will open your eyes to how good we really have it here! Take it from me, when you arrive back home, you’ll kiss the ground. The American Dream is still alive, and it’s not nearly as difficult to achieve as you might expect.

I truly believe anyone can have success, both professional and personal. But, the truth is, I also think America has lost something. The American Dream has been this country’s greatest export. The concept is alive and well all over the world and is flourishing in countries like China, for example. But on home soil, things are different. We have lost our edge—an edge I like to call the Emigrant Edge.

Since 1886, Lady Liberty has stood over New York Harbor with the inscription, “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!” Those “huddled masses” of immigrants went on to create the largest, most powerful economy in the history of mankind. Along the way there were lessons they learned and principles they adhered to that made the American rags-to-riches story commonplace.

Today, however, instead of finding inspiration in stories of success and prosperity, many Americans are overwhelmed with commentary about the shrinking middle classes, the impossibility of earning a living wage and the travails of the working poor. People no longer believe in the American Dream, even though they need it more than ever. It’s time to step back and remind ourselves of the greatness we’re capable of. It’s time for a timeout!

America may have lost its Emigrant Edge, but not its heritage and identity. If people are willing to humble themselves to the princi-
ples their ancestors lived by, they can restore not only their individu-
al American Dream, but collectively recreate a more prosperous nation
and shore up the dream of America. We must dust off the timeless prin-
ciples and traits that served us well for so long and rediscover what origi-
inally made America successful.

Immigrants compose 13 percent of the American population, but they’re responsible for a quarter of all new businesses. In 2010, it was reported over 40 percent of Fortune 500 companies were founded by immigrants or first-generation family members. Meanwhile, according to a recent Pew Research Center study, virtually all of the growth in the nation’s working-age population between now and 2050 will be accounted for by immigrants and their children. There can be no doubt about it, immigrants are natural entrepreneurs. More than that, many of them are successful entrepreneurs.

I came to this country as a 19-year-old with 92 dollars in my pocket and went on to found the largest business training company in North America. To get to where I am today took a lot of devotion, ded-
ication and hard work. It wasn’t glamorous and it wasn’t fast. There was none of the instant gratification so many businesses today seem to ex-
pect. I encountered many difficulties, setbacks and roadblocks on my journey to the good life. Why didn’t I just throw in the towel and give up? Because from the start, I knew I’d have to work my apprenticeship in success and pay my dues to experience before I ever rose to the top.

As an outsider, I was all too aware nothing would come easy. When I stepped off that plane from Ireland, I didn’t have a network of people I could ask for help and advice, or a rich uncle who could give me a head start. To me, this country was, and still is, a level playing field—and I had to compete if I wanted to win. I knew all the opportunities I ever wanted were mine for the taking, but I also knew I had to start from the bottom and work my way up. This didn’t put me off—on the contrary I relished the challenge! To me, and many other immigrants just like me, America is the land where dreams can come true if you apply yourself.
This is the mindset of a successful immigrant—and it’s a winning one. Immigrants can teach us a lot about success. People come from all over the world to settle here and live the American Dream, and millions of them have thrived. Why do they succeed when so many born-and-bred Americans fail? Simply put, they think and work differently. Immigrants have a survivor mentality. Many of them have already risked everything they have to start a new life, so a few setbacks on the road to getting what they want aren’t going to stop them. They are pragmatic about what it takes to succeed. They know the world doesn’t owe them a living and that each individual is responsible for his or her success. They manage to do a lot with very little, not only because they’re resourceful self-starters, but because they don’t have a safety net to catch their fall. Above all, newcomers to this country are willing to pay the price required to succeed. This relentless work ethic, drive and can-do attitude means they’re prepared to start from scratch and do what it takes to advance. They don’t see this as a disadvantage, but a fact. They can adapt to whatever life throws at them because they’re realistic about dealing with challenges. They bounce back time and time again after defeat. They’re prepared to duck and dive and go with the flow because they’re clear about what they want, they work hard for it and they never give up. If only every business owner could tap into this mindset, maybe we could reverse the current trend where approximately 50 percent of small businesses fail within the first five years.

