

FIELD NOTES



STEWARDSHIP DOESN'T JUST HAPPEN

Anyone in non-profit work, especially those in the financial development field, understand the importance of donor stewardship. Donors who feel valued and informed will often have a stronger relationship with your organization and are more likely to continue to support you.

But, like any important objective, without a deliberate and thoughtful effort, donor stewardship can fall through the cracks. If donor stewardship isn't yet a part of your overall financial development plan, we offer a few key steps to get you started.

DATA MATTERS

The more you know (and record) about your donors, the better you will be able to communicate with and steward them. It's imperative to keep track of their giving history (how much, to what, etc). But are you also tracking:

- how (and how often) they prefer communication
- how they prefer recognition
- any special interests
- age
- birthdays
- anything else that will help you either know this donor better or allow you to segment them with other like-donors

And for goodness' sake, make sure you have the correct contact information.

You could negate your whole effort if you send a thank you note to a misspelled name or the wrong address. Respect your donors enough to get their information right.

Donors should feel treasured, valued and vital to your organization.

IDENTIFY STEWARDSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

While every opportunity may not be right for every donor, take the time to think through all the ways you can connect with your donors including:

- one-on-one meetings
- a personal tour of a key program in action (specifically one you know they are interested in/support)
- phone calls
- letters
- handwritten cards of thanks
- donor profile in your newsletter/ website
- invitations to your events

And the list goes on. Make stewardship a part of your culture. Help all staff understand that when they interact with a donor, that donor should feel like they are a treasured part of your organization and its success.

BUILD YOUR TEAM

Everyone on your staff and volunteer team brings their unique talents to your organization. Pay attention to those that have a natural way of making others feel comfortable. Who in your organization still writes handwritten notes and remembers birthdays? This is your stewardship team.

Create a dedicated group of staff and volunteers that own this effort, hold others accountable and ensure stewardship is top-of-mind across the organization.

CREATE A PLAN

Now that you know your donors and the various opportunities to connect, have your team take the time to strategize, organize and get a plan on paper. Operationalize it. Measure it. Your plan should ensure you are thanking or connecting with your donors seven times during the year.

To measure the effectiveness, consider setting goals to see how far you've come. Measure donor retention, upgrades in gifts and, if you can, donor referral. All of these are measures of an effective stewardship effort.

Need help in getting the process started? Donor By Design can help.

Contact us at
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