

Effective Stewardship for Nonprofits: The Key to Donor Retention

Stewardship Matters

In a competitive and evolving nonprofit landscape, donor retention is essential. With individual donors contributing over 67% of total charitable dollars in 2023 (*Giving USA*), strong stewardship is critical to long-term sustainability. Stewardship is the practice of building trust, showing impact, and creating meaningful relationships.

Strategies for Effective Stewardship:

- Promptly thank donors, ideally within 48 hours
- Organize board-led “thank-you” call nights for donors contributing over \$100, preferably in Q1
- Facilitate handwritten note campaigns involving participants or volunteers
- Provide thank-you notes from program beneficiaries
- Share brief video messages from staff or program alumni
- Develop customized video messages for major donors
- Send postcards featuring impact data, accompanied by handwritten notes
- Arrange calls from philanthropic leaders or board members
- Distribute annual reports with concise, appreciative messages
- Invite donors to observe and interact with programs they supported
- Host donor appreciation events that focus on engagement without solicitation

Tailor and Delegate

Respect donor communication preferences and clarify that your message is gratitude and not a solicitation. When staff capacity is limited, engage board members and volunteers to maintain responsiveness and care.

Stewardship Beyond Donations

True stewardship extends beyond acknowledging gifts. It involves building trust, engaging in conversations around meaningful life events, and encouraging long-term support through legacy and planned giving.

Source: [Giving USA 2024](#)

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