



Ten (Inexpensive) Ways to Show Gratitude to Major Donors

1. **Go First Class** – In addition to the regular donor acknowledgement letter (used for the donor’s tax purposes) send a personalized, handwritten thank you note through the mail. Email is a quick way to get things done, to be sure ... but how many handwritten thank you notes do you receive? It shows that you will make time for them.
2. **Send More Than One** – Ask others to send a thank you, too. It’s a great (and easy and non-threatening) way to get your Board involved in the Resource Development process – just make sure they SAY they are a Board member in the note. The CEO should also invest the time (that’s the way to look at it, by the way) to do the same for gifts above a certain level.
3. **Pick Up the Phone** – Before you send the letters, make a phone call soon after the gift arrives. Tell the donor how much the gift means to accomplishing the Mission, how it will help the people you serve. We’ve had Board members make the calls as well as the CEO.
4. **Make a Stewardship Visit** – Not every visit should be about asking for money. Make a phone call in advance to schedule the visit to say thanks ... it’s not a meeting nor an appointment ... it’s a visit. Perhaps bring along something that you don’t normally send to donors – a report or a service folder.
5. **Give Them a Gift (but not extravagantly)** – Be sure the gift is appropriate to the level of their gift but also something that is meaningful. It could relate to your organization’s mission but it doesn’t have to. If you have been listening carefully and observing your donor, you may have the opportunity to give them something that they will really appreciate. One donor collected baseball caps – so guess what we gave him as a gift!
6. **Thank-a-Thon** – We organized members of the Resource Development Task Group and Board to conduct a **Thank-a-Thon** one evening. They were given the names and phone numbers – but no gift information – at the end of the fiscal year. “I’m a member of the Board and I’m just calling to say thanks!” The donors were taken aback ... “You’re not asking me for money?” It set our organization apart from the rest.

7. ***Say Thanks in Print*** – But only if they want their names published in your annual report. We always ask.

8. ***Invite Your Donors to Visit*** – Your school campus or service center. They understand in a new way the good that comes out of their gift by seeing the organization in action. It's a personal, one-on-one experience and often an opportunity for the donor to meet a faculty member, student or recipient of your organization.

9. ***Involve the Donor*** – Is there a task or a committee for which the donor's skills and/or knowledge are particularly well suited? Do you have need of advice for a specific project? Asking for help shows that you care about them for more than their money. It is a way to get to know them and their interests so that you may be in a position to better meet THEIR needs the next time that you are ready to ask for their financial investment.

10. ***Give You Donors the Good News*** – If your organization has received an award or some mention in the newspaper, let you major donors know. Here's where an email or social media can help because it is so immediate and you can provide a link for them to get the information. Don't hide your candle under a bushel basket – let people know that your organization is special and is making a difference!

Appreciation can make a day – even change a life. Your willingness to put it into words is all that is necessary.

– Margaret Cousins