



## 20 Dos and Don'ts for Nonprofit Thank You Letters

### THE DOs

**Do understand thanking donors and volunteers is savvy strategy.** It's important, and so many nonprofits do this so badly, that it really makes you stand out when you do it well.

**Do approach thank you letters as the first step in receiving the second gift,** not just as wrapping up the first one. It's about building an ongoing relationship.

**Do "Thank Before You Bank."** Get your thank you letters out within 48 hours if possible.

**Do make it personal.** Thank you letters should be from one person to another. Personalize both the greeting and the signature block.

**Do explain how the gift will be used.** I know it's hard to be specific sometimes, especially when it's general support, but do your best to convey how the money is most likely to be spent.

**Do explain what's next.** Let your supporters know when they can expect to hear from you next. Will they be getting your newsletter or a report back on the program they just funded? Will they be invited to events?

**Do use the word "You" – a lot!** Thank you letters should convey how important the donor is to your success.

**Do let clients or other beneficiaries speak.** Ask the people impacted by your work to help with thank you letters, from testimonials and anecdotes you can include, to writing the letters themselves.

**Do get help from your board.** Writing thank you letters and making thank you phone calls are easy ways for board members to participate in fundraising.

**Do include visuals.** Remember, a picture is worth a thousand words. Photographs or drawings and links to videos in emails are all engaging ways to demonstrate impact.

## THE DON'Ts

**Don't start with a tired and predictable opening.** You can do a lot better than, "On behalf of . . ." or "Thank you for your gift of . . ."

**Don't speak in generalities about how the gift will be used.** Don't just cough up your mission statement or a bulleted laundry list of all programs. Give supporters some specifics about how you will use the money.

**Don't be depressing.** Donors want to know that their gifts are helping, not that the gift isn't making a difference because the need is so great. That's the message you send if you blather on about how great the need is in your thank you letter.

**Don't gloat or brag.** The letter should be about how wonderful the donor is for helping you, not about how great the nonprofit is.

**Don't use jargon.** Write in plain English, with a friendly tone.

**Don't write a formal business letter.** The best nonprofit thank yous feel friendly, warm, and personal. They are more Hallmark card than grocery receipt.

**Don't use bad graphics for your signature.** If you just can't sign the letters and must use a graphic of your signature, make it a good one! It must be clear and crisp and look as much like real ink as possible.

**Don't wait.** If you send a thank you letter weeks or months later, it makes you look inefficient and out of touch – not good qualities for a nonprofit.

**Don't include the IRS language in the body of the letter.** It's dreadfully boring and impersonal – the opposite of what you need in a letter. If you must include the language, put it at the bottom as a footer, after your P.S.

**Don't panic.** Make progress little by little. Maybe only a certain percentage of donors will get great thank you letters this month. That's fine. Work towards a gold-star thank-you system step by step.

For more tips on writing thank you letters, visit <http://nonprofitmarketingguide.com/thankyou>

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