

Sustainability

Start Your Year on the Right Note

January 2009



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A service of the Corporation for National and Community Service - Special Projects and Sustainability Initiative

Dear “Thank You Note” Colleague,

Welcome to 2009! The new year is a great time to express gratitude with the right thank you note for the contributions of donors and volunteers. Research shows that stakeholders who feel appreciated by social-profit organizations are more likely to respond the next time with increased support. Click on the titles on the right to learn more about demonstrating your appreciation to your donors. Read...

[12 Ways to Thank Your Supporters](#)

[Schedule a Thank-a-Thon](#)

[Tips on Writing an Effective Thank You Note](#)

Do you have questions or ideas about showing appreciation to donors? Contact us through Sustainability@CampaignConsultation.com for more information. You can still access previous issues of On-the-Go eTA by clicking on the back issues at the bottom of the page.

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12 Ways to Thank Your Supporters

Supporters – donors, volunteers, partners, etc. – who are thanked effectively know that they are valued. Creative and intentional efforts to thank donors result in a positive response when you come to them again for another gift. Here are twelve ways you can continue to say thank you to donors throughout the year:

1. Send a formal thank you note

A written statement of the gift is required by law for

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gifts over \$250 and is a good idea for all donors. Personalize the salutation and always have a real human being sign the letter.

2. Recognize upgrades and/or cumulative giving

In responding to increased support, acknowledge specific growth in giving: "Thanks for increasing your annual donation to \$100."

Also, when thanking a long-time donor, do some math and total her lifetime gifts to your cause: "Since 1992, you've contributed \$520. Thank you! We really appreciate your continuing enthusiasm for our work." These notes can be incorporated into the body of the letter or added by hand.

3. Solicit informal notes from board members or volunteer leaders

At least twice per year, circulate the names and addresses of top donors to your board or Advisory Council. Ask them to write thank you notes, on personal stationery, to any donors they know, and even to those that no one knows. The thank you impact is even stronger if it's a "stand-alone" and not associated with an appeal

4. Use the phone immediately upon receipt

For exceptional acts of service and contribution, it is vital to use the phone (not e-mail) immediately to thank a supporter for his generosity. Even if your message is left on voice-mail, people know they're loved (yes, loved!) and appreciated. Use volunteer fundraisers' to make thank you phone calls. A supporter will appreciate hearing a thank you message from a peer and the action also helps build your volunteer fundraisers' confidence.

[Click here](#) to read eight more ways to thank donors.

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Schedule a Thank-a-Thon

In the midst of a recession, it is necessarily important to reach out to supporters. They need to know you still value them even though they were unable to give like they normally do in 2008. Now is the time to:

- Let your supporters know that you are thinking of them which helps to assuage them of any guilt they may have for any cut-back in support ... people need to feel positive about what they are able to do
- Reassure supporters that your organization is

Tips for Tough Times

Even though some donors may have reduced their giving due to the economy, continue to communicate through newsletters, thank-a-thons special event invitations, updates, personal notes, etc. With consistent contact, they are more likely to resume their support when times improve.

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responding to the needs of the community

- Share with contributors that you will continue in the future because they have stood by you in the past.

At the top of a very short list of things that influence donor retention and gift value is “being acknowledged in a personal and meaningful way.” Phonathons and e-athons are solicitations by a group of non-paid staff made by telephone or the web.

Thank-a-thons, on the other hand, do not solicit support, but serve to tell supporters how much their gifts of time and resources mean to your organization or program. This activity is relaxed, fun and gratifying for volunteers who get a break from asking and for donors who are pleased that they are so appreciated. Also, thank-a-thons are a great way to acclimate fundraising volunteers to the giving culture.

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Tips on Writing Personal a “Thank You” Note

The personal “thank you” note for a gift is the most vital expression of appreciation to a donor. Donors expect it – especially Boomers – and they want it in a timely manner. Here are some essential elements for an effective thank you note.

What to do	How to do it	Example
Write it now	A thank you note should go out as soon as the gift/service is received. You don't have to wait until the gift is deposited and the check has cleared.	Send it out within 24 hours of opening the envelope/or learning of the service if possible.
Hand write it	At the very least, hand sign the letter and add a handwritten note. You also may ask a volunteer leader or someone who benefited from the gift to add a handwritten note.	If a gift came as a result of a contact by an Advisory Council member, that member can add his own thanks. If this will significantly delay sending out the note, prepare a separate

“The deepest principle in human nature is the

	<p>A handwritten envelope with a stamp shows personal attention, too.</p> <p>If you receive many gifts, you may reserve this for your larger gifts or for gifts that come from a special donor.</p>	<p>prepare a separate note for the member to add his/her personal thanks.</p>
<p>Make it personal to the donor</p>	<p>Use a name in the salutation, not “dear friend” or “dear donor.” First names are appropriate for long-time friends or those donors you know.</p> <p>If you are aware of any special interest or concerns of the donor, these may also be mentioned in the note.</p>	<p>Dear Marsha, I know that you, as a retired teacher, are concerned about the reading skills of young children.</p>
<p>Be specific</p>	<p>A thank you note often serves as proof of the gift for tax purposes. Be sure to include the amount of the gift, the date it was made, and an acknowledgement of any special instructions for the gift.</p>	<p>Thank you for your gift of \$200 received on December 21, 2008 for the Delta Family Support Center. Per your request, we are directing your funds to our Breakfast Club.</p>
<p>Tell how the gift is used and its impact</p>	<p>Donors want to know how their gift will make a positive impact on their priorities.</p>	<p>Your gift means that 40 children will start the school day well nourished for the daily lessons ahead.</p>
<p>Allude to future needs</p>	<p>Donors want to know that you will continue to do good work and there is a role for them to play in the future success of your project.</p>	<p>With more than 250 families currently in the program and the many thousands more in need of our services, we hope you will continue to support the</p>

craving to be appreciated.”

