BEYOND THE DONOR WALL
Moving from Recognition to Mission Promotion

How do excellent organizations use technology to better honor, engage and motivate donors? How do they integrate fundraising and mission messages into their onsite communications?

They accomplish it through a comprehensive approach that ensures philanthropic messages are combined with and complement the program and service messages. They don’t stop at thank you, but carefully elicit a response in the future.

The organizations that enjoy the greatest success ensure that any recognition and communication tool is part and parcel of their overall strategic plan and supports their long-term goals. When considered through the filter of the overall objectives of your organization, it’s easier for staff from operations, finance, marketing and development to see the need for and value of a more robust, flexible technological solution.

“Only one out of ten members visit our gym, but that is where all our banners hang. That does not seem the most effective way to recognize a gift or motivate others to give. On the other hand, ten out of ten members walk through our lobby, and seven out of ten ask about schedules, programs, hours, events, et cetera. So I ask myself, if I want to promote the philanthropic mission, why don’t I start in the lobby?”

Phil Carter, YMCA of Pierce & Kitsap Counties
A key trend in recognition is moving away from static recognition to one that is active, dynamic and focused on donor engagement and experience.”

Marnie A. Spears, Philanthropic Trends Quarterly

GOING DIGITAL

Some organizations aren’t facility-based and rarely welcome members or visitors to their program sites, while others, like YMCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs, churches and schools regularly see members, supporters, alumni or community members walk through their doors.

A traditional donor wall or signage scattered throughout a building is a passive method of recognition. It requires the visitor to come to it. Plus, once it’s read, it doesn’t entice the member to check it out again.

In addition, there are many other messages an organization has to communicate - everything from daily schedules to special announcements to invitations to take action. These messages are constantly changing. A dynamic and engaging communication tool can help draw in members and donors to tell your better story.

“Too often organizations find themselves in the dilemma between static (never changing) and dynamic (ongoing) recognition. A dynamic recognition display allows everyone to participate. It not only recognizes those large single gifts that are received from time to time (especially in a specific campaign) but also those smaller gifts given with consistent caring over a longer duration.”

Bill Miller, Design for Recognition

According to Planned Legacy, the key questions to ask are:

- Is your organization ready for electronic recognition?
- Location, Location, Location. Where will you set up your display for maximum exposure?
- Content is critical. What content do you have? What will you develop?
- Will you integrate your recognition systems with your overall communication plan?
- How will you select a vendor? Do they know your needs and organization?
- How/who will handle day-to-day content updates?
- How will you promote your new display and your important messages?
- How do you move from passive (“Thank you donors”) to actively create conversation through testimonials and storytelling?
CONSIDERATIONS

PROS OF STATIC CONTENT

Low time commitment: you create a banner once, print and hang. The content can be repurposed and moved, but most static content just sits there and waits for people to find it.

Easy to control: people can read it or view it, but they can’t change anything. In most cases, they can share or comment on it. Static systems are good for highly regulated industries in which all content must be carefully reviewed and approved.

CONS OF STATIC CONTENT

One-time deal: good for first time visitors but bad for repeat visitors. Why would a visitor come back to view your static wall or gym banners if the content is always the same?

One-way communication: static content is similar to a TV advertisement. There is no two-way dialogue, and even those are tightly controlled and edited.

Cost: initially expensive for design, printing and installation. Any updates require an additional investment.

PROS OF DYNAMIC CONTENT

Higher conversion rates: many studies have shown that personalized, relevant content converts at a much higher rate than static content.

Increased loyalty: Studies have also shown that personalized content changes with time and circumstance is far more likely to produce repeat visits and subscribers than static content.

Easily changed and fresh: content can be changed consistently, scheduled, customized, and bring eyes for a variety of reasons. Dynamic messages exposes members to philanthropic and mission messages while seeking other information.

Cost: cost-effective and efficient once installed and very inexpensive per message to operate long-term.

Flexible and engaging: effective for communicating information such as events, hours, membership offerings, program opportunities, registration, job opportunities in addition to utilizing dynamic videos bringing the eye and attention to the screen.

CONS OF DYNAMIC CONTENT

Initial expense: purchase and installation is costly, but can be capitalized or sponsored by a donor.

Requires change: in most cases, moving to a dynamic content strategy involves changing from a static approach to a dynamic approach. This may be hard to swallow for senior managers and entrenched, traditional marketers. Time must be scheduled to update and maintain the messages.
WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING

“RBD goes beyond recognizing our donors - it gives them voice and educates our members on the mission. One system to thank our annual donors and promote events helps us inform members, it just makes it simple and flexible.”

Debra Phillips
Countryside YMCA

“Thanking donors is a 24/7 job today - digital recognition makes that easy, clean, and dynamic - all with a user-friendly technology. It is a 21st century way to honor all our highest level donors - annual, capital, and endowment gifts.”

Michelle LaRue
YMCA of Pierce and Kitsap Counties

“Recognition By Design has been great to work with on the implementation of the digital screens. The team did an excellent training and the software is very easy to navigate. They also are very open to suggestions that help us in implementing our ideas. The support team returns our calls and emails quickly.”

Gretchen Deaton
Sr. Vice President, YMCA of Greater Kansas City

RECOGNITION BY DESIGN™
Recognition By Design uses dynamic screens to recognize donors, volunteers, and legacy society members, and also allows you to provide current information to those in your facility. By incorporating motion, varying backgrounds and color, RBD stays vibrant and eye-catching, even for those who see it every day. Each wall is designed by you to meet your unique needs, and it’s easy for you to update should you need to add or alter your message.

HONOR AND INFORM
In addition to donor recognition, RBD can be used for:
- Annual campaigns
- Capital campaigns
- Highlighting and promoting programs
- Broadcasting seasonal events
- Communicating special events
- Marketing membership
- Recruiting employees and volunteers
- Playing videos and testimonials

Learn how you can energize your donor stewardship and communications at donorbydesign.com. While you’re there, sign up for our weekly blogs on fundraising and leadership.