

Stewardship Forum

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Stewardship Tools for Fundraisers : Giving Matters

Title: Saying Thank You to Your Donors

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The most important reason for saying thank you to your donors is that is the right thing to do. Yet few charities regard saying thank you as important - except when they receive large gifts. Here are 13 ways of expressing your attitude of gratitude to the supporters of your organisation or ministry.

1. When you send a "personalised" thank you acknowledgement note or letter, do it within 24 hours of receiving a gift. The sooner you acknowledge the gift, the more your supporter will appreciate your promptness and believe in the integrity of your work.
2. Because donors are not likely to hear the magic words 'thank you' in their daily lives, be appropriately generous in your language as you express your gratitude for their giving. Use phrases such as 'thank you for your thoughtfulness', and 'we really appreciate your gift'. Praise your supporters for being generous stewards of their financial resources, and when appropriate for the continuous support.
3. Remind your donors how vital their prayer support and their giving is the work of your charity. Donors want to know that their gifts inspire you and your staff. They also want to know their gifts are important, regardless of the amounts given.
4. Tell your supporters you appreciate how they have given serious thought to giving to your organization. They had many options but, in the end, they chose to give to your cause. Acknowledge that decision, and remind them that you will be a good steward of that gift.
5. It is amazing how some organizations send thank you notes or letters only to those who go beyond a certain giving level. Great mistake! Whatever level people give, deserves a thank you. Some donors may be testing you with a smaller gift...to see how grateful you are, if you are. Thank every one who makes a contribution and do so enthusiastically.
6. Tell a short story. Research on what motivates people to give has shown again and again that there are two reasons why people give: 1. to provide hope, and 2. to see lives changed or saved. Think donor. Think what he or she wants to hear about your success. Incorporate a brief "changed/saved life" story in each thank you letter.
7. Do you have an forthcoming meeting, conference, or event? Is it something to which you'd like to invite your donor? If so, invite them to attend. Supporters want to know that you have new and exciting programmes on the horizon, and that you are grateful to them for helping to make these events happen.
8. Use statistics that emphasise the need for your ministry. It may be the number of children in poverty or the number of homeless people that need help in your community etc. Make these punchy statistics work for you, and thank your donors for responding to the need as demonstrated by quantifiable fact.
9. As you thank your supporter for the donation, ask them if they would be willing to recommend a friend or colleague who might also be interested in supporting your work. This is a proven effective way to find new donor friends

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10. You already know this, but I'll say it again: Always enclose a return envelope and a simple reply card. Ask and you shall receive. Assume that your donor will want to give again. Now, help them do it. Give them yet another opportunity to help make a difference in the lives of others.
11. It has been proven that when you send a gift acknowledgement letter, many donors are likely to respond with a second gift. People give when their interest level is high. Give them yet another good reason to stay involved.
12. Tell your donor that his or her gift is among many being received for your special project. People want to be involved in something that is larger than themselves. Let your supporters know that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and that you are grateful they play such an important role in seeing lives changed through your work.
13. Last, but not least, express a truly thankful heart. Write your thank you letter as if you were writing it to your best friend in the world. Don't be afraid of your emotions. Your attitude of gratitude will spill over onto the page, and your donor will know you mean what you say.

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About the Author - Todd Baker is a marketing and fundraising strategist. He works for Grizzard, a direct marketing organization based in LA California. Todd served over 13 years at World Vision, where he managed integrated marketing programs. He also led marketing initiatives with the NFL's New York Giants and the NBA's Los Angeles Lakers.