– William James, American psychologist and philosopher. 1842-1910

		Breakfast Club.
Say thank you again	Reinforce your appreciation of this donors' gift.	Marsha, thank you again for your generous support of the Delta Family Support Center's Breakfast Club.
Add a P.S.	Use this opportunity to promote a success, publicize a future event, or highlight a new activity.	P.S. We hope to see you at our annual Read-a-thon event in March. This year, the Waters Foundation will provide a book for each child to keep.

[Click here](#) to download the sample thank you letter from the Delta Family Support Center.

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Let us know

Contact Sustainability@CampaignConsultation.com
We would be happy to answer questions or to give you more support.

Thank you for your interest in On-The-Go eTA. We encourage you to send this and other issues of [OTG eTA](#) to friends and colleagues who would benefit from the information. Also, if you're on information-overload, you may request [email removal](#). Otherwise OTG e-TA will be back soon with another edition.

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For more information, contact:
CAMPAIGN CONSULTATION, Inc.
2819 Saint Paul Street, Baltimore, MD 21218.4312 USA
T. 410.243.7979 x19 F. 410.243.1024 Toll Free: 1.877.243.2253
Sustainability@CampaignConsultation.com
www.CampaignConsultation.com

12 Ways to Thank Your Donors (cont.)

5. Acknowledge donors, volunteers, partners, etc. in your publications and on line

List the names of supporters in your newsletters, annual reports, websites, etc. Be sure to give everyone the option to remain anonymous.

Occasionally, mistakes will happen. Include a disclaimer on any donor list, i.e., "If we have misspelled your name, or made an error in your listing, please let us know by calling _____ or emailing _____ so we can correct the error and please accept our apologies.

6. Invite donors to tour your facility

The best way to engage people in your work is to show them, first-hand, what you do all day. If appropriate, have them meet the clients and/or beneficiaries of your programs. Even if donors decline they will be impressed that you wanted to make time for them.

7. Invite contributors to join you in one of your activities

Ask them to join you at your annual meeting, rally, performance, press conference, and community workshop, whatever. Use every opportunity to showcase your group in action. Try making a telephone call to invite them personally to join you at an event you think they would most enjoy.

8. Involve supporters in different ways

Encourage donors to volunteer and volunteers to donate. Some will refuse but will appreciate your desire to involve them in the cause differently. Everyone, however, loves to express their opinion. Show your respect for supporters and ask for their thoughts related to the wellbeing of your program.

9. Send special program updates

Two or three times per year, write reports specifically for your top donors, including foundation and corporate grantmakers. Keep these reports brief – no more than two pages – and informal. Create a sense of intimacy; make the reader part of your "inner circle" by sharing information about emerging strategies and opportunities.

10. Send "comp" tickets to your next benefit event.

While it doesn't make sense to give away too many tickets, consider "comping" your best donors and prospects.

For example, Native Seeds/SEARCH, a cultural restoration organization in Tucson, organizes a big "Chile Fiesta" each fall. All donors of \$100 or more receive a pair of admission tickets (worth \$5) to encourage their attendance and reinforce their relationship with the organization. Once at the festival, people end up spending money on food, crafts, and other items which increases income as well as commitment.

11. Share the good news

If you receive welcome coverage in a newspaper or magazine, get any necessary authorization from the publisher, clip and paste the story up with the publication's masthead and make photocopies. Send these to top donors with a note: "Thought you might enjoy this. Thanks for your support." Supporters are always pleased to be associated with third party endorsed winning causes.

12. Send informal photos of your group in action

Send action pictures – planting the community garden, repairing the abandoned house. Put a note on the back: "Your gift makes this work possible. Thank you!"

Adapted from "12 Ways to Say Thank You." Andy Robinson, National Housing Institute

Resources

The National ASK (Awareness, Skills, Knowledge) to Sustain Institute, sponsored by Corporation for National and Community Service, provided by Campaign Consultation, Inc. 1998, 2002

The CNCS Resources Now! National Institute, sponsored by Corporation for National and Community Service, provided by Campaign Consultation, Inc. 2005-07.

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Learning Products and Services

LEADline:

(Learning Experiences At a Distance) LEADline is designed to give information fast. Have a resource & fund development question? Use LEADline and within 24 hours you will receive response and advice from a fundraising professional.

Contact us Sustainability@CampaignConsultation.com

GIZMOs:

(Giving Information for Zooming Mission Objectives) GIZMOs are resource and fund development tools for you and your volunteers. They are tangible products in packets, pocket brochures, CD-ROMs, games, etc. They feature a myriad of fundraising topics such as The Case for Support, an interactive online resource. View and use our newest GIZMOs at

www.CampaignConsultation.com/gizmosplash

The Chronicle of Philanthropy:

Everyone who comes to a Resources Now! National Institute gets a free subscription to the Chronicle for a year. Participants in CNCS Campaign Consultation workshops receive the latest issue free of charge plus a \$20 discount on one year's subscription.

Workshops/Clinics:

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), through its T/TA service provider Campaign Consultation, Inc., offers a three-hour workshops and clinics for those interested.

Online Courses/Webinars:

Web course delivery of topics pertinent to resource development such as — **Build Fundraising Volunteer Champions** and **Cause Related Marketing and Corporate Partnerships**.

Available through the Resource Center at <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org>

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- [Mid-September 2008 Getting Ready for the Boomer Resource Explosion](#)
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