The GiveMN Guide to

STEWARDSHIP



Why does stewardship matter?

Stewardship, otherwise known as gratitude or thanking, is the part of the donor cycle where we report back to supporters and let them know the impact their gift is making. We all want to feel seen and recognized, so whether you send a simple thank you postcard, have an in-depth phone call, or something in between, showing gratitude can go a long way to help your people feel appreciated.

In the long-run, great stewardship can help grow your donor retention, build better relationships with your audience, and demonstrate your values. It's a key part of making your relationships with supporters last and grow from a place of authenticity!

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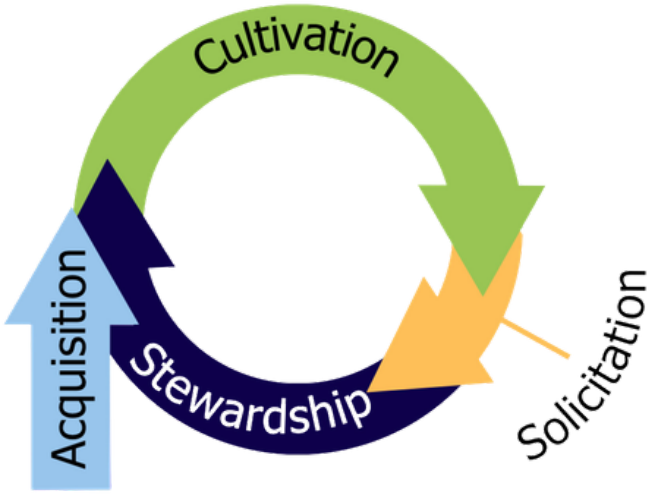
THE DONOR CYCLE



One of the foundational frameworks that fundraisers refer to is the donor cycle, pictured to the left. The donor cycle helps us understand the cadence of fundraising and how we engage supporters throughout the year. **This guide focuses on the stewardship part of the cycle which is when we follow up with donors, thank them for their support, and continue to deepen our relationship with them.**

Each part of the donor cycle is important, but stewardship is especially critical while building trust and rapport with your audience!

When it comes to your organization's revenue sustainability, one of the best investments you can make is in keeping your current donors engaged with your work. Stewardship is a great way to do this and some studies even cite that donors who receive handwritten thank you cards are 38% more likely to give again!

GiveMN insight!

In addition to helping boost overall retention, a recent study shows that 60% of Gen Z donors (b. 1997-2012) say they're motivated to give when they receive a thank you letter via postal mail! Taking a moment to thank your donors can make a big difference in helping them feel more connected to your organization.

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STEWARDSHIP IDEAS

No matter how much capacity your team has, there are ways you can show gratitude to your supporters! The following guide will provide you with some ideas whether you have just a few spare minutes or weeks to plan ahead.

Send an email thank you

Donors that support your organization on GiveMN.org will automatically receive a thank you message for their gift. But we recommend taking it one step further and sending a thank you email, too!

Consider pre-scheduling your thank you email, automating it through your database, and/or sending a general thank you to all of your supporters after your fundraising campaign concludes. Just be sure that it's written in a way that's authentic to your organization's mission and values!

Use social media

Social media, like Facebook and Instagram, is another great way to spread your gratitude far and wide. Use tools like Canva or Sprout Social to pre-schedule your thank you messages and share the love with your social media audience!

Feel free to re-use images you used in your fundraising campaign and keep the graphics simple. No matter what you post, social media is a simple way to thank a lot of your supporters at once, making your life a little easier while still recognizing the generosity of donors!

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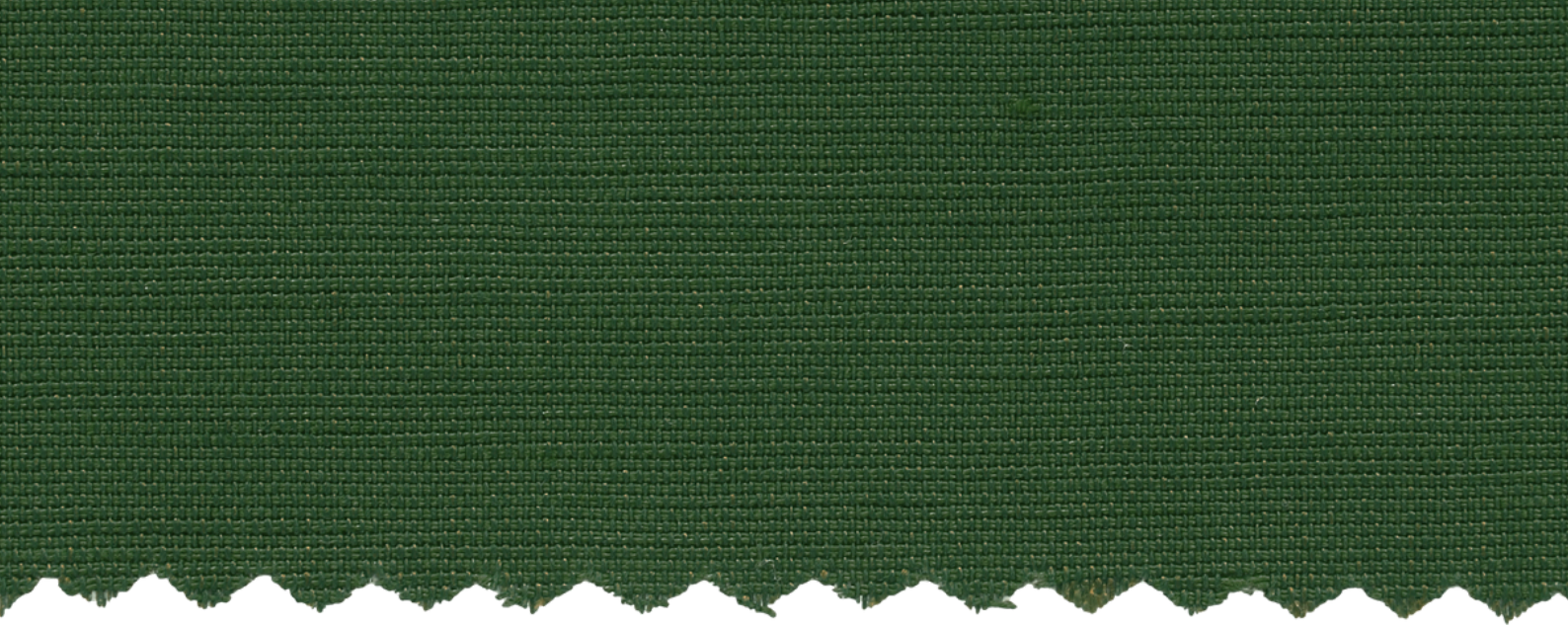

