

THANKING DONORS



Thanking your supporters probably sounds like the most obvious piece of the fund development puzzle, yet it is a part frequently overlooked. Roger Carver, researcher and author of “Retention Fundraising: The New Art and Science of Keeping Your Donors for Life,” has found that **over 60% of donors are either not thanked at all or are not properly thanked.** What should be a natural step in the progression of planning and executing a campaign somehow often falls short, so be careful not to let this happen for your organization.

Thank-you efforts should be:

Welcoming

It should be seen as a beginning or a continuation, not an end, especially if it is the first donation. Remember that this is your first chance to communicate after you’ve secured a new donor should be thankful, yet should also serve as a “Welcome” to the organization. **New donors should feel like they’ve just joined a team with a bright future, and returning donors should feel like they are a veteran player on that team.** No one should feel like this is the end of a simple transaction.

Timely

It’s wise to create a chart with defined timelines for thank-you efforts which can vary according to amount, type of donation, or method of giving. You should create the type of system that works best for your campaign.

No matter how you arrange it, however, the first thank you must be as soon as possible. For example:

- Every donation receives a card in the mail within 1-2 weeks.
- Donations over \$500.00 receive the card AND a phone call from a Board Member or an employee within 1 week.
- Donations over \$5,000 receive the card, a phone call within a couple of days, and an invitation to a lunch or dinner with the chair of the Fund Development and Executive Director.
- Business sponsorships for a specific event (concert, 5K, carnival) also receive another follow-up letter after completion with a brief report on the highlights of the event and the total amount raised.

Donor-Centered

When you send thank-you communication, regardless of method, it should **focus on the donor and their generosity**. Be sure to indicate how their donation helped the immediate event or expenditure, and explain how their donation will continue to help long-term plans for the program. Stress that certain things are now possible because of **their support**.

Personal

Thank you communication should be addressed and **written directly to the giver** with their appropriate choice of name, nickname, or family members included. Take this directly from their donation form or check, so you know it is correct. Even if the majority of the letter is a duplicate that goes to many people, **add a personal note at the bottom to give it a special touch**. Include an invitation to be more involved or become further connected through a non-fundraising event, such as a tour, open house, or social function.

Unique

Be creative in the design of your thank-you communication, using graphics, photos, children's artwork, or something else eye-catching and fun that aligns with your program or the recent event. Avoid doing a formal business letter on your regular letterhead, especially if they already saw this approach when you solicited their help.

Sent by Multiple Methods

- Cards
- Letters
- Phone Calls
- Emails
- Website
- Social media posts
- Newsletter
- Face to face

Thank-you efforts should NOT be:

- Solicitations for more money right away.
- Lengthy paragraphs about your organization with no focus on the donor's role.
- Impersonal form letters.
- Overly emotional or full of cliché phrases that sound false or dramatized. Be authentic.
- Overlooked because you have already recognized a donor with signs or advertising at an event. You still need to thank them personally in addition to those efforts. See **Recognizing Donors**.