I’m not for a minute saying all immigrants are successful. However, I have become a student of success and I have seen a consistent pattern amongst America’s most successful immigrants. I’ve broken down what they do and also analyzed my own journey. All successful immigrants share seven main characteristics or traits, and they are what I call the Emigrant Edge. These are the differentiators between success and failure, winning and losing, a life of prosperity, or one of quiet despair. The good news is, these seven traits are 100 percent transferable and adaptable, no matter where you were born, or what your circumstances.
Imitate these seven traits and you can tap into the DNA of who you are and where you and your people came from. You’ll access that immigrant spirit in your own heart, mind and bloodline to attain the same level of achievement so many people who are new to this land experience.

You don’t have to move far away from home. You don’t even have to move up the street. Just learn by example: study the traits of the Emigrant Edge and then do the same. Think and behave like these people, and you can achieve whatever you desire. If you can rediscover and reconnect with the immigrant inside, you will experience phenomenal success, just as many millions have before you. In this book, let me show you how it’s done.

Brian Buffini

*Founder, Buffini & Company*
Immigrants face many difficulties. When you leave your home and move to a new world, you’re a stranger in a strange land. Nothing is familiar, nothing feels comfortable and the simplest of tasks can present difficulty. Whether you encounter barriers of culture, language or customs, you face challenges that can make you feel like a vulnerable child again. From ordering a sandwich to figuring out how to use the shower, being a newcomer comes with inherent disadvantages. As you read and learn about these challenges, you’ll realize an immigrant’s disadvantage is your advantage. You’ll discover how, if this were a race, you’d already be many steps ahead:

- They don’t understand the culture
- They don’t have established relationships
- They don’t have many assets or resources
- They don’t have much choice in where they start
- They don’t have any mentors or role models
The Lens of Opportunity

The difficulties and disadvantages that immigrants experience serve to remind us how much opportunity we have at our fingertips in comparison. The other side of the coin is that immigrants have some natural advantages that we don’t. Read on and discover the unique advantages we can embrace to help develop our own Emigrant Edge:

- They’re coming to a better place
- They’re making a fresh start
- They’re pursuing a dream
- They paid a price
- They have the edge
The Seven Traits of Successful Immigrants

As Winston Churchill said, “When people ignore their histories’ lessons, they’re doomed to repeat its failures.” The same thing can be true when people ignore their histories’ greatness. The history of America is awash with stories of people who came here with nothing and built fortunes and families and contributed to the overall well-being of the new country they came to know as home. Along the way, these newcomers exhibited consistent traits and patterns that ensured their success. Many traits they learned through trial and error, or because they modeled someone they admired. My own desire for success led me to study many who had gone before, analyze what they did and find a way to apply it to my own life and circumstances. Over the past two decades, I’ve shared these principles with many people who’ve all gone on to experience great success themselves. Most of those we’ve
coached and trained may not have been fully aware why our teachings resonated with them so deeply. Ultimately, it was a clear and concise packaging of principles they had heard from a parent, grandparent or other that had been passed down through the years. The seven traits of the Emigrant Edge will resonate with you at a deep level too because somewhere in your DNA and bloodline is someone who exhibited some or all of these traits:

- **TRAIT ONE:** An openness to learn
- **TRAIT TWO:** A do-whatever-it-takes mindset
- **TRAIT THREE:** A willingness to outwork others
- **TRAIT FOUR:** A heartfelt spirit of gratitude
- **TRAIT FIVE:** A boldness to invest
- **TRAIT SIX:** A commitment to delay gratification
- **TRAIT SEVEN:** An appreciation of where they came from
SECTION THREE

HOW TO GET THE EDGE

The Seven Steps to Greatness

They say faith without works is dead. So are traits without application. Whenever I create an event, training program, coaching curriculum or even a book, it’s with the clear intention that those who participate will actually do something with the information. Throughout this book I’ve made the point that these principles and traits are transferable and adaptable to your life. I’ve passed on these principles to my own children, who, even though they’re American born, have the Emigrant Edge. In this final section, I’ll leave you with a roadmap to integrate these seven traits into your life and career so you can receive the benefits of developing your own Emigrant Edge:

- STEP ONE: Be a lifelong learner
- STEP TWO: Be a go-getter
- STEP THREE: Be relentless
- STEP FOUR: Be grateful
- STEP FIVE: Be a farmer
- STEP SIX: Be patient
- STEP SEVEN: Be true to yourself
CONTINUED...
STEP FOUR: BE GRATEFUL

Gratitude: The quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness.

