

Readers of *The Grow Report* were asked to write and relate “one thing that your organization has implemented in the past six months to build stronger relationships with your donors.” Following you’ll find the best of the best responses:

The one thing that we have done in the last 6 months to build better relationships with our donors is to emphasize the importance of face-to-face meetings to share thoughts and ideas (*not* for an ask) between board members and donors. Our board members had a goal of how many donors they were supposed to reach out to, and how many meetings they were supposed to have. Reporting on these meetings at our board meetings makes it an action item with accountability and we are seeing results!

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Jennifer Johnson
Director of Development and Outreach
The Nature Connection

Listening is key. Kudos, Jennifer!

The one thing that we did was to change the focus of our annual meeting from a dull insider’s event for the staff and board to an engaging, inclusive event for our donors. We also used the revamped annual meeting as a “good excuse” to call our top 100 donors to thank them for their continued generosity and to personally invite them attend.

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Kent E. Fillinger Director of Partnerships
CMF International

You rock Kent!

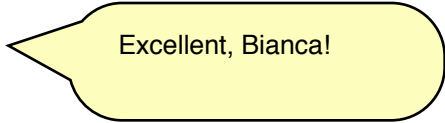
The one thing that we implemented to improve donor relations/retention is increasing our stewardship. Everyone on my team doubled their weekly calls/emails/notes to donors (in addition to the thank you/tax letter) from 5-10 each week and every other month we have a thank a thon where we try and reach in the ballpark of 1000 donors. Development staff, volunteers, our board and even our executive team have helped!

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Heather Sieting
Development Assistant
Michigan Humane Society

I love the way you’ve got everyone participating in this lesson of gratitude, Heather.

One thing I have worked with one of my clients to do in the past 6 months is introduce thank you phone calls to renewing donors over \$100 and all NEW donors. It is giving them a great chance to build stronger relationships and understand why their donors support them.

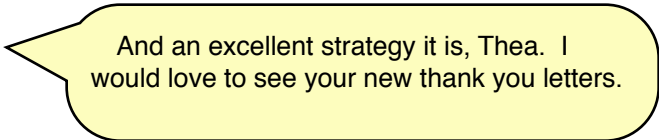
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Bianca Ousley
Community Change Architect



Recently we designed & implemented a prospect/donor communications protocol.

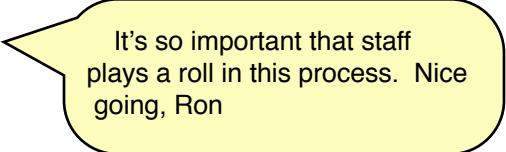
- 1) After each prospect's point of entry tour or event, he or she is personally called and emailed by the Development Associate (me) who acts as a Donor Services representative. We take this opportunity to thank them for coming and get feedback about our organization & the event itself. No "ask" is made. This is purely a relationship-builder.
 - 2) We are now sending out gift thank you letters on a regular weekly schedule! The letters have been vastly improved and are more personal, human and less generic.
 - 3) We just had a "no ask" donor appreciation event where board members got to know our donors more thoroughly. Notes were provided to the Development Associate (me), logged into Donor Perfect & filed in each donor's file.
 - 4) We are creating more points of communication, increasing our email/web/social media engagements, and sending quarterly newsletters.
- All-in-all we actually have a strategy now!!

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Thea Vandervoort, M.S. & C.N.M.
Development Associate
Mental Wellness Center
Director of Artistic Operations
Santa Barbara Chamber Orchestra



The one thing that we implemented in the last six months to build stronger relationships with our donors is a donor 'thank you' call program. Members of our staff call donors just to thank them for their support. No ask - just thanks. The donors love it and the staff get to connect with donors.

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Ron Skenes



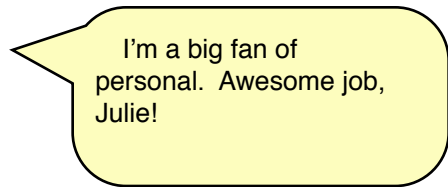
Christ Community Health Services Augusta

The one thing that we do now is to follow up with significant project donors after the project they supported launched (or was completed, depending on the nature of the project), to tell them how the program performed and how their donation had an impact. We send a short, personalized letter (signed by the Ex. Dir.) and a one-page wrap-up of the project with photos. (this is in addition to immediate thank you letters, etc.) Timing varies with the project and depends on if it was a one-time or short term initiative, a continuing project, etc.

Thanks for the blog!

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*Julie Klett
Development Manager
Rocky Mountain Nature Association
Estes Park, Colorado*



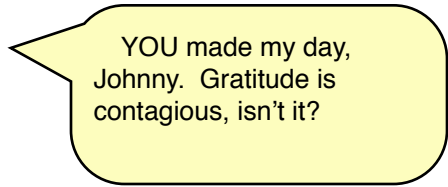
The one thing that we, here at KVIE Public Television, implemented in the last 6 months was regular thank you calls by board members.

