

Acknowledging Donors

CASE Annual Meeting
of Donor Relations
Professionals

June 15-17, 2005

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Agenda

- What are your questions?
- The what and why of acknowledgment
- Let's look at letters
- Other information

What is acknowledgment?

Acknowledgment is the organization's response to a gift

Correspondence is the personal expression of appreciation from the leadership to the donor on the occasion of the organization's receiving a gift

Why acknowledge gifts?

Good manners

“Thank you” *leads to* “You’re Welcome”

Maintain/expand philanthropy

The way to:

Build trust

Manage the relationship

Deliver the message

Why acknowledge gifts. . . another reason?

Because it is the single most important thing you can do to thank a donor. . .

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Dear Mrs. Bilbao,

I'm looking at the marvelous gift of silver flatware that you made to the university's museum last month. I know that you and I reviewed your collection earlier this year, and I marveled at the beauty of the pieces you offered then—I am again smiling as I view them here in the cases set aside for their display. Thank you. Your generosity to us is most appreciated.

Let's plan to have lunch next week so that I can show you our current exhibition on early American decorative arts. I'll be in touch.

Sincerely,

Genevieve Fairweather

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Dear Elizabeth and Jim,

**Do you mind if I call you Elizabeth and Jim?
We have not yet met, but I know that we will
be fast friends when we do!**

**Thank you for your wonderful gift to the
library's endowment fund. Carnegie Library is
a beautiful place and a wonderful asset to the
university. Your decision to invest in its
future means a great deal to me personally
and to generations of students who, as
budding scholars, will use the resources
which gifts like yours can provide.**

**I trust that you will consider coming to the
next Friends of the Library event, in June,
featuring a talk by Carlos Fuentes. He is a
favorite author of mine and a visiting scholar
on campus this semester.**

Sincerely,

Charlene Madison

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Dear Martin,

Thank you for making a gift to your fifth reunion fund. I understand that your class has decided to allocate the total raised to current-use, unrestricted expenditures of the college. Thank you for your trust in us—I assure you that we will use the fund wisely.

I expect that this year, in addition to supporting general operations of the college, we will use unrestricted funds for scholarships and for several special initiatives on campus. The library has received some funds to open a multimedia lab for faculty and students to extend the use of technology in the classroom. We've also allocated funds this year for building upkeep and much-needed maintenance.

I look forward to seeing you on campus for your reunion. Throughout the year, I'll keep you informed as well on other projects we are developing.

Sincerely,

Charlene Madison

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Dear Sybil and Harry,

Ben just called to tell me of your wonderful gift to support our scholarship program. I'm so pleased that you've made this decision—scholarships make a huge difference in our ability to attract and keep some of the most interesting students I've ever had the pleasure to meet. Thank you for being a part of our very important work here.

I'm headed out to see how things are going with the new wing of the library—where many of those students you'll be supporting are going to spend appreciable amounts of time!

Do think about a visit to campus. I would appreciate having the chance to thank you in person. And there is so much to see here these days.

With warmest regards,

Charlene

Who should be acknowledged?

Fundraising is hierarchical BUT

Acknowledgment is democratic

*Setting the acknowledgment
parameters JIC*

FOLs

Rising donors

First-time donors

Special occasion donors

Memorial/honorific donors

Etc.

How should acknowledgment be managed? *Be strategic. . .*

Set goals and objectives for acknowledgment outcomes

Partner with gift/bio and IT

Mine your data and stockpile text

Develop production capacity

Organize straight-line systems

Measure outcomes

Report back to the donors on impact

What Warwick has to say about acknowledgment. . .

- **Reassure the donor that the gift is still a good idea; don't invite buyers remorse**
- **Reinforce the original belief that your organization is effective, caring and worthy of their donation**
- **Be warm and friendly. Welcome new donors to the family.**
- **Praise their generosity; explain how, by joining other supporters, they have a significant impact on the work of the organization**
- **Reaffirm your gratitude at the end of the letter**
- **Give examples of recent successes they can feel proud of**

(Mal Warwick, How to Write Successful Fundraising Letters, p. 245.)

In other words. . .

- **Be appreciative**
- **Be accurate**
- **Be accessible**
- **Be on time**

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Thank you!