

Chris Schembra — Long Bio

WALL STREET JOURNAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR · KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Chris Schembra is a Wall Street Journal bestselling author, theater producer, keynote speaker, and one of the world's leading voices on the power of gratitude and human connection in the modern workplace.

Chris is the creator of the 7:47 Gratitude Experience™, an evidence-based methodology used to spark profound client and team relationships across hundreds of the world's leading organizations, including Google, Microsoft, IBM, Dell, Citi, and the U.S. Navy. Over the last decade, he has facilitated more than 820 transformational experiences across six continents, helping thousands of professionals pause, connect, and rediscover their shared humanity.

It all started with a pot of pasta sauce. On July 15, 2015, Chris invited 15 strangers to his small Manhattan apartment for a dinner party, and at exactly 7:47 PM, he threw the pasta in the pot. But he did something different: he delegated. Guests folded napkins, set the table, arranged chairs, strangers with egos and stories and biases working together to create a shared meal. Then, over dinner, he asked one simple question: *"If you could give credit or thanks to one person in your life that you've never thought to thank, who would that be?"* The room went quiet. Then, one by one, people shared stories that brought laughter, tears, and a kind of connection most had never experienced in a professional or social setting. By the end of that first year, Chris had hosted 54 dinners in 52 weeks, feeding 808 people, all for free. Fortune 500 executives, Grammy winners, and Super Bowl champions began knocking on his door. Nearly a decade later, he has served tens of thousands of people and facilitated more than 820 gratitude experiences worldwide, sometimes in boardrooms, sometimes on a houseboat under the Tower Bridge in London, sometimes at a long table set in the middle of Times Square where strangers shared stories of gratitude as thousands streamed past. As Chris says, "If we can create empathy and belonging in Times Square, we can create it anywhere."

Known for blending heartfelt storytelling with data-driven strategy, Chris teaches leaders to slow down, foster cross-functional empathy, cultivate gratitude-based recognition, and build high-performing cultures centered on belonging and resilience. His frameworks provide practical, science-backed tools for increasing engagement, trust, and innovation at scale.

In 2024 and 2025, Chris expanded his work to the public sphere by launching Gratitude in the City™, a city-wide campaign that transformed more than 4,000 digital screens and 2,131 LinkNYC towers across all five boroughs of New York City into a month-long call to gratitude

and connection, reaching tens of millions of New Yorkers and reframing out-of-home media as a pioneering platform for social health and urban belonging.

Chris's impact extends well beyond the corporate stage. He led marketing on "Just a Common Soldier," a gratitude campaign honoring veterans and helping reduce suicide that went viral with more than 20 million views, over 2 million shares, and two Emmy Awards, sparking a national conversation about the toll of service and the importance of recognition. He spent five years as the producer of a five-time Emmy Award-winning one-man play about Fiorello La Guardia, performing it for audiences around the world.

In 2015, he organized a several-hundred-person flash mob on the iconic Red Steps in Times Square for "Light a Candle, Save a Heart," raising money and awareness for babies born with congenital heart defects in partnership with Save a Child's Heart. He produced a one-act play on a billionaire's tennis court in Beverly Hills, the house from *The Big Lebowski*, where 350 people gathered for an Easterseals fundraiser that made the front page of *Variety*.

At just 28, Chris served as one of the youngest board members in the 100-plus-year history of Easterseals, helping guide one of the nation's largest nonprofits serving millions of people living with autism, ADHD, PTSD, and other disabilities.

Chris has served more than 400 corporate and government clients and has been featured in The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Forbes, Inc., Entrepreneur, USA Today, Good Morning America, Fast Company, and hundreds more. He is a columnist for Rolling Stone and CNBC, a member of the Fast Company Executive Board and a Founding Member of the Rolling Stone Culture Council, and has authored more than 100 articles on gratitude, leadership, and human connection. He has conducted over 300 podcast interviews and has been called "The Gratitude Guru" by USA Today.

Chris is the author of two books, the Wall Street Journal #1 bestseller *Gratitude Through Hard Times* and *Gratitude and Pasta*, and is currently writing his next book, *Earned Connection: The Playbook for the Wisdom Era*, which makes the case that meaningful relationships require designed friction rather than frictionless efficiency, positioning authentic human connection as the defining competitive advantage in an AI-dominated business landscape.

Through his books, campaigns, productions, philanthropy, keynotes, and the thousands of dinner tables he has set, Chris Schembra continues to help individuals and organizations unlock human potential — one question, one story, and one connection at a time.