

The 3-Part Thank You System

In fundraising, one of the worst things that can happen is for your donors not to feel thanked. With so much focus on obtaining donations, the 'thank you' is often an afterthought.

In campaigns, it's easy for a thank you letter to be forgotten or sent late. The problem is even when a letter is sent, it still can get lost or missed, and the donor will think they were never thanked.

One way to avoid this is by creating what's known as a redundant system. A redundant system is where if one thing goes wrong, there is a backup.

The easiest way to ensure donors know how much they are appreciated is to use a redundant system - the 3-part thank you.

3-Part Thank You

Here is what the three-part thank you looks like:

1

Email: Send an email thank you within one day of receiving the donation. Automate this process for efficiency.

2

Letter: Mail a thank you letter within a week—batch process these weekly, with volunteers or staff handling the addressing and mailing.

3

Call/Text: Within a week, either call or send a personalized text message to convey gratitude. While calls might go to voicemail, a personal touch, especially for major donors, makes a lasting impression.

If phone calls might make it too hard to execute, another variation is one with no phone calls.

1. Email within 1 day
2. Personalized text message thank you within 2 days (ideally from the candidate)
3. Letter within a week (all batched in one day).



A great example of redundant systems is the A-10 Warthog, a plane used by the US Air Force for almost 50 years. The aircraft's purpose was close combat support and needed to work even when taking enemy fire. Its entire design was built on redundant systems. If one system failed, another kicked in.

One Air Force pilot, Kim Campbell, experienced this redundancy firsthand during an intense firefight in Baghdad. At one point, Campbell took heavy fire from the ground, and the plane jolted from the repeated hits. Suddenly, warning lights flashed, and her hydraulic flight controls failed.

Because the A-10 was built with three different redundant systems for its controls, Kim Campbell calmly switched the plane's flight controls to manual mode and safely landed her aircraft—bullet-ridden and missing part of its tail wing.

Source: "How an Air Force A-10 pilot pulled off a miracle landing with much of her tail shot off"
Photo Credit: U.S. Air Force Academy website

The Bottom Line

Create a simple, redundant system for thanking your donors so your campaign stands out, and your donors feel appreciated.