



12 Appreciation Strategies that Create Gifts

Big 12 Development Conference

Robert G. Swanson
President, Hartsook Companies, Inc.

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The “Be” Guidelines



Be Timely.

Don't wait too long to say thank you.

Be Thoughtful.

Don't send the same thank you to every donor or volunteer.

Be Communicative.

Share more than one thought in every thank you.

Be Honest.

Don't mislead or spin-doctor your supporters.

Be Grateful.

Let your enthusiasm and appreciation show.

Be Consistent.

Send publications on a regular basis.

Be Sincere.

Appreciation programs can generate additional gifts, but they must result from a **sincere** desire by the organization to say thank you and keep a donor informed.

STRATEGY #1: Tattoo Your Gifts

Put your organization's name, address, phone number and web site on the gifts, mementos and premiums that you present to donors. The goal: Repeat and new gifts.

Key Points:

- ❖ If a certificate or picture is worth handing out, frame it.
- ❖ Place donor names on gifts if the items and donors are worthy of the added expense.
- ❖ Present gifts in person whenever possible.
- ❖ "Presentation" is half the value of the gift. Involve volunteers.
- ❖ Keep premiums to a minimum.

STRATEGY #2: Honor Roll of Donors

Mail donor honor-roll to non-donors and low-level donors. Let them see who is involved in the life of your organization. The goal: First-time gift or upgrade.

Key Points:

- ❖ Use gift giving categories.
- ❖ Include specific gift and donor stories.
- ❖ Include testimonials or endorsements.
- ❖ Place annual report data in the back.
- ❖ List all board members and their businesses.
- ❖ Include a page outlining ways to make charitable gifts.

STRATEGY #3: Walk the Blue Line

Use your donor honor roll publication as an opportunity to encourage donors to move into the next gift-giving category.

Key Points:

- ❖ A “blue line” was the term once used to proof a publication before it went to press. Print the “blue line” as a proof to mail to each person listed in the donor honor roll. Include specific gift and donor stories.
- ❖ Don't send the entire blue line.
- ❖ Ask them to verify the spelling of their name.
- ❖ Ask them if they want to take this opportunity to move up to the next category with a larger gift.
- ❖ Include justification for the request.
- ❖ Give them a deadline for sending back a response and the donation check.

STRATEGY #4: Coffee On Site

Just as one-on-one solicitations are more effective than direct mail, one-on-one appreciation is more effective. With one-on-one meetings, keep it simple.

Key Points:

- ❖ Don't talk more than 30 minutes.
- ❖ Talk about many things, not just your institution.
- ❖ If you're in the middle of a fund drive or a campaign, talk about it.
- ❖ Conduct these sessions at your institution, if possible.
- ❖ Always be professional.
- ❖ CAUTION: Don't seek out advice or feedback in these settings unless you are willing to accept it.

STRATEGY #5: "First Monday"

If "communication is the essence of appreciation" the most efficient method for communication is a monthly memo . . . if done correctly.

Key Points:

- ❖ Keep it to one sheet of paper front and back.
- ❖ Never use more than four or five lines for a single item. Bold face the first sentence of every section.
- ❖ Talk about volunteers, birthdays, funeral, awards won by staff and board members, upcoming events and success of recent events. Express appreciation to individuals and groups. Include facts, figures and stories about the good work of your organization.
- ❖ Always make the final section "Did You Know?"
- ❖ Mail on the Friday before the first Monday of every month so recipients will expect it.

STRATEGY #6: Donor Fund Report

If they are already a donor to an endowed fund, share the good work of that fund with them.

Key Points:

- ❖ Share the fair market value of the fund.
- ❖ Share annual payout value and the good work the payout funded in the prior year.
- ❖ Talk about the need for new endowed dollars.
- ❖ Include a donor card and return envelope in the report mailing.
- ❖ Share ways of giving with them, such as deferred gifts.

STRATEGY #7: Tax Summary Mailing

Send a summary gift receipt report each February to all donors who make more than one gift per year.

Key Points:

- ❖ Mail it out by the first week in February for April 15th tax deadline.
- ❖ Include cover letter saying thank-you for the prior year's gifts and highlighting the prior year's needs and successes.
- ❖ This is a great strategy whether an ask is included or not.

STRATEGY #8: The Beneficiary Thank You

Nothing says “thank you” like a beneficiary (student, faculty member, administrator, parent) saying “thank you.”

Key Points:

- ❖ Have beneficiaries make “thank-you” phone calls.
- ❖ Have beneficiaries complete a “thank-you” Christmas card mailing.
- ❖ Have beneficiaries host tables at a donor “thank-you” luncheon.
- ❖ Have beneficiaries participate with donors on tours of your facilities.

STRATEGY #9: Engage Donors as Volunteers

You have their money, now build a relationship that lasts a lifetime.

Key Points:

- ❖ Have donors accompany you on asks.
- ❖ Have donors do volunteer work with students and staff.
- ❖ Have donors give the guided tours of your facility to the media.
- ❖ Have donors host leadership receptions in their homes for cultivation purposes.
- ❖ Recruit them to the board of trustees.

STRATEGY #10: Blue Ink and Two Sentences

Personalize mass communication mailings like “First Monday,” birthday cards and year-end appeals.

Key Points:

- ❖ Use a different color of ink in your pen.
- ❖ Keep the personal note to three sentences or less.
- ❖ Make your comment personal and legible.
- ❖ You can say thank you, congratulations or ask for help.
- ❖ Write your phone number or e-mail address under your signed name.

STRATEGY #11: Celebrate Anniversaries

They have already helped you accomplish something great. Keep them in the fold and remind these important donors of the great things they have helped your organization accomplish.

Key Points:

- ❖ Recognize one-year, five-year and ten-year marks of a great event for your organization.
- ❖ Consider on-sight and virtual anniversary celebrations.
- ❖ Celebrate people and committees as well as buildings.
- ❖ Consider re-dedications of buildings and club charters.
- ❖ Use flexible/adjustable donor recognition plaques to add new gifts to old projects.

STRATEGY #12: Do The Donor Testimonial

Non-donors often find it easier to make first-time gifts, make larger gifts and use different types of giving vehicles when they see others doing it first.

Key Points:

- ❖ Use donor gift stories as testimonials.
- ❖ Ask donors to “sell” a gift giving method in an appeal or story.
- ❖ Use a donor’s volunteer work in a message, appeal, story.
- ❖ Ask distinguished alumni and service citation recipients to do more than accept an award at a banquet.

The Philosophy: Communication is the Essence of Appreciation

I believe strongly in the philosophy that “communication is the essence of appreciation”.

Once someone has donated to your institution, they have already bought into your mission. Their ongoing support will be based on your commitment to keep them engaged in the life of your institution. If the ONLY time you are talking to donors and volunteers is when you need something – something is wrong.

Key Points:

- ❖ Implement regular communication strategies.
- ❖ Share victories and testimonials of those helped.
- ❖ Keep donors apprised of successes and setbacks.
- ❖ Say thank you!



HARTSOOK
COMPANIES, INC.
AMERICA'S FUNDRAISING COUNSEL

THANK YOU!

PO Box 782890 Wichita KS 67278

www.hartsookcompanies.com

info@hartsookcompanies.com

866.630.8500