AN A-TO-Z GUIDE FOR GIVING THANKS

AMAZING ART THE BIG PICTURE CONTENT IS KING

DEDICATIONS FOR THE DEDICATED EVERYWHERE ONLINE

FILL’ER UP! FLOWERS AND PLANTS GET THE GEAR G

GOOD STUFF IN THE MIDDLE HEAD OF THE TABLE INSTANT

GRATIFICATION JUST FOR FUN KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK WHO’S THERE

AN A-TO-Z GUIDE FOR GIVING THANKS (THE CEO) LEAVE A

NOTE MAKING LIFE EASIER MUSIC TO YOUR EARS NAME THEM WITH APPLAUSE OUTSTANDING PERKS POINT THEM OUT

20 QUESTIONS RAISE AWARENESS SNAP TO ATTENTION STICK STICK IT! TALK ABOUT IT UP AND DOWN THE STREET

VOUCH FOR THEIR CAUSE WHAT’S IN A NAME WHILE THEY’RE WAITING XTRA, XTRA! YEAR AFTER YEAR ZIP IT! AND
AN A-TO-Z GUIDE FOR GIVING THANKS

It feels great when someone thanks you, doesn’t it? A sincere expression of appreciation from a friend, a coworker – even a stranger – can transform your day. But thanking others is also good business.

Studies by United Way and others show that contributors who get thanked are significantly more likely to continue their support. In a world where donations and volunteering can’t be taken for granted, it’s more important than ever to keep our supporters fully engaged – even as we enlist new people to support our cause. Thank them for their time, financial support, hard work and the IMPACT they have made in the community.

This idea book offers several examples for saying THANK YOU – some old, some new. Try a few – or better yet, try them all. We’ve made this book user-friendly, so you can refer to it anytime, all year long.

At the end of each section, you’ll see tags indicating which type of thanks might work best for which contributors. But your experience may differ. What matters most is to find lots of ways to thank your supporters, and to keep them engaged in your work.

P.S. Thanks for reading!
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TAGGING GUIDE FOR CONTRIBUTOR GROUPS

ACTIVE COMMUNITY INVESTORS – donors who give more than $500 a year and are civically engaged

AFFINITY GROUPS – groups of like-minded donors, like Women’s Leadership Councils, young leaders, Student United Ways, LGBT and other diverse groups

COMPANIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

GOVERNMENT AND ELECTED OFFICIALS – policymakers who may be critical to your community change work

INTERNAL STAFF – employees at your United Way

LEADERSHIP GIVERS – major donors

LOYAL CONTRIBUTORS – donors who have given to United Way for 10 years or longer

NONPROFIT PARTNERS – 501(c)3 organizations that may be collaborating with you on community change

VOLUNTEER LEADERS – board members, leaders of your issue or allocations councils or committees
AMAZING ART

Interesting or unique pieces of art can make great thank-you gifts for a contributor’s home or office. Showing appreciation with local artwork has been a longstanding tradition for United Way and many other organizations.

Created Just For Them … By One They Helped

Art created by kids can be a much appreciated alternative. When selecting or commissioning art, make sure it reflects the act of generosity for which you’re expressing appreciation and represents a subject that makes sense for the project. For example, a picture of a classroom or children learning, is ideal for the contributor who is passionate about education.

Best for thanking ...

Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Companies and Organizations, Government and Elected Officials, Internal Staff, Leadership Givers, Nonprofit Partners, Volunteer Leaders
THE BIG PICTURE

Portraits and Photos

Taking someone’s picture makes them feel important. This is why LIVE UNITED portraits are so popular.

Avoid posed shots with giant checks. United Way is about lasting change that goes beyond charity, so try to show people engaged in solving community problems.

Best for thanking ...

Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Companies and Other Organizations, Government and Elected Officials, Internal Staff
CONTENT IS KING

Creating great content about contributors is an easy way to thank them because it can be shared widely – in blogs, website copy, newsletters, speeches, brochures and letters to the editor of your local newspaper.

Make sure the message of thanks is clear and elevates results, not the problem.

