



How to retain donors after your giving day



Virginia Davidson

Virginia is a member of LGL's customer support team. She has over 15 years of fundraising experience and continues to be active in development as she fundraises for Alamo Rescue Friends, a non-profit dog rescue organization she founded in 2010.

How to retain donors after your giving day

With a robust post-giving-day plan in place, you can retain your donors and amplify their support for your next giving day.

Twenty-four-hour online giving events can be a real boost to your existing development efforts, helping to raise critical funds and reach new supporters. While it's important to plan ahead for your giving day to ensure its success, it's just as important that you also take time to plan beyond that twenty-four-hour flurry of donations.

Whether you've just completed your first giving day or you're brainstorming your strategy for next year, this guide can help.

GETTING STARTED

If you're participating in a community-wide giving day, the added publicity can help attract new donors to your mission and motivate existing ones to make additional contributions.

With all the effort you put into preparations, you may feel your work is done when the clock strikes midnight at the giving day's close. But if you want to make the most of your great efforts, the work is just beginning. This is because donor retention is key to successful fundraising.

The Fundraising Effectiveness Project finds that only 19 percent of new donors will make another contribution to your organization. That's not an encouraging number. But the good news is that there are clear steps you can take to boost that retention rate.

Your post-giving-day plan should include action items for at least a month beyond the day itself. Key elements of your plan should include:

- The information you'll need in order to engage with donors
- Targeted strategies to engage first-time donors
- A thought-out communication plan that:

1. Thanks donors
2. Shares results
3. Reports back
4. Builds a deeper connection
5. Includes a second ask

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Fundraising Effectiveness Project

A NOTE BEFORE YOU START CRAFTING YOUR POST-GIVING-DAY PLAN

You can't follow up with donors if you don't know how to reach them. Whether your giving day is hosted by a community foundation or another sponsoring organization, or you're running your own giving day through a crowdfunding platform, make sure you know:

- How to access donor information
- What information will be available to you (some companies may give you access only to names and email addresses, rather than mailing addresses)
- In what format the data will be available, such as an Excel file

Remember that it's important to schedule time to get those donor and gift details into your database! (If you use a donor management system like Little Green Light, you will be able to upload that Excel file into your database, saving precious time.)

Once you know how to access and store the contact information for your giving-day donors, you can start planning how to engage with them.

HERE ARE 7 KEY TO DO'S TO ENSURE YOU RETAIN YOUR DONORS AFTER YOUR GIVING DAY:

TO DO #1: Say thanks



You may feel like putting your feet up after the giving day ends. But before you take a break, get those thank-you letters in the mail!

Your donors most likely received an emailed receipt when they made their contribution, but you need to go beyond that generic gift confirmation.

They'll appreciate a prompt, donor-centered thank-you letter. Knowing the impact of their donation will bring satisfaction and inspire them to give on your next giving day.

What to include in your thank-you letter:

Check with the hosting organization in advance to determine what communication they'll be sending to donors. If your giving day was managed by a community foundation, the donors will receive a tax receipt directly from the foundation. Nonetheless, your nonprofit should still send a prompt, specific thank-you letter to your giving-day supporters.

Note: If donors received a tax acknowledgment from the hosting organization, you should not include tax language in your thank-you letter.

Tips for crafting a meaningful thank-you letter:

- Share results of the giving day, such as the number of donors and the total amount raised
- Describe how the funds will be used
- Make sure the letter is donor-centered

What's a donor-centered thank-you letter?

A donor-centered letter focuses on the donor and connects them directly to the impact of their gift. Here are three quick tips for crafting a donor-centered thank-you letter:

1. Include the word “you” often. Rather than saying “Our organization raised \$20,000,” try “Generous supporters like you gave \$20,000.”

2. Explain how the donor’s gift will be used, and take mention of your organization out for the purposes of the letter. This will help your donor feel better connected to your mission.

Instead of writing...

“Your gift to ABC Food Bank will help our staff provide meals to hungry families and brings us closer to our goal of feeding 500 families in the year ahead.”

...take your organization out and connect the donor directly to the purpose of the gift, like this:

“Your gift is putting food on the tables of hungry families throughout our community. Thanks to your generosity, these families will rest easier knowing that they have access to nutritious meals.”

3. Add a personal note at the end of your letter. A brief handwritten note makes the letter more personal. Be sure to include a “you” in your note!

ABC Food Bank

PO Box 123 Anytown, USA
Federal Tax ID: 12-3456789

Lila Lerner
100 Main Street
Anytown, USA

Dear Lila,

Thank you for your gift of \$100 received on December 15, 2018. Generous supporters like you gave a total of \$15,375 on our recent giving day and we are grateful for this outpouring of support.

Your gift is putting food on the tables of hungry families throughout our community. Thanks to your generosity, these families will rest easier knowing that they have access to nutritious meals.

Sincerely,

Thank you, Lila, for your continued support!

