



# The Importance of Saying 'Thank You'

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*"From internal communication to volunteers and all the way to your largest corporate donor, saying thank you is a great way to start, grow and keep relationships, which are the foundation of success for any nonprofit organization."*

## It Seems Elementary

It Seems Elementary ..... 1

*Thank you.* It's simple, right? These two words are so commonplace that they should have lost their impact. The real truth is that these two words can have serious impact. From internal communication to volunteers and all the way to your largest corporate donor, saying thank you is a great way to start, grow and keep relationships, which are the foundation of success for any nonprofit organization.

Intra-Organization  
Thanks ..... 1

Think about the last time you did a favor for someone or gave time or money to an organization. Did the person you were working with say 'thank you'? If you gave money, did you get a thank you note in return? If you didn't, you probably remember and were not very happy that your generosity, however big or small, did not get recognized.

Volunteer and Donor  
Thanks ..... 2

When you show appreciation to fellow employees, volunteers or donors, you invite them into your "organizational family" and increase their commitment, and, hopefully, their participation.

Resource for  
More Ideas ..... 2

## Intra-Organization Thanks

Whether your organization is all-volunteer or has paid staff, the people that bring your programs to life are people that spend a lot of time together. The first opportunity to build a habit of saying thank you is within this group. Here are a few simple and creative ways to say thank you.

**Praise** - Praise something your co-worker has done well. Identify the specific actions that you found admirable. Tell the entire staff, not just the person you are appreciating.

**Food** - Almost everyone loves food. Take a co-worker to lunch to express your appreciation for all of their hard work. For an organization-wide event, have a potluck lunch or bring homemade cookies or cupcakes into the office to share.

**Tradition** - Create a fun tradition. Whether your tradition falls around a holiday or you make up your own, getting everyone involved brings the group together.

**Share** - Share success stories with your co-workers. Letting them know what their work means to someone else can have more impact than anything you might say.

## Volunteer and Donor Thanks

Once you create a habit of thanking your fellow co-workers or volunteers, it is easy to translate that behavior to new volunteers and your donors. Following are inexpensive and simple ways to say 'thank you':

**Send a Formal Thank You** - This is required by law for gifts over \$250, but is a good idea for all gifts. After all, a donor might give to other organizations and has to have a bank record or written acknowledgement from the recipient if they want to claim a deduction. Make sure to always have a real signature on thank you letters and try to have the person signing the letters also write a small note. It can be simple such as "Thanks so much!" but it shows the recipient that there was effort put into the process.

**Use the Phone** - Solicitation calls are almost universally looked down upon, but your donors and volunteers will be pleasantly surprised by your quick acknowledgement call. If you want to limit your time on the phone or think that a caller might assume that you are soliciting money from them, try calling during the day when most people aren't at home and leaving a brief message.

**Newsletter Acknowledgement** - Applaud donors or volunteers by publishing their name in your newsletter or on your website. Before doing so, make sure you give them a chance to remain anonymous.

**Invite Contributors and Volunteers to Special Events** - Ask volunteers or donors to come to annual meetings, press conferences, etc. Use these opportunities to showcase their participation.

**Share the Good News** - If you receive positive coverage in a newspaper or magazine, clip the story, masthead and date and make photocopies or, better yet, put the link to the story in an email. Send to your top donors and volunteers for a quick, no-pressure way to let them know they are part of your organizational family.

**Take Pictures** - Everyone loves snapshots. Take pictures of special events or even the ordinary events going on at your organization and send them to volunteers and donors. Along with the photo, send a little note saying "Thanks for making this possible!" or something similar.

**Swag** - Inexpensive logo items are great ways to keep your name out there. When someone volunteers, give them a sticker that says "I Helped Feed Hungry People Today!" Not only are you saying thanks to them for their service, but by wearing the sticker, they are promoting your organization to others.

## Resource for More Ideas

Want to find more ways to say thank you? The Alaska Food Coalition website, [www.alaskafood.org](http://www.alaskafood.org), has a recently revamped section called *Food for Thought*. You can find this on the right-hand side of the home page. Click on the various topics to find links to articles such as "[101 Ways to Say Thank You to Volunteers](#)" and many other nonprofit topics that can help you with various issues that you come across in your organization.

Next Month:  
In-Kind  
Donations