Keep it short, and visual. While blogs can run as long as 200 words, letters to the editor should be only a paragraph or two. Take a cue from content already published on your target venue.

For online content, incorporate as many images as possible to garner more attention and underscore your message.

Best for thanking ...

Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Companies and Organizations, Government and Elected Officials, Internal Staff, Leadership Givers, Loyal Contributors, Nonprofit Partners, Volunteer Leaders
DEDICATIONS FOR THE DEDICATED

Are you publishing a special report or major publication? Consider including a brief dedication in a prominent spot, either within the contents, a sidebar, or in the front or back. Make sure to link it to the issue at hand, to highlight how that person or organization is helping to build a stronger community.

You can also add dedications to events by including the thanks in event programs, advertising and in announcements.

Best for thanking ...

Affinity Groups, Companies and Organizations, Government and Elected Officials, Leadership Givers, Volunteer Leaders
Closing the Gap with Social Media

Not so long ago, social media seemed to be the playground of “geeks” and young people—now it’s a standard for communicating and building relationships.

**Twitter**

Tweets are a great way to shout out thanks to supporters in a way that all their followers can see. Incorporate hashtags so others can contribute their own words of encouragement and use as few characters as possible to allow for future Tweets.

**Facebook**

Although similar to Twitter, Facebook allows for longer posts and rich media. Use it to post gratitude or positive remarks on a contributor’s page and to post messages of appreciation on pages belonging to organizations with which your contributor is involved.

**Photo Galleries or Apps**

Photo sharing websites like Flickr or Shutterfly are popular for posting photos of special events—especially when you are thanking someone for their contribution to that event. Use the highest-quality photos you can, and skip the ones that could prove embarrassing. You can also use apps like Instagram, which let you share the photos instantly on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and the microblog Tumblr.
LinkedIn
With a focus on managing business contacts, this social networking site is an excellent venue for thanking volunteers by endorsing them, posting recommendations, and making introductions. As with other social media, your message will get more traction if you or your contributor has more followers.

YouTube (Video)
YouTube and other video sharing sites should be considered an integral element of staying connected to contributors and for thanking them for their support. Written content that accompanies your videos – what you type into comment fields, for example – can be an important element of the experience. Shorter videos of two minutes or less are generally better at holding viewers’ attention.

United Way Thank You video: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jz3EqW0sGOw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jz3EqW0sGOw)

*All social media is best for thanking ...*

Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Companies and Organizations, Government and Elected Officials, Internal Staff, Leadership Givers, Nonprofit Partners, Volunteer Leaders
FILL’ER UP!

Good Food and Kind Words
Food is a way to anyone’s heart, and can be a much appreciated way to say thank you. Breakfast or lunch is more casual and costs less. Catering or take-out makes it easy, but consider travel time and stick to a schedule. Gift certificates to a popular restaurant are a good option, too.

Ice Cream Social
Who doesn’t love ice cream? You can also hold an ice cream social to say thanks, or as a stand-alone event (in that case, promote it as free and request donations). Some ice cream stores can bring a cart to your site, or you can set up your own sundae bar with a variety of flavors and toppings. (Avoid anything with nuts due to allergies.)

Best for thanking ... 
Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Internal Staff
Happy Hours and other After-Work Events
Great for affinity groups, events can be held in a local bar or micro-brewery. They’re less formal and more social. Be sure to offer food and non-alcoholic options, and ensure that cabs or other transportation options are available.

*Best for thanking ...*
Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups (except students), Companies and Organizations, Government and Elected Officials, Internal Staff, Leadership Givers, Nonprofit Partners, Volunteer Leaders

*Something Sweet*
Cupcakes, cookies or other gourmet pastries can add a sweet moment to someone’s day. They’re inexpensive, too!

*Best for thanking ...*
Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Internal Staff
FLOWERS AND PLANTS

Flowers and plants add a cheerful note for days, and reminds your donor of your appreciation for days as well.

Call your local florist to determine what’s in season to get the biggest bang for your buck.

Or create your own bouquet from wholesale florists – all it takes is some creativity, a container and a well-timed delivery!