IF YOU HAVE A COUPLE OF WEEKS TO PLAN...

Send an email thank you... with some flair!

If you have a little extra time, it might be worth creating some special graphics on Canva or another design tool you feel most comfortable with.

Spicing up your email with your brand colors, photos, and fun graphics can take your thank you email from nice to great!

Also consider merging donors' first names into the email to be more personal, adding a picture of your staff celebrating, or sharing more information about the impact your donors' contributions will make moving forward.

Send a thank you card

Sending a thank you card can be a special surprise for donors in their mailboxes after Give to the Max Day. Whether you send a postcard with a pre-printed thank you or a card inside an envelope, a physical card can feel more special than an email or Facebook post.

If you don't have the budget to send physical cards with postage, you could also consider using platforms like Paperless Post to deliver digital thank you cards!

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IF YOU WANT YOUR THANK YOU MESSAGE TO WOW!

Call your donors!

Picking up the phone and sharing your heartfelt gratitude with donors is one of the best ways to build deeper relationships and go above and beyond with your stewardship.

Making a phone call gives you an opportunity to start a conversation with your donors, get to know them better, and hear why they care about your work.

Thank you phone calls can also be a great way to get board members and other staff at your organization involved in your fundraising! Think about how you can delegate phone calls to your support team and share the gratitude both internally and externally.

Send a handwritten card

To take your thank you card to the next level, try handwriting a note in your thank you card! This extra touch can go a long way to show donors how much you care, especially in a world that is moving more towards digital.

Like thank you phone calls, this can also be a great way to involve board members and other staff! By spreading out the work, it becomes much more manageable for each board member to write 10 thank you cards rather than asking your fundraising team to write 100 cards each.

GiveMN tip: if you don't have time to call every donor, try starting with calls to first-time donors. A quick phone call is a great way to welcome them into your community and learn more about their interest in your organization! Just make sure you find ways to thank your other donors too.

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SCRIPTS & TEMPLATES

Sample thank you call voicemail script

“Hey, [Donor]! This is [Name] calling from [Organization]. I saw your recent donation of [Amount] and I wanted to call and let you know how much we appreciate your support! Our whole team was thrilled to receive your gift and it will go a long way to [support our mission] this year. Thank you again!

If you ever have questions about [Organization] or how your gift is making a difference, please don’t hesitate to reach out to me at [555-555-5555]. Thank you again for your support and have a great day!“

Sample thank you card message

Dear [Donor],
Thank you so much for your gift of [Amount] during our Give to the Max Day campaign! Your support will help us [advance our mission] this year and we are so grateful for community members like you.
I look forward to updating you soon about all the ways your gift is making a difference at [Organization]!
Thank you again!
With gratitude,
[Name]

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LAST MINUTE TIPS

Regardless of how you choose to thank your donors, here are a few more tips to keep in mind:

- ***Write from the heart!*** *Make sure your thank you message feels true to the mission and values of your organization and feels warm and personal.*
- ***Any thank you is better than no thank you at all.*** *Don't feel pressured to have a glossy, highly designed thank you card if you don't have the capacity or budget! As long as you recognize your supporters' generosity, you're on the right track.*
- ***Involve your team.*** *Think of ways you can ask board members or colleagues to help execute your stewardship plan. Perhaps they can sign thank you cards, make phone calls, or stuff envelopes...every role is important!*

NEED MORE CAMPAIGN HELP?

Reach out to our team of technology experts at Help@GiveMN.org anytime or visit the GTMD26 Resources Hub on GiveMN.org for more templates, guides, and tools to help make your campaign the best it can be.

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