At first only a few participated but once they started having a fun chatting with donors, more and more volunteered! Plus having Penelope Burk's statistics on the matter was really helpful: "In a survey, 95% of donors said they'd be grateful if a board member called to thank them and 86% said they'd consider giving a larger gift." Board member: "Where do I sign up?" Can't wait to see what comes of it!

PS - THANK YOU for the Grow Report. I love grabbing my cup of coffee to settle in for the BlogRoll and some great insights. It's my morning awesome sauce!

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*Johnny Avots-Smith
Leadership Giving Officer
KVIE Public Television*



The one thing that we implemented was homeowner thank you notes. Our stewardship had been a form letter from the CEO with standard, mission centric language. The

homeowners started hand writing notes saying what a new home meant to them and their families. We actually received donor calls saying, “that’s the first time I’ve ever received a note like that.”

Thanks for all you do and your invaluable insights!

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Lisa Barr
VP of Development
Habitat for Humanity of Brevard County, Inc.

I'm such a fan of Habitat. Beautiful job, Lisa.

The one thing that we have implemented at The River Food Pantry is coffee or lunch with new or existing major donors, just to say thank you.

I would love to learn how to strengthen those relationships even further.

Fingers crossed,

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Betsy Ezell
Development Director
The River Food Pantry

Great start, Betsy!

The one thing that we have done is invite some donors who have committed to planned gifts to a Leave a Legacy luncheon to thank them for their commitment to our museum. I co-hosted our table with our Executive Director and manager of our museum’s local branch.

It was a lovely lunch!

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Jen Pederson
Western Development Museum

A special way to treat a special group of donors - lovely, Jen!

The one thing that we do is to send at least one hand written thank you per day, just to say thank you. It has been great and I have found it means so much to our donors.

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I am such a believer in the daily habit of gratitude. Good job, Lisa.

Lisa Wells
Down Syndrome Indiana

Thanks very much for your informative newsletter! I have to say that at the beginning of my foray into the role of Development Coordinator, I signed up for probably a dozen online blogs and newsletters. Yours is the only one to stay in my inbox! I feel it's most relevant to me, my new role and our small organization. Thanks in advance for all of the helpful information!

The one thing that we implemented to build stronger relationships with our donors was:

Specific, hand-written thank you notes. We realized that in the age of electronic communication and social media, a genuine note carries more value and weight with our individual donors. We are a small enough organization (approx 300 donations a year) that this is still manageable. Our notes, written on cards with student-designed artwork, are specific to the donor, including information such as what part of our organization their donation directly assists. If appropriate, we follow up 6 weeks later with a photo that is relevant to that area their specific donation helped. Early reports from donors and people in our community tell us that this personalized outreach helps them stay connected with our school and acts as an incentive for additional donations!

There's nothing quite like a hand-written note, is there, DeAnna? And thanks for making my day!

Thanks for the opportunity to tell you our tidbit of success!

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DeAnna Marler
The Joshua School

The one thing that we now do: cookies at every meet and greet. Everyone loves cookies :)

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Christina Hanna
Glendale, CA

You've got that right, Christina! What's your favorite kind?

The one thing that we have implemented in the past 6 months to improve our communication with donors is an Impact Update. It differs from the newsletter created by our communications department, in that it is less a report on what WE have done, and more an update on what the DONOR has made possible through their gift. Donors

receive updates twice each year – 4 months after their gift, and 9 months after their gift – and we have both email and postal mail versions depending on their mailing preferences. Since we have just started the updates, I have included a brief survey asking donors for their feedback. Our first email version had a 33% open rate, and no opt-outs.

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Penny Campbell
Donor Relations Associate
Planned Parenthood of Southwestern Oregon

You totally get it! I'd be interested in reading your surveys. LOVE it, Penny!

The one thing that we are doing this month is that we are including 1/3-page informational sheets about our distinguished graduates in all of our donor thank you letters. Across our three schools (Undergraduate School, Seminary, and School of Adult & Graduate Studies) we had 10 distinguished graduates at this year's commencement exercises in May. We had head shots taken of each in their graduation garb and used the biographical and future plans information on each of them from the commencement program to create ten different full-color, 1/3-page sheets. We rotate the ten different distinguished grad sheets and include one in each thank you letter. The letter references the bio/informational sheets with the message focused on "your gift benefits all our students and makes stories possible like..." [the enclosed distinguished grad].

The 1/3 page sheet gives donors something to hold on to long after they toss the thank you letter. We're sending a thank you and receipt anyway, so we're hoping the graduate information personalizes their gift even further.

Thanks for asking!