Best for thanking ...

Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Government and Elected Officials, Internal Staff, Leadership Givers, Volunteer Leaders
GET THE GEAR

Company-Branded Swag

People love free stuff – and United Way swag is a great way for them to show off their involvement.

You can find a lot of great United Way items at www.unitedwaystore.com, including hats, shirts, water bottles, notebooks, blankets, USB drives and more.
Pins

Pins commemorating an accomplishment are a time-honored United Way tradition – from the Tocqueville fleur-de-lis to the swirly “W” celebrating Womens’ Leadership Councils.

It’s easy to create through United Way’s store. [www.unitedwaystore.com](http://www.unitedwaystore.com)

Make the presentation extra special by attaching it to a United Way-branded card with a personal message from your CEO.

*Best for thanking ...*

Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Internal Staff, Leadership Givers, Loyal Contributors, Volunteer Leaders
For events with decorated tables, get double-duty out of your centerpiece by turning it into a thank-you. You can identify recipients at each table, or in the crowd, in advance — or conduct a drawing as part of the event.

Flowers, plants or “goodie bags” relevant to the event can all work wonderfully as centerpieces.

Best for thanking ...

Active Community Investors, Government and Elected Officials, Internal Staff, Leadership Givers, Volunteer Leaders
HEAD OF THE TABLE

One of the highest forms of appreciation is a seat on your board of directors. It’s the thank-you that keeps on thanking, as it gives your supporter a deeper way to get involved and help set strategic direction.

Best for thanking ... Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Internal Staff, Leadership Givers, Volunteer Leaders
INSTANT GRATIFICATION

Post-Pledge Thank You Screen or Email

Don’t make your contributors wait! Use a post-pledge message of thanks that can be sent via automatic email, pop-up window, or web page redirect that displays after an online pledge has been processed.

Be thoughtful when deciding what information to provide through these automatic methods — short and simple is usually best. Be sure to include a contact person and phone number.

Best for thanking ...

Active Community Investors, Loyal Contributors
JUST FOR FUN

When you work closely with someone, consider saying thanks in a way that’s both creative and unique.

**The Haiku**
Writing poetry is an informal way to show your appreciation that can be fun for everyone. Remember – it doesn’t have to be written in perfect form to perfectly express your gratitude!

**Serenade**
Like haikus, serenades (or songs) are best for expressing appreciation for people you know well – in a way that will be well-remembered. The lyrics can be accompanied by music composed for the purpose, or karaoke-style, or matched to a pre-existing royalty-free melody. Even when thanking informally, be sure to highlight how the honoree has supported the cause.

**Best for thanking ...**
**Internal Staff**

For those whose college poetry class was a while back, haiku is a Japanese poetry form written in three lines, with five syllables in the first line, seven syllables in the second line, and five syllables in the third line.
A personal visit from your United Way CEO is a sign of respect for a special donor or organization – and can lead to increased engagement.

But keep the focus on thanking, not selling.

Equip your CEO with points to illustrate the community impact the donor has helped create or accelerate, with stories of people instead of programs.

Keep the conversation focused on the issue, and how important the donor’s support is to advancing the common good.

Delay until the end – or another time – any suggestion for how your contributor can work with you in the coming months to accomplish even more.

*Best for thanking ...*

Active Community Investors, Government and Elected Officials, Leadership Givers, Volunteer Leaders
Thank you notes are still in fashion, and highly valued.

Notes can be handwritten, typed out using a high-quality script font for printing, or sent via email. Keep in mind the age of your supporter, and how she/he is most likely to get information.

E-greetings – digital greeting cards that can incorporate rich media into your message – are another great way to personalize your “thanks.”

**Best for thanking ...**

Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Companies and Organizations, Government and Elected Officials, Internal Staff, Leadership Givers, Loyal Contributors, Nonprofit Partners, Volunteer Leaders
MAKING LIFE EASIER

Give your supporters a little relief from their daily responsibilities by thanking them with services – gift certificates for car washes, personal chefs and babysitting are just a few examples.

