

## Fundraising and the Importance of Saying “Thank You”

### A Story of the Importance of Saying Thank You

Several years back I was directing a capital campaign for a large organization. The organization had a good case, an excellent leadership team, and a director who understood the importance of lead gifts to a successful campaign.

The Lead Gift Team went through the process of identifying the lead donors to the campaign. There was a man named Tony, who had given \$1 million to the organization’s previous capital campaign. With Tony’s continued involvement in the organization and another inspiring case in front of them, the Lead Gift Team assumed that Tony would be supportive of this new campaign.

The solicitors went over their plans to meet Tony, the elements of the case that they were going to highlight for him, and their “ask” for \$1 million. The day came to meet Tony, and everything was going well. The solicitors felt sure that Tony would make another gift of \$1 million. The solicitors made the ask and waited. To the solicitors’ surprise, Tony turned them down. Why? Tony went on to recount that no one had bothered to thank him for his \$1 million gift to the previous campaign. If they couldn’t thank him for the previous gift, they were not going to get another! The \$1 million gift was lost because of a failure to thank the donor.

As amazing as it seems, some CEO’s, principals, directors, pastors, and presidents don’t feel that it is necessary to thank people. When I’ve heard the directors of organizations mention that they won’t thank donors personally by signing thank you notes, or by some other means, I often ask myself, “Why?” And I confess, I still don’t understand this attitude. Are they too proud to say thank you? Is it too much effort? Do they feel it weakens them? Do they believe that people “owe” them their gifts? Who knows?

**Let’s try to be as clear as possible, it is important to thank people, in as many ways as possible, as often as possible!**

### Some Ways of Thanking Donors

- 1) Handwritten and personally signed thank you notes.
- 2) Coffees, lunches, dinners or cocktails of gratitude. We spend a lot of effort to solicit gifts. Why not spend some effort to say thank you?
- 3) Have those impacted by donations – children, scholarship beneficiaries, service beneficiaries, or members – write a personal thank.
- 4) Record a short video message.
- 5) Have children draw or color personal thank you notes and just sign their first name.
- 6) Walls of Remembrance for large and small gifts.
- 7) The naming of pavilions, wings, entrances, conference centers, gyms, meeting rooms, gardens, windows, furnishings, and towers.
- 8) Periodic printing of names of donors to various projects.
- 9) Include a photo of people being impacted and holding a thank you sign.
- 10) Be specific about who is being helped and how the gift is being used.

It is right to thank donors. It is courteous to thank donors. Thanking donors continues to build the bonds of friendship and interest. Consider dedicating a portion of your schedule, or a staff person or volunteer, or a group to the task of thanking and remembering donors. Thanking donor will even lead to future gifts as Tony’s story shows.

**VisionWorks helps organizations with their Foundation Reviews and Building, Planning, Case Building, Feasibility Studies, and Capital Campaigns. Contact Mark Filips and VisionWorks today at 402.999.2970 or [markf@VisionWorksCo.com](mailto:markf@VisionWorksCo.com). Let us put our experience and expertise to work for you!**