Over the past 20 years, I’ve had the privilege of teaching and training more than three million people how to live the American Dream. I’ve met countless individuals all over the world who have shared their stories of transformation and triumph. Many of these people were immigrants who, like me, came to this country and built a fortune and a family. What has been the common thread amongst them? Gratitude.

Scientific research has proven gratitude is one of the most powerful personal resources we have at our fingertips. One of its key benefits is helping people feel more connected to each other (source: Watkins, Van Gelder and Frias, 2009) and more empathetic (source: Maisel and Gable, 2009). Gratitude can also be associated with increased energy and optimism, with the personal and interpersonal benefits occurring at both a psychological and neurobiological level. Those who express gratitude regularly have:
**Stronger bonds with others**

How do you feel when someone thanks you? You feel good! It’s no surprise then that gratitude is a primary way to forge better relationships with people, both personally and professionally. For example, it takes mere minutes to call a friend to say thanks for helping you out or to send a customer a handwritten note to say how grateful you are for the business, but the payback is priceless. Because you have expressed, instead of repressed, your gratitude, your friend will know just how much the relationship means to you, and your customer will feel valued and even more inclined to connect with you again in the future. Both relationships deepen and grow as a result.

**Improved physical health**

Perhaps because of the many benefits of a positive mental attitude, thankful people generally feel healthier and suffer with fewer aches and pains than other people. They’re also more likely to take care of themselves, exercising more often and having regular checkups, all of which means they typically live longer too.

**Better mental health**

When you practice gratitude, toxic emotions such as frustration and envy naturally reduce. Not surprisingly, this can have an enormous impact on a person’s psychological health, increasing feelings of well-being and happiness and reducing instances of depression. It also has a knock-on effect of improving your attitude to the world at large—gratitude and entitlement cannot coexist.

**Better sleep patterns**

One of the best ways to promote better sleep is to write in a gratitude journal. People who spend just 15 minutes a night writing down what they’re grateful for sleep better and longer than those who don’t.
**Improved self-esteem**

When you’re grateful for what you have, you’re less likely to compare yourself to other people and feel that you come up short—a major factor in reduced self-esteem. Instead of resenting the good fortune of others (having more money or a better job, for example), grateful people are able to objectively appreciate and celebrate other people’s accomplishments.

**Increased compassion**

Grateful people can put themselves in others’ shoes, an invaluable tool in business and personal relationships. When you can see the other person’s perspective and point of view, the risk of conflict and misunderstanding is greatly reduced.

**Increased resilience**

Studies have shown that gratitude reduces stress and plays a major role in overcoming trauma. Recognizing everything there is to be grateful for—even during the toughest and most painful of times—helps people to cope, endure and gain perspective. Veterans of the Vietnam War who demonstrated higher levels of gratitude were found to experience lower rates of post-traumatic stress disorder. Gratitude was also a major contributor to resilience following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. And, of course, it’s no coincidence immigrants who are profoundly grateful to be in a better place prove to be incredibly resilient to the challenging circumstances they can face when trying to make it. Successful immigrants truly appreciate the new opportunities given to them. A deep and pervading sense of gratitude underpins their attitude to everything, and that gives them an edge in business and in life. To get that same edge, we should focus on embracing that very same mindset. Here’s how:
Appreciate those closest to you

It's nine o'clock on a Friday evening and I'm looking at the faces of my six children. They’re preparing to dig into enormous cups of frozen yogurt, smothered with mountains of delicious toppings that defy the laws of physics! Before they take a bite, I raise my own spoon in the air and say the refrain they’ve heard since they were infants.

“It’s a good life, kids!”
“It’s a good life, Dad,” they beam back before proceeding to demolish their desserts.