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Keith Snyder
Associate Vice President of Development
Lincoln Christian University

Schools & universities have such wonderful relationship building opportunities built right in. This is lovely, Keith.

The one thing that we have done is invite our large donors to tour our affordable apartment building that we are renovating. We called it our "hard hat tour". We also invited local legislators and community leaders as well as our board members. We hope that by doing this, our large donors will see the impact their investment is making on the

community first hand. I'm attaching a PDF of the flyer I designed for the tour. I'd love to have a copy the book. I haven't won a book yet!

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Lisa A. Keeter
Resource Development Manager
Mountain Housing Opportunities

There's nothing quite like seeing that impact up close and personal, is there? Great job, Lisa!

The one thing that we have done in the past six months to build donor relationships: We started to provide open houses for donors and potential donors, targeting different groups (corporate community outreach staff for one, religious organizations at another, etc.). We provide tours of the facility and talk about what we do and what they could do with us, provide lunch and time to network. Since we just started this recently it is hard to know exactly what the results will be, but we believe it is creating stronger ties with donors.

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Mary Bennett
Director of Programs
Stepping Stones Shelter

You're on the right path, Mary. Keep it up!

Hi Pam,

The one thing that we have implemented in the last six months to improve donor relations is sending unexpected handwritten notes, "just because".

Dear Pam,

Thought of you today while I was at New Life Family Shelter. Rosie, spent 6 months there last year. She stopped by today to show us her graduation pictures and share her news... She got hired the day she took her last exam! Aren't you proud of her?

Thanks for being part of Rosie's second chance. You cared, you shared, and she achieved.

Hope you can stop by for a visit soon.

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Rachel, you always bring a smile to my face. Terrific job.

Rachel Ramjattan. Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Miami

The one thing that we have done is to phone every donor when the donation is received and thank them BEFORE doing anything else!

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It sets the tone for the day, doesn't it, Sharon?

Sharon Evans

The one thing that we have implemented was sending handwritten notes on organization notecards sent from the Executive Director and org president.

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*Cristina Rodriguez
Development Coordinator
Texas State Historical Association*

Nothing beats the power of handwritten. Nice job, Cristina.

The one thing that we implemented recently was a donor appreciation event. We separated our donor database into three regions matched to our three offices, and personally called all the donors from one region to invite them to a simple house party. We told them to keep their wallets at home; this event was just to thank them sincerely for all their support over the years. We kept it simple and used the lovely home of a board member as the location. We offered beer/wine/soda and appetizers from 5 to 7 PM on a Sunday. The response was great. Those who could not come were thrilled just to be asked and the ones who did show up were completely charmed by not being asked for money and instead simply being thanked. We are planning the next two donor appreciation events in our other two regions within the next few months.

Thanks for the opportunity to tell you.

Kudos, Ann! Be sure to write and tell me about your next two events.

*Ann H. Kloeckner
Executive Director
Rappahannock Legal Services, Inc.*

The one thing that we have done is... well, we've done lots of things! We wrote gift acceptance policies and are following them, cleaned up our official thank you response time and procedure, and have made a point to call, email, write and have lunch or tea with a major donor every week. But probably the most important thing we've done is we've gone more personal and bolder in our communications with donors.

Pamela, you made this change possible! Thank you!

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*Mandy
Intervale Center*

Thank YOU, Mandy. "More personal and bolder" -- do share. I'd love to see.

The one thing that we have done to deepen relationships with donors is to talk to them and thank them personally. In at least two instances, the personal connection after the first donation resulted in an increase in subsequent donations.

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*Lin Nelson-Mayson
University of Minnesota*

That personal connection trumps. Thanks, Lin.

The one thing that we did is to invite past (and future?) donors to eat a hamburger-and-hot-dog lunch with our kids, after taking a kid-guided tour of the facility. Thanks for all your great info!

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*Susan Goldstein
Development Director
Boys & Girls Clubs of the Pee Dee Area*

Sounds like a fun day, Susan! Thanks for sharing.

The one thing that we have done is to divide up mid-level and major donors amongst the four of us that are focusing on donor relations. Now we each have a "caseload" of people that we are the primary contact for and we can pay attention to their activity, look for ways to connect, etc.

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*Angie Weldy
Pioneer Bible Translators*

I'll be interested in hearing more, Angie.

The one thing that we have done to build stronger relationships with our donors is to implement thank you calls! We try to call every time we receive a donation to let our donor know how much we appreciate it.

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Tara Noland
Director, Development | 4C for Children

Nice going, Tara! Would you believe I've never gotten a thank you call for a gift from an org?

The one thing that we put into place is the strategy taken from Susan Howlett's *Boards on Fire* book, but also in the Christopher Davenport video.