Of course, the deeper your relationship with your donors, the more information you should have about their lives and likes. Knowing that your donor has a dog could suggest a gift certificate for a pet grooming, kennel or dog-walking service, for example.

Best for thanking ...

Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Internal Staff
MUSIC TO YOUR EARS

Music is a popular pastime for many – and a concert can be an exciting event that inspires people to renew their commitment to your United Way.

Link your concert to existing community events for a built-in audience – then thank everyone for their contribution and offer opportunities to do more (whether that’s donating, volunteering or spreading the word).

Local or regional bands may be willing to donate their time.

Consider pairing your concert with a barbecue or other gathering to bring together a diverse crowd.

If hosting a concert is too much, consider adding a thank you element to a reception or VIP access beforehand, donating a few tickets to randomly selected volunteers, or asking the performer to give a “shout out” during the performance.

Best for thanking ...

Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Companies and Organizations, Government and Elected Officials, Internal Staff, Leadership Givers, Nonprofit Partners, Volunteer Leaders
NAME THEM WITH APPLAUSE

Giving a thank-you award creates a multiplier effect: the award notification, the actual presentation, media coverage of the award, and subsequent mentions of the award on your web site, in newsletters, social media or even a paid ad in your newspaper.

You can create an annual awards or recognition effort, or simply present a certificate, plaque or trophy during Volunteer Appreciation Week or other relevant commemorative days, weeks or months.

Best for thanking ...

Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Companies and Organizations, Government and Elected Officials, Internal Staff, Leadership Givers, Loyal Contributors, Nonprofit Partners, Volunteer Leaders
Certificates/Plaques/Trophies
Available in different sizes and with various levels of artistic detail, these are great (and often inexpensive) options that the contributor can display for all to see. You’ll find a wide variety of customizable certificates and other award items at http://www.unitedwaystore.com/.

(Be sure to double-check spelling!)

Another way to go that’s an easier lift: nominate your contributor for an award you’re not sponsoring, then let them know about the nomination with a personal note from your CEO. He/she will appreciate the effort and gesture even if someone else wins.

**Best for thanking ...**

Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Companies and Organizations, Government and Elected Officials, Internal Staff, Leadership Givers, Loyal Contributors, Nonprofit Partners, Volunteer Leaders
Outstanding Perks

Bonuses, Big or Small
Nothing expresses appreciation for going the extra mile than a bonus. If your bottom line doesn’t support a one-time or annual bonus, consider gift cards to local stores, restaurants or coffee shops.

Note To File
An official letter of thanks, recognition or commendation from the boss can be a meaningful way to let employees know you support their current contribution as well as their long-term career path. Be specific in your praise, and make sure the letter goes into the employee’s employment file – and In Box.

A Day Off
An extra day off – not counted against existing vacation – is always a winner. Consider offering multiple days for larger contributions.

Dressing Down
To celebrate a milestone event or other major accomplishment, consider allowing employees to wear jeans the next day, or week. It’s another way of encouraging people to “exhale” after a collective sprint.
VIP Parking
Everyone loves parking close to the office, so designating a prime parking spot (for a month, or even a year) is a great benefit. It reminds recipients of your appreciation every time they pull in.

Picnics
Whether it’s potluck-style or catered, a picnic can build team spirit and make everyone feel appreciated. Weekend events at a popular park can involve families, but a Wednesday picnic near the office is a nice way to break up the work week, too.

Holiday Parties
Special celebrations can be organized around any holiday, during the work day or after hours.

CEO for a Day
Sitting in the corner office for a day is an opportunity that’s fun and professionally beneficial, as it offers a new perspective and can result in new ideas.

Best for thanking ...
Internal Staff
**POINT THEM OUT**

**Shout-outs During Speeches**

It's easy to incorporate a word or two of thanks for special contributors into any speech.

During a business-related meal or meeting, ask contributors to stand and accept your thanks. Applause from the crowd is part of this. Once the largest contributors are thanked, recognize volunteers next. Same concept applies to internal staff during a staff meeting.