Sofia Golden

Sofia Golden
Executive Director

Image: Example of a personalized note added to a donor acknowledgment letter

Tips for saying thanks

Get ready in advance

You can craft the majority of this letter well in advance of the giving day and fill in the specifics once the day is completed. That way, you'll be ready to generate those thank-you letters quickly and get them in the mail. Plan to send them the day after your giving day, or at least in the same week.

Consider making thank-you calls

If you have access to phone numbers and enough staff members or volunteers to do so, consider calling your donors to say thanks, too. The calls themselves don't need to be complicated or in-depth. Simply introduce yourself, thank them for their support, and tell them what it's helping to accomplish. If you have any upcoming programs or events, you can mention those, too.

Tip: This is a great opportunity to engage your Board, staff who don't fundraise, and volunteers.

Segment your thank-you letters

For donors who have contributed in the past, acknowledge their past giving and thank them for their continued support. For your first-time donors, include welcome materials.

TO DO #2: Pay special attention to your first-time donors



Think of your giving day as the beginning of your organization's relationship with these first-time donors. What does it take to get the relationship off to a great start?

You need to help these new donors get to know your organization, keep in touch, and keep them interested! With their thank-you letter, include welcome materials.

Tips for creating or refreshing your welcome packet to new donors

A welcome packet introduces your organization's mission, demonstrates the impact donors have, and shares success stories. Like the acknowledgment letters, a welcome packet needs to be donor-centric:

- Avoid a lengthy background about your organization. Instead, show the impact that donors have.

For example, say:

“Each year, donors like you ensure that hundreds of school-age children like Violet have access to books and art supplies...”

...versus the following:

“Founded in 1822, the Community Society is a well-respected organization...”

- Write your welcome materials so they will remain relevant a year or two from now. You want your welcome program to make your first-time donors feel so good that they tell other people about your organization. The welcome materials should be something that the donor could even pass along to a friend or neighbor.

TO DO #3: Share the results



Once the giving day is complete, spread the word about the impact it will have on your mission. If you sent email appeals to your network, make sure you include an update to everyone—even if they didn't make a donation. Non-donors may be inspired by your results and make a donation to your organization at a later time, or they'll remember your success when next year's giving day comes around and choose to participate then.

Keep in mind that there are likely some supporters who didn't make their own donation but helped spread the word about your giving day. A volunteer could have mentioned your organization's giving day to a friend, who in turn made a generous first-time donation. Ripple effects like this are a great reason to share the impact this giving day will have on your mission with everyone.

TO DO #4: Report back

Your thank-you letter shared how the giving day funds will benefit your mission. Within a month or two, send another brief communication to update your donors. Provide at least one specific example of what their giving-day donation is making possible, and include a photo to demonstrate the impact.



TO DO #5: Get to know your donors

Thanks to your post-giving-day communications, you've given donors the opportunity to get familiar with your organization and feel great about all that their donation has made possible. Now it's time for you to get to know them. Reach out and ask them to share what inspired them to support your organization. You can build a simple web form for this purpose.

Get to know your donors (con't.)

Keep the form simple for the donor to fill out. It can be tempting to try to collect lots of information, but limit yourself to posing a maximum of 3 to 4 questions. Asking too many questions can make the form cumbersome and deter donors from completing it. Consider what information is most meaningful for your purposes. Questions such as, “How did you hear about our giving day?” and “What inspired you to make a donation?” will likely help you evaluate your outreach efforts and learn more about what motivated your donors so that you can better prepare for your next giving day.

Thank you for supporting ABC Food Bank on our recent giving day!

You helped contribute \$15,375 to feed local families

What inspired you to make your donation to ABC Food Bank?

How did you hear about our giving day?

- ABC Food Bank's newsletter
- Social media
- Word of mouth
- Other

If you answered Other, tell us how you heard about ABC Food Bank's giving day:

Image: Donor survey form

TO DO #6: Have ongoing communications

Make sure all your giving-day donors are included in your regular mailings and email communications.

Regular, consistent communication will help them keep your organization top of mind and remind them of how satisfying it was to support your mission. For your first-time donors: If you're sending out a regular newsletter, consider adding a little note thanking the donor for their giving-day donation and telling them you hope they'll enjoy the newsletter.



TO DO #7: Ask again!

Once you have thoroughly thanked, reported to, and communicated with your giving-day donors, you can include them in your solicitation for the next giving day.

Most donors won't give unless they're asked, so don't assume that they'll make a repeat contribution on their own. Give them the opportunity to invest in your organization's work again.

Your appeal should reference their previous giving-day donation and reinforce how much your organization appreciated that gift.



Conclusion

Whether you're new to nonprofit fundraising or are just looking for some fresh ideas, we hope you will implement a strategy to leverage your giving day.

When you approach your giving day with a plan that extends beyond the day itself, your organization can better retain donors and build support over the long term. With your well-executed post-giving-day strategy, your donors may find it hard to resist making another contribution!

About Little Green Light

Little Green Light is a complete fundraising and donor management software application that helps you to simplify your fundraising tasks and grow your donor relationships.

Our affordable, cloud-based CRM integrates with tools you already use, and lets you manage your data all in one place, accessible from anywhere.

Join our growing community of satisfied users.