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10 Ways to Thank Givers and Encourage Future Giving

Helpful tips and practical advice to ensure you maximize giving—and thanking—opportunities

FACILITIES & FINANCE

Can you email a thank you letter or simplify your system with a printed note? Learn how to show gratitude and honor givers

by Kristine Miller

Giving is an outward expression of an inward commitment. When someone gives to your church, it is a sign of personal and spiritual growth. You want to honor and celebrate that in the same way you might celebrate a milestone with friends and family.

One of the most important things you can do to encourage giving is to say, “Thank you.” Of course, most people don’t give in order to be noticed or thanked. But expressing gratitude is an important generosity principle.

Why is saying thank you important? Expressing gratitude to your givers serves multiple purposes. It lets them know you appreciate their support. Again, most supporters don’t give in order to receive a letter of thanks. But donors agree that receiving a letter of appreciation encourages future giving.

Saying thank you provides an opportunity to let givers know their gift is being used according to their wishes. Often donors will designate to a specific program or ministry. A thank you note assures the donor their gift has been properly allocated.

A note of thanks models gratitude. Generosity begins with expressing gratitude to God for all of life’s blessings. Thanking your givers tells them you are grateful to them for sharing God’s blessings with your church.

Most importantly, a note of thanks lets your givers know you care about them, not their gift. That is, if you take the time to write a good thank you note.

Here are 10 things to remember about writing a good thank you note:

1. Make sure the letter is personally addressed. No “Dear friend” or “Dear church family member.” Your givers are in relationship with you. They want to know that you know who they are. Using their names on thank you notes is critical to conveying that knowledge.

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2. Be concise. A couple of paragraphs is better than a couple of pages. It can be challenging to write a letter that is shorter rather than longer, but it makes a big difference. Your letter is much more likely to be read if it is short and to the point.

3. Make sure your letter focuses on the donor, not on the gift, and doesn't follow the same old format. Most thank you letters begin with, "Thank you for your gift of xx." Pretty boring. Plus it puts the emphasis on the gift, not on the donor. Instead, begin with something powerful and unique such as, "The Jones family slept well tonight because of you," referencing a gift for a feeding or housing ministry. Or, "We will make a joyful noise because of you," referencing a gift to a music ministry. Or, "Thanks to you, our net was cast a bit wider," referencing a gift to expand ministry. Try to avoid "your" and use "you" instead. Don't say "Thank you for your gift." Tell them how they made a difference.

4. Make sure each letter is personal and personally signed. Each giver wants to know that the person writing cares about them.

5. Telling stories about how funds were used will inspire givers to give again. Donors want to know their contributions are making a difference. Ideally, rather than tell the story yourself, ask those who have been impacted by the ministry to tell it for you. Share quotes and testimonies about how your ministry is making a difference in their lives. Your donors will be inspired to make another gift.

6. Be sure your letter is 100 percent gratitude and 0% ask. Even a subtle ask such as including a return envelope can turn a donor off. Your letter is about gratitude and nothing else.

7. Do not make the thank you gimmicky in any way or include a P.S. This distracts from the real purpose of saying thanks.

8. Do not continue to sell. The donor has already determined that you are worthy of their support. The thank you letter is not the place to continue to make your case.

9. Make sure your thank you goes out within 48 hours of receiving your gift. In all cases, make sure you do not ask your donor for another gift until she has been thanked for her last. Overzealous asking has been linked to donor attrition, so be sure to thank before asking again.

10. Mix it up and make sure the letters are different every time. Do your best to make the thank you note reflect how much appreciate your donor.

In case you're wondering, emailed thank you notes are good, too. Just be sure to know your givers and what their preferences might be. It is still true that a handwritten note stands out. But especially for younger donors, an email feels just as good.

Remember that gratitude is fundamental to growing giving. It only takes a few minutes to say "Thank you." You'll be glad you did. [CGM](#)

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