If you have a lengthy list of individuals or groups to thank, mention the top ones out loud, then list the rest in the event program, on framed posters displayed on easels, in a laptop computer slide-show, projected onto a screen, etc.

_Best for thanking ..._

Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Companies and Organizations, Government and Elected Officials, Internal Staff, Leadership Givers, Loyal Contributors, Nonprofit Partners, Volunteer Leaders
20 QUESTIONS

Asking supporters for feedback, input or opinions about a project or event can be considered a form of thanking because it shows you respect their opinions.

This can be done in a written or online survey: through a link via email, though a special emailed or hard-copy survey, via a link attached to a post-donation thank you page, postcard, etc.

For major givers, it’s best done in a personal conversation.

Keep the survey short. And be sure to circle back with the results — and subsequent actions informed by the results. People want to know their input was meaningful, so make sure it is — and let them know.

Best for thanking ...

Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Companies and Organizations, Government and Elected Officials, Internal Staff, Leadership Givers, Loyal Contributors, Nonprofit Partners, Volunteer Leaders
RAISE AWARENESS

Advertising can be a great way to communicate your appreciation and can reflect positively on both you and the recipient of your praise. There are many options available, including online banners and ads, print, radio (widely broadcast or limited range), television, posters, movie theater screens, and outdoor methods such as video displays, billboards, digital scrolling banners, and marquees.

Remember that repeating your message within a short period of time increases the likelihood that it will be remembered.

For posters, one popular strategy is to print campaign information on one side and a thank you message on the other. This way, posters need only be flipped over when the campaign is done. Accomplishing two purposes with a single print run saves you time and money!

Best for thanking ...

Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Companies and Organizations, Government and Elected Officials, Internal Staff, Leadership Givers, Nonprofit Partners, Volunteer Leaders
Best for thanking ...

Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Internal Staff, Leadership Givers, Loyal Contributors

STICK IT!

Stickers are inexpensive and fun ways to carry your message. And they can go just about anywhere: on binders, car bumpers, clothing – even on foreheads! Bumper stickers “stick around” a lot longer than many other varieties and spread their message as far as their host travels.

Generic “thank you” stickers are the most budget-friendly, but customized stickers are better for leaving a lasting impression: try to include your organization (or the United Way) logo as a minimum. Colorful is usually better – and adding a unique element (like a thank you card) will help make it memorable.
The easiest way to say “thank you” is to come right out and say it!

Tell your contributor exactly how the support is making a difference in the community, the cause or your United Way’s community change effort.

Even better, take the supporter down to see the solution in action, whether that’s a funded agency’s program or your own initiative. The more your donors understand how they’re driving community solutions, the more engaged they’ll get.

Best for thanking ...

Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Companies and Organizations, Government and Elected Officials, Internal Staff, Leadership Givers, Loyal Contributors, Nonprofit Partners, Volunteer Leaders
UP AND DOWN THE STREET

Parades can draw a crowd and generate positive buzz, making them a great venue for expressing your thanks!

With options like multimedia displays, live marching bands or other music, dancers, singers, signage, banners, balloons and special lighting, there are lots of ways to lift up for the community how valuable your supporters have been.

Remember to check with your city’s recreation department and law enforcement for permits.

Best for thanking ...

Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Companies and Organizations, Government and Elected Officials, Internal Staff, Leadership Givers, Nonprofit Partners, Volunteer Leaders
VOUCH FOR THEIR CAUSE

Turn-about is fair play. One way to express appreciation for a supporter’s contribution to your cause is to support his/her cause in turn.

You can attend their event, buy tickets or do it online by commenting on their blog posts, retweeting their Tweets, and spreading the word for them.

Showing your support is a win-win-win: your contributor feels good, their cause(s) benefit and your own public image receives a boost.

Best for thanking ...

Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Companies and Organizations, Government and Elected Officials, Internal Staff, Leadership Givers, Loyal Contributors, Nonprofit Partners, Volunteer Leaders
WHAT’S IN A NAME?