Don't you love small moments of joy like that—when you realize how lucky you are and how grateful you should be to share everyday pleasures with the people closest to you? Sadly, in today’s world, many of us forget to cherish and celebrate these simple, precious times with friends and family. Thanks to the Hollywood ideal of perfection we’re constantly (and often subliminally) subjected to, many of us don't recognize these beautiful moments, even when they’re right under our noses. We’re too busy in frantic pursuit of unrealistic emotional highs, mountain-top experiences and a sense that everything is always going our way. It's really no surprise we feel that anything less just isn't good enough: from reality TV shows that celebrate wealth and acquisition above all else, to social media posts that only ever show the heavily edited show-reel of other people's lives, we're inundated with the idea that perfection is not only standard, but required. As a result, it’s easy to become dissatisfied with our circumstances and miss out on the fact that the life we’re living, which admittedly may need improvements or enhancements, is inherently good.

In Freedom Hall in Philadelphia, for example, when people line up to see the famous Liberty Bell they focus on the crack. Yet the crack represents just a tiny percentage of the circumference of the entire bell.
Often, in our lives, we can have a tendency to repeat the same mistake. When we think of our health and well-being, we see the blemishes, the wrinkles and the spare tire, but rarely take inventory of how well our bodies are functioning. When we focus on our finances, we worry about our bills and obligations, but never take time to be truly thankful for all that we have. In our relationships, we ruminate on the hurts and disappointments, instead of reveling in the beauty of our strong and healthy connections. In business, we fret about the sales goal missed, the one unhappy client or the member of staff who just left. It’s no wonder so many people suffer with a relentless and gnawing sense of unease and unhappiness!

The good news is we can learn to change our thought processes, adapt our patterns of behavior and embrace an attitude of gratitude. Like the most successful immigrants do, however, we must first acknowledge and accept that life has its ups and downs. We will always face challenges on our journey. Roses have thorns. Acorns have to die in order for oak trees to grow. But, by focusing on our blessings, instead of on a consumer-driven emphasis of what we lack or want, we can get so much more out of life. We must concentrate on being thankful for the small things—for they are really the big things.

“The more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is in life to celebrate.”
—OPRAH WINFREY

Catch people doing something right

It’s easy to find things to criticize in this world. In fact, if we’re not careful, we can find ourselves noticing only what others do wrong!

It’s a basic parenting principle that instead of scolding children when they misbehave, you should try to catch them doing well and
praise them instead. It’s far healthier, more encouraging and motivating for children to get positive feedback instead of negative criticism. Not only does it foster stronger parent-child relationships, it results in positive growth patterns, increased self-esteem and better behavior! The same basic principle extends to grownups. If you work to actively notice when someone does something right and thank them for it, instead of nitpicking when they do something wrong, it will be hugely beneficial for all the relationships in your life. But it’s not enough to just say thanks—you have to really and truly mean it! People can tell when a thank you isn’t sincere and, ironically, it can have the opposite effect of the one you’re hoping to achieve.

All too often, we just mutter a distracted thank you to people when they go out of their way to help us—the teller at the checkout, the waitress in the diner or the barista in the coffee house. Does this make the other person feel appreciated or valued? No! It makes them feel like an after-thought. Saying thank you just to “tick a box” isn’t enough. You must really connect with the person you’re thanking. If that means putting down your phone for five seconds and looking the other person in the eye when you speak or taking out a pen and paper to compose a genuine and heartfelt letter of thanks, even when you can think of a million other things you could do, then do it!

“Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.”

—WILLIAM ARTHUR WARD

Likewise, when it comes to your internal monologue, it’s critical to really embrace gratitude as an attitude, with body, mind and spirit. This can take some getting used to—it can be difficult to learn to focus on the positive and good in the world—but practice makes perfect. Waiting for gratitude to magically occur without investing any work is a false hope. As Benjamin Franklin is often quoted, “The Constitution only guarantees
you the right to pursue happiness—you have to catch it yourself.” The same applies to gratitude.

