

Sharing Virtual Kudos: Using Kudoboard to Send Online Thank You Notes

Skylar Elmore
Graduate Assistant
skelmore@ttu.edu

Dr. Courtney Meyers
Professor
courtney.meyers@ttu.edu

Texas Tech University
Department of Agricultural Education and Communications
Box 42131
Lubbock, TX 79409
806-742-2816

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Introduction/Need for Innovation

The use of guest speakers is not a new teaching tool. For years, college professors have called on outside professionals and alumni to speak in their courses. Past research has shown that guest speakers are a valuable learning tool, helping students connect what is taught in the classroom with “real-world” experiences (Hooks & McKenzie, 2007; Ji et al., 2021; Metrejean et al., 2002).

In the Spring of 2021, we leveraged the required online course experience of a senior-level, capstone to invite guest speakers from across the country to share their expertise with students. When the course was taught previously in a face-to-face modality, students would sign a thank you note for each guest speaker. With COVID-19 precautions and students participating online, we needed to find a new way to send thank you notes that was more distinctive than email. To do this, we used Kudoboard, which is an online tool groups of people can use to send online notes of appreciation (Kudoboard, n.d.).

How it Works

At the beginning of the semester, 25 Kudoboards were purchased to use in the course. A teaching assistant managed the Kudoboard account and created a Kudoboard for each guest speaker. Following the presentation, the teaching assistant sent students in the course a link to the online Kudoboard for each speaker. To “sign” the Kudoboard, each student created a post on the board. Students were encouraged to not only thank the speaker for their time, but also to mention one thing they learned or found insightful from the presentation. Posts could include a personal message with either a photo (from the Kudoboard stock images or uploaded), animated gif, or video (uploaded or linked to YouTube). This allowed students to customize their thank you posts for each guest speaker.

All boards can be personalized for their targeted recipients with more than 100 backgrounds for all occasions and a variety of font choices. After all the posts are added to the Kudoboard, delivery can be scheduled or sent immediately. The link to the full Kudoboard is emailed to the recipient’s email. Along with the link to the Kudoboard, an optional custom message can be added to the email, if needed. In this course, the following message was added to each email: “Thank you for speaking to our class. Here is a little something to show our appreciation.” Once received, speakers can reply to the contributor of the board (the students). If at any point, a speaker did not receive their Kudoboard, the website would prompt that a link to the board be sent personally or to invite the recipient to check their junk mail.

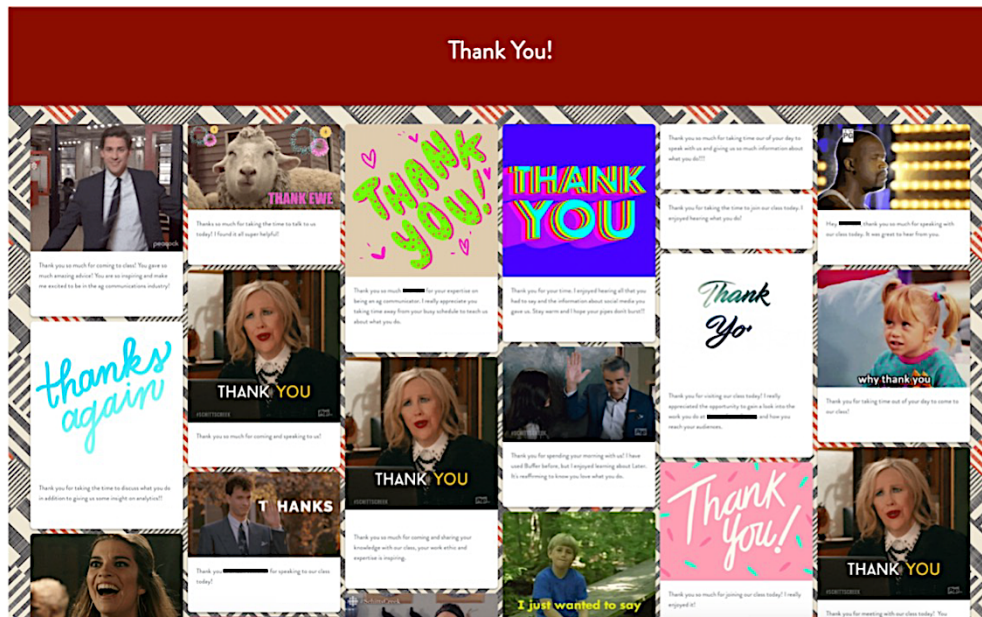
Results to Date/Implications

At the beginning of the Spring 2021 semester, the department purchased a premium package with 25 boards, which was an estimate of the number of guest speakers for the semester. By the end of the semester, all the boards were used. Both students and guest speakers said they enjoyed creating and receiving the Kudoboards. Students appreciated that it was an easy way to say thank you and enjoyed that they could make their post unique to their personality and to the speaker. Each premium board allowed for a maximum of 100 posts; however, there were only 45 students in the class. Participation was optional but highly encouraged, and on average, 21 students would

participate on each board. Most of the posts included an animated gif and a brief typed note. When completed, the board turns into a collage of fun images and notes (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Example of a Kudoboard Sent to a Guest Speaker



These posts included the student's name so the guest speaker could contact them individually, if necessary, or the speakers could respond to the board as a whole. One speaker wrote back: "Wow, you guys! The gifs were so spot on, and the messages made my day! Scratch that, my week! No, my MONTH. OK, but really. Thanks for being such a kind group of ag communicators. It was an honor getting to speak to you all."

Future Plans/Advice to Others

Kudoboards will continue to be used as a tool to send an electronic gratitude in courses that have a virtual component (online or hybrid courses) where students are not all together to sign a physical card. Kudoboards are a great way to show appreciation for virtual guest speakers and can also be implemented into a department's culture. Potential reasons to share kudos are when graduate students pass their defense, a professor receives an award or tenure, or when celebrating birthdays, work milestones, and retirements. The board should also be shared with students quickly after the guest speaker to encourage the best response rates. We recommend setting a deadline for contributors to add to post so the board could be sent in a timely fashion.

Cost/Resources Needed

Kudoboard is a user-friendly website. Only one account was required for the purpose because it was managed by one teaching assistant. If multiple people need to be able to create the Kudoboards, they would need to purchase their own boards. Kudoboard has several different pricing options. Mini boards are free; however, they only allow 10 posts on each board. Premium boards can be purchased individually for \$5.99/board or in three different annual packages: 25 boards for \$99/year, 50 boards for \$189/year, or 100 boards for \$349/year.

References

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