Offering naming rights is a powerful way to thank more significant contributors in a way they’ll surely remember – because there’s a lasting reminder! There are lots of options when it comes to offering naming rights, at just about any price range. A few ideas include:

- a newly planted tree
- piece of furniture in a public location
- event program / event name
- park or local intended for public use
- books or other publications
- and so much more!

Remember: naming rights can be offered for a limited period of time, rather than permanently. Consider maintenance, rental and other expenses that could accrue when offering longer-term rights.

*Best for thanking...*

Companies and Organizations, Government and Elected Officials, Leadership Givers, Volunteer Leaders
WHILE THEY’RE WAITING...

On-Hold Messages ...
for telephones or automated telephone systems can be an affordable (and fun) method to spread some love to your contributors. Have messages recorded professionally or record them yourself using a good quality microphone.

Ring Ring, Now We Sing – their Praises!
Arrange for your CEO or president to personally call and thank the contributor. If that’s not possible, have them leave a voicemail message of appreciation.

Best for thanking ...
Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Companies and Organizations, Government and Elected Officials, Internal Staff, Leadership Givers, Nonprofit Partners, Volunteer Leaders
XTRA, XTRA!

Press Releases

A positive press release about a contributor is a great honor because it boosts their public image. To increase the likelihood that media outlets will pick up the story, make your message as newsworthy as possible.

To be considered newsworthy, a story must be:

- timely
- unusual/interesting
- connected to a “celebrity”
- important to the reader/media consumer for some reason
- affect a large number of people or a large geographical area

The more categories your press release fits within, the more newsworthy it is. If your contributor is a publicly traded company, be sure to include its stock symbol, as this also indicates newsworthiness.

Best for thanking ...

Affinity Groups, Companies and Organizations, Government and Elected Officials, Leadership Givers, Nonprofit Partners, Volunteer Leaders
YEAR AFTER YEAR

Annual Meetings and Reports
With their built-in audience, annual meetings and reports offer fantastic opportunities for thanking contributors for their hard work, dedication and devotion to your cause.

For meetings, consider thanking your contributors through mentions in speeches, programs, event advertising and in messages or logos printed on giveaway items. For reports, it’s usually easy to mention contributors in the body of the publication because you’re probably already talking about your most impactful projects. Remember that a photo with a meaningful caption gives contributors credit in a way your audience will enjoy.

Information highlighted should scream solutions/results whenever possible.

Best for thanking ...
Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Companies and Organizations, Government and Elected Officials, Leadership Givers, Nonprofit Partners, Volunteer Leaders
ZIP IT!

Know When to Say Nothing at All.

Sometimes contributors prefer to receive NO public acknowledgement. Always honor this! Respecting a person or organization's wishes is the first step in showing your appreciation – and it's a non-negotiable requirement for maintaining a good relationship.

Best for thanking ...

Active Community Investors, Affinity Groups, Companies and Organizations, Government and Elected Officials, Internal Staff, Leadership Givers, Loyal Contributors, Nonprofit Partners, Volunteer Leaders
ENDING REMARKS

So this is the end – not of the ways you can thank others, but of this guide. The different ways you can say “thank you” are practically endless – and exploring them is a journey well worth taking. Don’t let it end: as you move forward, pass on what you learn – and everyone wins.
“When building relationships with supporters, don’t just contact them when you want something – always take time to thank them. Thank them for their support, their generosity and their belief in your mission. You will have not just one-time supporters, but supporters for life.”

— Michael Nilsen, Vice President, Public Affairs Association of Fundraising Professionals, Alexandria, VA

“We tend to focus on what we can get from our donors. Instead, we should focus on what we can give ... gratitude and social impact.”

— Katya Andresen, Fundraising Expert and CEO, ePals Inc.

“Most people do kind things for others because they understand the impact that one person can have on another. These generous people freely give time, talent or other resources and don’t expect anything in return beyond the satisfaction of knowing they’ve made a meaningful difference in someone else’s life. But when someone takes the time to acknowledge a gift with a heartfelt “thank you,” the pleasure in the giving becomes all the more rewarding – and more likely to recur.”

— Donald J. Hall, Jr., President and CEO of Hallmark Cards, Inc.