There’s an old saying that if you’ve forgotten the language of gratitude, you’ll never be on speaking terms with happiness. We all have the ability to jump-start the upward spiral of well-being that is triggered by small acts of gratitude. Deliberately cultivating gratitude and, as a result, increasing happiness costs nothing and it doesn’t take much time. These small adjustments can transform your life.

**Gratitude as an attitude**

Even if you’re not entirely satisfied with your life as it is today, you can still be grateful in your attitude. In other words—fake it ‘til you make it! If you go through grateful motions, even if you’re not truly feeling it, authentic gratitude for what you do have will be triggered. It’s like training yourself to stand up straight. If you improve your posture, your mindset shifts—you become more self-confident and energetic. Express gratitude, even if you’re not really in the mood, and you will experience the benefits.

> “Let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayer. And let faith be the bridge you build to overcome evil and welcome good.”
> —Maya Angelou

**Teach by example**

Science has shown kids can really benefit from gratitude—they often do better in school and contribute more to their community as a result. The greatest achievement of my life is the knowledge that Beverly and I have raised six very grounded and grateful children. Whenever we travel, airline staff remark how well-mannered and appreciative our
kids are and it always makes me swell with pride…and gratitude. They know how blessed we are, and don’t take it for granted, but we regularly remind them just how good life is (in all its ups and downs) and we also strive to practice what we preach. As well as showing the kids the joyful value of being thankful for everyday miracles, we make sure to consistently thank them for sharing, doing their chores or communicating with others in a mannerly and respectful way so they know we appreciate their efforts too. The beauty of this approach is that the well of gratitude just keeps filling up!

In our business or vocation, we must also lead by example. It’s no good insisting your team express gratitude to customers if you don’t do the same! Adopt an attitude of gratitude in your daily dealings with others and people will follow your lead.

Rewire, reboot

It might sound far-fetched, but you can actually rewire yourself to see good in the world. To train your brain, simply focus on the positive for three minutes every day—you can write in a journal, sit and meditate or share with someone what it is you’re most grateful for, from a beautiful sunrise, a hot cup of coffee or a parking spot in a jam-packed lot! Noticing things for which you’re grateful very quickly attunes the brain to positivity.

“It is not happy people who are thankful. It is thankful people who are happy.”

—ANONYMOUS

The feeling of increased well-being experienced when you practice or receive gratitude is phenomenal. Plus, the great news is there’s no expiry date on gratitude! Even many years after an event, remembering a kind gesture and giving thanks warms the heart.
Take the thank you note astronaut Neil Armstrong sent to the team of specialists who made the spacesuit and backpack—the so-called Extravehicular Mobility Unit (EMU)—that he wore as he stepped foot on the moon on July 20, 1969. The EMU had to provide, amongst other things, oxygen, a safe internal pressure, a regulated temperature, protection from radiation and other threats and a communications system. It also had to be comfortable and mobile—no mean feat! To mark the 25th anniversary of the moon landing, Armstrong sent this memorable letter to the EMU team who had kept him safe and allowed him to create history.

July 14, 1994
The EMU gang at
Johnson Space Center
Houston, TX 77058

To the EMU gang:

I remember noting a quarter century or so ago that an emu was a 6 foot Australian flightless bird. I thought that got most of it right.

It turned out to be one of the most widely photographed spacecraft in history. That was no doubt due to the fact that it was so photogenic. Equally responsible for its success was its characteristic of hiding from view its ugly occupant.

Its true beauty, however, was that it worked. It was tough, reliable and almost cuddly.

To all of you who made it all that it was, I send a quarter century’s worth of thanks and congratulations.

Sincerely,

Neil A. Armstrong

How gratifying it must have felt to get this note from the most famous astronaut in the world. Just like our team at Buffini & Company, Mr. Armstrong clearly believes in the power of a personal letter to express gratitude!
I still remember the first time I was introduced to the phenomenal power of the thank you note. It was 1992 and President George Bush Senior was being interviewed about his career as congressman, Director of the CIA, Vice President and President. The interviewer asked one simple question, “What’s the one thing you’ve done in your life to make you so successful?”

