



## Beyond the “Thank You” Note

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*“Stewardship is the space between the gift and the next ask.”*

*~ [Arlene Snyder](#), Senior Vice President, Development at Washington Hospital Center and [Timothy Snyder](#), Senior Vice President for Brakeley Briscoe, Inc*

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Everyone needs to feel appreciated; it’s a fundamental human need.

But in the world of nonprofit organizations, making your donors feel truly appreciated and involved in your mission is the difference between sustained charitable giving and a one-time gift.

That is the heart & soul of **EFFECTIVE STEWARDSHIP!**

*(You may not realize it, but even a LACK of planned stewardship is stewardship in some sense, but it’s definitely NOT the way you want your partners to remember you! [Strategize your Stewardship!](#))*

So, how do you do that? How do you go **BEYOND** the thank you note? How do you ensure that your relationship with your supporters becomes a give-and-take partnership, rather than a “take, take, take” paradigm?

Traditionally, stewardship has been REACTIONARY – thanking a donor **after** they’ve made their gift. But, in a rapidly-changing world, nonprofits need to take stewardship to the next level. While transparency in the way a past gift is used remains an important measure of a nonprofit’s stewardship, that only scratches the surface. Stewardship should be an ongoing part of cultivating that relationship with a donor **before** the next gift is made; getting them involved and engaged in your mission, so their commitment is enhanced, and their gifts evolve into sustained giving.

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*“Part of the challenge is getting others involved, sharing the responsibility and sharing the joy of being involved.”*

*~ David Phipps, Executive Director,  
[San Antonio Christian Dental Clinic](#)*

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Researcher [Penelope Burk](#) gave nonprofit organizations a roadmap for effective stewardship when she first released *Donor-Centered Fundraising* in 2003. In her report, she highlights three things donors say they want from nonprofit organizations they support:

- "Prompt, personalized acknowledgment of their gifts."
- "Confirmation that their gifts have been put to work as intended."
- "Measurable results on their gifts at work prior to being asked for another contribution."

Recently, KMAC & Associates conducted [our own study](#), *Building Relationships That Create Win-Win Partnerships*, discussing our findings at the AFP San Antonio 2011 Conference. What we learned builds upon the foundation of Penelope Burk's research; like individuals, businesses have very specific reasons why they will *continue* to support an organization through charitable giving:

**Top 4 Reasons why businesses make REPEAT contributions to an organization:**

- "We hear about their work throughout the year, not just when they want something."
- "We feel our past participation made a real impact."
- "They did what they promised."
- "We are committed partners of the organization."

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*“Relationships lead to other fruitful connections that build on themselves. It’s about a circle of influence.”*

*~ Tracy Tylman, [Access National Mortgage](#)*

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As you know, I believe “it’s all about relationships.” If you’ve taken the time to build strong relationships with your supporters, they will help you carry on your mission. Among the keys to good relationship-building is knowing your audience. Who are your key stakeholders, and how are you cultivating their trust?

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*“Supporters of one event may be interested in supporting another event. We think of it as ‘crosstraining’ for our supporters.”*

*~ Paul Furukawa, Executive Director,  
[Children’s Association for Maximum Potential \(CAMP\)](#)*

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When you go **BEYOND** the “Thank You,” that’s where the real power for relationship building lies. Engaging your supporters, bringing them into the fold of your organization’s mission, seeking out opportunities for them to get involved in a more pronounced way than simply writing a check – those are where deep, meaningful, sustained relationships are built.

That is true stewardship.