I took notes during the video (and also bought the book) and she gives 10 very specific steps to engage busy board members who are dipping their toe into the fundraising waters for the very first time - or have had bad experiences in the past (like being thrown in without any swimming lessons). We're on step three and we're getting incredible responses from donors, but also the board members are enjoying their role as "thank you ambassadors." Come on in, the water's fine!

When our board meets again after the summer, I intend to implement the three stories every board member should be able to tell from your video interviewing Christopher himself on *Storytelling for Board Members* (from your e-course *Nonprofit Storytelling* – which my marketing director and I went through together, discussing what we want to share and implement with board and staff. I highly recommend it!).

Thanks for sharing your knowledge so generously to help others,

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Ruth Jones
Director of Fund Development
Presbyterian Manor

Chris and Susan will both be thrilled to hear how you're implementing. Excellent job, Ruth!

The one thing that we have implemented in six months to build stronger donor relationships.....

Gosh, I could write a book! I've been here 10 months now, and there was nothing in place prior to my position being created. NOTHING. No appeals, no thank you's, no donor profiles, no mailing lists, no history, no plan....you get the picture! On the one

hand – I look like a hero no matter what! On the other hand – YIKES! So, what have I/we done:

- Learned about the organization and the best way to communicate the services provided, outcomes reached while building a privacy-centered plan.
 - Created two events/tools that celebrate what we do as an agency, involves those we serve, communicates with the general public, and raises funds.
 - Developed website (www.ilresources.org), and hard-copy newsletter strategies.
 - Currently have in place an 18-month strategy for marketing and fundraising.
- Whew! I'd love a copy of this book – I want to keep ALL the new donors we are generating!

Thanks so much!

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Lori Dubczak

Marketing & Fundraising Coordinator Independent Living Resources

You rock, Lori! Pat yourself on the back and don't forget to reward yourself.

The one thing that we have done this year is talk. In January my Artistic Director and I began a campaign to talk to everyone – to meet donors, patrons and Trustees and talk to them about who Scene & Heard is, why we are and how much they mean to us. We're not done yet, but we've got a new Major Donor event planned for 4 July and 85% of the people we've spoken to have suggested someone, are bringing someone or have committed to our Major Donor program in some way.

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Simma Gershenson

Head of Development

Scene and Heard

Meeting on that one-to-one level is so key, Simma. Let me know how your event goes.

The one thing that we have implemented that was not here a year ago is to do a newsletter. It seems like a no brainier but had never been done. Issue one goes out tomorrow to our amazing donors! I have to say Pamela and several others who I follow made it so much easier for me to convince others that it is a good idea!

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Jamie Mykins, Director of Donor Relations

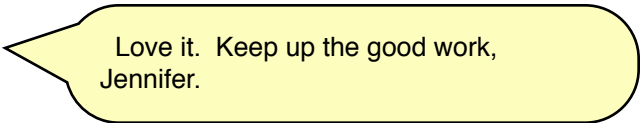
Orlando Shakespeare Theater in Partnership with UCF

Congrats! One of my favorite quotes is from W. Edward Demings: It does not happen at once. There is no instant pudding.

The one thing that we implemented in the past 6 months was to increase our communication to our Community Leadership (\$1,000+) donors.

We designed a e-newsletter (and printed it for those who we don't have email contact). This communication included a TY message from the chair, some examples of how their gifts made an impact in the community, s testimonial from a Community Leadership level donors, and introduced our new staff member who manages that demographic of donor.

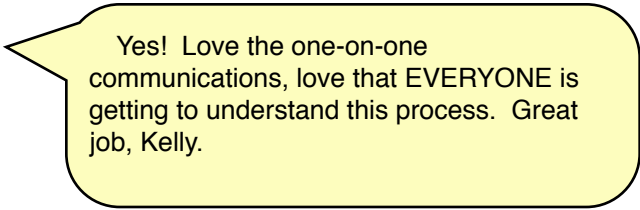
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Jennifer Loker
United Way of Oakville



Love it. Keep up the good work,
Jennifer.

The one thing that we have implemented in the last six months is sending exclusive trip reports to specific donors. The Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) has six senior associates that make nearly-monthly trips to Latin America to work with partner organizations on human rights issues in the region. When they return, they write up a one-page report on what they did and the outcomes they hope to see from the trip. We then send these updates from the senior associate's email account, as a one-on-one communication to a handful of donors who are interested in the topic, noting it is an exclusive update for them. We try to rotate which donors we send to so that each of our donors who gives over \$500 gets at least one of these communications every 6 months (or that is the goal at this point, we haven't been doing it long enough to hit everyone yet). So far we've gotten a great response, as the donors reply to the senior associates and it starts a relationship between a non-fundraising staff person and our donors.

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Kelly McLaughlin
Washington Office on Latin America



Yes! Love the one-on-one communications, love that EVERYONE is getting to understand this process. Great job, Kelly.