The President’s response was so simple and profound it stopped me dead in my tracks. He said for the previous 25 years he had written at least 10 personal notes a day to people he’d recently met, those who came to mind or correspondents who had written to him. Now, at the time of this interview I was living in a little “white house” myself and I believe when people at the top of the ladder give you clues on success it’s a good idea to take heed. And so I did. I sat and wrote my first note that day. I’m still writing them 25 years later!

In fact, for the past quarter of a century I have sent several thousand notes a year. I’m a prolific note writer to my clients, staff, family and friends, and I firmly believe the cumulative effect of that goodwill over time has been one of the key ingredients for my success. Inside the walls of Buffini & Company we even have our very own card store where staff can pick a free card for any occasion. You can’t put a price on the goodwill that departs our mailroom in thousands of personal notes and cards each week.

Personal notes expressing gratitude have an incredible power to them. When people open their mail, a personal note is always the first one they read. After all, it stands out amongst all the junk mail and bills! And in this high-tech, social media-driven world, I find personal notes are more powerful and better received than ever before. I’ve often saved a meaningful note or letter someone has written to me and I know I’m not alone.
“As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.”

—JOHN F KENNEDY

I have hundreds of stories I could share on the power of expressing gratitude through a note. Here are just a couple:

It was Christmas Eve 1999. As we tucked our four kids into bed, the phone rang. A lady introduced herself: “You don’t know me,” she said, “but years ago you sold my father’s house.” She mentioned his name, but nothing rang a bell. That late on Christmas Eve my mind was far away from a business which I had sold many years before. “I’m sorry,” I admitted, “I’m drawing a blank on your dad.”

She mentioned the street where he had lived and suddenly it all came flooding back. In a flash, I remembered the day I first met her father. He had called me shortly after becoming a widow. His beloved wife of 46 years had passed away six months before and he was a heartbroken man, struggling to carry on without her. His daughter wanted him to move back east and live with her—but he was unsure of what was best.

The day I met him, I had a full schedule of appointments, but after speaking with him for a short while I canceled everything. In truth, we barely got around to talking about business or putting his home on the market—instead we sat and he told me his life story. When I got back to the office, I wrote him a heartfelt letter telling him how much I respected him as a devoted husband and father. I wrote that I hoped to be privileged enough to be married for 46 years, and if I lost my wife I would be every bit as heartbroken as he was.

The reason his daughter was calling me on Christmas
Eve was to let me know her dad had recently passed away, and in preparing for his eulogy, she had discovered my note had served as a bookmark for his daily Bible readings. It had been 10 years since I had sold that home, and, in one way or another, he had read or looked at that letter every day since. You just never know what a word of gratitude or appreciation will do for the recipient.

The second story I want to tell you is about someone I’ve already mentioned—astronaut Neil Armstrong.

For many years, I wanted Mr. Armstrong to be a guest speaker at MasterMind. I wrote to him often, asking him to come. Every time, the reply was the same—he was retired. But, I persisted… for a long time! Eventually he wrote back to ask if I was going to keep writing to him until he agreed to come out of retirement! My answer was, of course, yes! This is how I eventually had the very great privilege of interviewing Mr. Armstrong in front of a riveted audience. To hear this incredible human being recollect his journey to the moon remains one of the highlights of my career—and serves as a testament to the power of the personal note!

Today, Buffini & Company provides more than 10 million thank you notes a year to those we train in the sales and service industries. Our clients average eight times the earnings of their peers. That’s right… gratitude is big business. Better than that, it’s a great way to live, and the foundation for the good life. You must be intentional about expressing gratitude. Make acknowledging and thanking people part of your routine, just like brushing your teeth. Eventually, if you don’t do it, it will feel like something’s wrong—as if you’re walking around with bad breath!
Actions speak louder than words

If you’re in the service business (and every business should be!) then thanking your customers in original and memorable ways is important. Here are some more suggestions to do just that:

**Pop-By to say hi**

Customers appreciate face-to-face time. If you don’t regularly see your clients, do a “Pop-By” to say hello and leave a small, personal gift, such as cookies, a fruit basket or gift cards. It doesn’t have to take long or incur much cost—even a short visit and a token gift can have a lasting impact.

