



Your Guide to Donor Thank-A-Thons

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What better way to show donors your love and gratitude than gathering a team of board members, volunteers and development staff together for a thank-a-thon? Donor research tells us that receiving timely, sincere appreciation along with communication about how gifts are making a difference, is the most effective way to retain donors and increase gift values.

Recruit your dream team of callers. Set a date and time (usually a weeknight, at the end of the workday like 5:30PM to 7PM). Ask callers to bring their cell phones and chargers. You provide snacks and bottled water – make a fun event of it! Review the process with callers. Role play a couple of calls using the call guideline and script, as a demonstration. Distribute call sheets, and let the donor gratitude calls begin! Reserve the last fifteen minutes of the thank-a-thon to convene callers to debrief the thank-a-thon experience. Be prepared to hear callers sharing how much they enjoyed the calls. Oh, and donors like them too!

Call Guidelines

- **SMILE:** Your smile can be heard through your voice. Some people like to stand up while making calls, because their voice will project better.
- **INTRODUCE YOURSELF:** Share your name and your role with your organization.
- **SHARE WHY YOU'RE CALLING:** I'm not calling to ask you for money. I just want you to know you much we appreciate your support. You are awesome! or You've been so generous!
- **ASK AN OPEN-ENDED QUESTION:** What is it about our work that compels you to give? or How did you first learn about us? or What area of our work are you most interested in? These are examples of open-ended questions. Add open-ended questions of your own.
- **SHARE THE IMPACT OF THEIR GIFT:** Thank the donor for their support of your work. Connect their gift(s) to the impact of their gift on those you serve. Be specific: Donations, Special Giving Society, Board, committee membership, Volunteer, Sponsor, ticket purchaser, etc.
- **THANK THEM FOR TAKING YOUR CALL:** Time is precious. Thank the donor for taking time to talk with you. Wish them well, and extend a non-monetary call to action. For example: Invite them to take a tour of your program, so they can see first-hand how their gift is making a difference. Or invite them to a special mission-focused holiday gathering, etc.
- **HELPFUL HINT:** Use a "Relation(s)" column on your call sheets so callers may understand relationship with the donor(s). Also include a "notes" section, so callers can share details of their conversations with donors. Ensure all notes and calls are added to the donor record in your donor database.

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During the Call

Please use the script on the next page guideline when talking with the donor or leaving them a voice mail. Don't read the script word-for-word. Generate the script from the guideline and make it a great conversation!

Leaving Voicemail & Call Back Numbers

Your callers will likely be leaving a lot of voicemails. Encourage them to leave a warm, gratitude-filled voicemail using the outline above (obviously, without the open-ended question).

Before the thank-a-thon event, pre-determine the appropriate call back numbers callers should use when leaving messages. You may choose to call back numbers based on development staff donor portfolio assignments, or refer them to one specific point of contact.

Here's an example of segmenting call back numbers by staff portfolio assignments:

- **All individual donors over \$1K:** STAFF NAME & TITLE ACCOUNTABLE FOR THIS DONOR SEGMENT at DIRECT DIAL OR CELL NUMBER
- **All corporate donors:** NAME & TITLE ACCOUNTABLE FOR THIS DONOR SEGMENT at DIRECT DIAL OR CELL NUMBER
- **All individuals under \$1K:** NAME & TITLE ACCOUNTABLE FOR THIS DONOR SEGMENT at DIRECT DIAL OR CELL NUMBER

Documenting the Call

Ask callers to indicate if they left a message or spoke with a donor, detailing any post-call follow-up actions. In the notes section of the thank-a-thon call sheet, callers should indicate the one of the following:

- Spoke with donor
- Detail key conversation points
- Detail action items for staff follow-up
- Bad phone number (BN)
- No voicemail available (NV)
- Left message with a person (LM)
- Left a voicemail (LV)

Post-Call Actions

- Be certain callers return their assigned call list with notes to you or a designated development team member before they leave the thank-a-thon.
- If callers were unable to complete all their assigned calls, you can choose to reassign them to staff, post thank-a-thon volunteer callers, or gain agreement with the caller to complete their calls within a specified period.
- Completed calls, caller notes and action items should be entered into your donor database within a few days to ensure you have record of this donor stewardship activity, as well as any information the donor shared with the caller, and resulting action items.

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Thank-A-Thon Sample Call Script

Introduce yourself, and the reason for your call.

Hello, my name is (first name). I'm a (Volunteer, Board Member, Staff) with (your organization's name).

I'm not calling to ask for money. I'm just calling to say, "thank you" for your support. You are (sincere acknowledgment using morale adjectives – examples: amazing, generous, etc.). We really appreciate you!

Pause and listen for possible response. If no response, move ahead.

Ask an open-ended question. What is it about our work that compels you to be so generous? or How did you first learn about us? or What area of our work are you most interested in? (These are examples of open-ended questions. Add an open-ended question of your own).

Thank the donor and share the impact of their gifts. Thank you for caring about (specific mission area and/or group of people or cause you serve). Because of you, (impact of their giving). We really couldn't do this work without you or Your support is making such a difference.

Thank them for taking your call. Thank you for taking my call. I know your time is precious. I just wanted you to know you matter to us, and we hope you have a great holiday season.

Share a non-monetary call to action. Before I let you go, we would love for you to (call to action, examples – take a tour, attend our gratitude reception, etc.). Thanks again. Have a great evening!

Leaving A Voicemail

Hello, this is (name) and I'm a (Volunteer, Board Member, on Staff) with (name of your organization). I'm just calling to say thank you for the generous support you give to help (impact statement). You are making such a difference. And we really appreciate you!

Because of you, we've made real progress this year. Thank you again for your incredible support! We'd love to have you (non-monetary call to action).

If you are interested in (call to action), please call me back. Or if you have ideas to share. You can reach me at (contact information).