**Help your customers learn something new**

Providing your customers with free learning materials is a great way to express your gratitude. What books have been most influential to you or your company, for example? Why not give a copy with a personal note inside to your clients—this can offer insight into your values and open new topics of conversation and lines of communication.

Other ways to reach out and show thanks include holding educational seminars, writing informative blog posts and hosting events with experts, amongst others. These efforts also mean customers will learn to value your advice, trust you more and have more regard for your business.

> “Gratitude is a currency that we can mint for ourselves, and spend without fear of bankruptcy.”
>
> —FRED DE WITT VAN AMBURGH

**Set up a loyalty program**

Who doesn’t love to be considered a VIP? Airlines have successfully utilized loyalty programs for years—throwing in upgrades and rewards to the most loyal customers and creating delighted brand ambassadors in
the process. A loyalty program doesn’t have to be complicated to be effective—you can simply offer discounts on birthdays or anniversaries, for example.

Use social media rewards

Social media can be a great way to reward customers with exclusive online promotions and useful tips, hints and links to other resources. Your social media platforms are also the ideal place to spotlight and honor special customers.

Throw a party

A gratitude gathering is ideal for bringing your clients together to give thanks collectively for what they mean to you in your business. Picnics, wine tastings and barbecues are all fun ways to gather everyone together at one time.

Worried about hosting? Keep it simple with movie nights or restaurant events to remove a lot of the logistical burden.

Give freebies

We all love free goodies! If you have a physical store then samples such as coffee and treats are great ways to brighten someone’s day. Or, you could mark special occasions, such as a customer’s birthday or a new arrival to the family, with a small gift. Customers love to know a business is invested and interested in their lives. Alternatively, you could celebrate a major milestone in the life of your company—20 years in business, for example—by treating customers. At Buffini & Company we did just that—offering a discount on our Client Relationship Manager, Referral Maker® CRM. Visit www.referralmaker.com to check it out for yourself and get a free trial!
Give a charitable gift

Why not consider donating to customers’ favorite charities on their behalf—generosity and gratitude are two sides of the same coin. How great to make a difference to someone in need while thanking your loyal customers.

Excel at customer service

Nothing says thank you as well as consistently treating your customer like the king of your business. All the gifts, Pop-Bys and personal letters in the world will never make up for poor customer service!

We all have the ability to cultivate gratitude and increase our satisfaction with life, as well as strengthen our bonds with other people. If we take the time to focus on all we have—rather than complain about the things we don’t—everything changes for the better. We really can make every day Thanksgiving!

An excerpt from We Thank Thee:

“For this new morning with its light.
For rest and shelter of the night.
For health and food, for love and friends.
For everything Thy goodness sends.”

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

—END—
On Sale now—Get your copy at brianbuffini.com/ee
Every year, people from all over the world come to this great country of ours to live the American Dream. Despite starting from scratch with little or no support, large numbers of them go on to experience the sort of phenomenal success most of those born-and-bred here never do. What’s their secret? The answer is they have an edge—the Emigrant Edge.

Many Americans no longer appreciate their good fortune. They’ve forgotten how lucky they are and how much opportunity is at their fingertips. Unlike newcomers to this country, they don’t believe the American Dream is within their reach...or that it even exists at all.

Immigrants have a very different perspective. They see this society with fresh eyes. They recognize the opportunities, benefits and value that surrounds them—and they’re ready to work hard and take advantage of them. This is what gives them an edge—in business and in life.

Wouldn’t it be great if we could all tap into this winning mindset? Well, we can! In this book, rags-to-riches Irish immigrant Brian Buffini outlines what successful immigrants can teach us—and how we can duplicate it in our own lives and businesses in order to thrive. He describes the seven traits of successful immigrants and how, by imitating them, anyone can attain the same level of achievement that many people who are new to this country experience.

Think and behave like an immigrant, and you can achieve whatever you desire for you and your business. If you rediscover and reconnect with the immigrant inside, you will experience phenomenal success, just as many millions have before you. America is the land where dreams can come true if you apply yourself. So rediscover your Emigrant Edge...and win!