

Thanks for everything!

How do charities recognise and say 'thank you' to their key donors

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Section 1

Introduction

To create this report, we collected case studies of ways charities recognise donors through desk research and by asking people in our sector to contact us with their stories via twitter. It was found that there is great diversity in the ways charities acknowledge donors and this diversity is brought together under an umbrella of four themes:

- **In Memoriam:** Donors who have died or supporters who have chosen to leave a donation in their Will are often remembered in a physical space such as a memorial garden or acknowledged in a book of remembrance.
- **Thanking audience en masse:** Social media platforms have allowed charities to extend their reach. Often charities will hold companywide 'thank you' days where they spend the day contacting their supporters via telephone, post and email to say 'thank you'. The day is also documented on video which is then uploaded on their website for all their supporters to access.
- **Awards and accolades:** Bringing together inspirational survivors and determined campaigners, award evenings are held to honour the strength of survivors and award those who continue to volunteer and donate.
- **Saying thank you with a gift:** A crucial way of receiving continued support from large organisations or major donors is saying thank you with a gift and encouraging them to get involved in the work of the charity. Alternatively, smaller charities ensure their supporters are acknowledged by inviting them to events such as garden parties.

A breakdown of the top five ways of saying 'thank you' provides a quick, helpful insight into the differing ways charities say thank you.

Overall, it was refreshing to find that a thank you culture exists which acknowledges all donors, small or large.

Section 2 – Some of our personal favourite ways of saying 'thank you'

Listed below are some charities whose approach to thanking their supporters stood out. Also, this ranking is a good indicator of identifying the different mechanics charities used to thank their donors.

1. **Terrence Higgin's Trust** thanks each of their London & Brighton Marathon runners. A team at head office designed personalised thank you placards for their 51 marathon runners and uploaded the video on YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yADgtkkgK3g&list=UUvDIu4SI_mKkD9uYFOqXutw
WHY? Fun, quick and personal.
2. **Teenage Cancer Trust** celebrates and thanks Bank of America Merrill Lynch for their partnership with a tube of Smarties for each employee to devour and then fill with spare change. <http://www.teenagecancertrust.org/get-involved/as-a-company/our-partners/thank-you-bank-of-america-merrill-lynch/>
WHY? Simple – memorable for Bank of America staff which should encourage them to fundraise.
3. **The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds**, Tree of Life Memorial Garden. A large, carved owl is the feature point of RSPB's memorial garden where donors are remembered by inscribed plaques placed on the owl. http://www.rspb.org.uk/supporting/inmemory/how_to_donate.aspx
WHY? Physical space to return to and markedly different from other ways in which charities recognise donors.
4. **charity: water's 5th birthday** with over 250 personalised video thank you messages. charity: water spent the whole week thanking their donors via telephone, email and post as well as making personalised videos. <http://www.charitywater.org/blog/fifth-bday/>
WHY? Creative and the extent to which they recognised each of their fundraisers, donors and sponsors.
5. **Chief Scout Bear Grylls** Tour of London and the South East to thank volunteers. Grylls visited various Scout groups to encourage young Scouts and thank adult volunteers for their time, commitment and support. <http://scouts.org.uk/news/2010/10/bear-grylls-on-whirlwind-tour-to-thank-volunteers/>
WHY? Clever technique of having a celebrity figure that many will recall may therefore influence fundraising behaviour i.e. repeat donation.

Section 3 – In Memoriam

Supporters who choose to leave a donation in their will or 'leave a legacy' by passing on their Estate are recognised by charities in a physical space. Similarly, those who wish to remember a loved one are able to reflect in a memorial garden or through a book of remembrance.

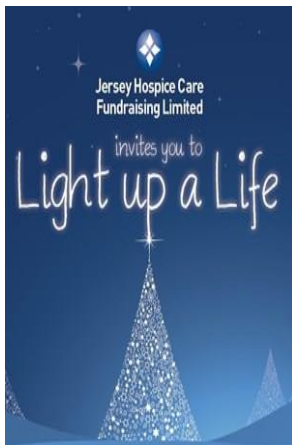
Tree of Life Memorial Garden- The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

A giant owl, sitting under the branches of an oak tree is a place of memoriam for those who have left a donation for RSPB. The giant owl can be found at The Lodge Nature reserve and is the feature point of the 'Tree of Life Memorial Garden'. Messages or names of loved ones are



engraved onto lime leaf shaped plaques of which RSPB asks for a minimum £300 donation. In addition to the Tree of Life Memorial Garden, there are seven books of remembrance, each belonging to one of RSPB's 7 nature reserves. Donations left by supporters of over £250 are remembered by an inscription in a Book of Remembrance.

Light up a life – Jersey Hospice Care



On Sunday 1st December 2013 The Tree of Light was lit in the gardens of Clarkson House to remember those who had died and left a donation and was lit every evening until 5th January 2014. Alternatively, donors were able to give a donation of £5.00 in memory of a loved one and a light was also lit in their memory. Alongside the Tree of Light is a book of remembrance where donors are remembered by name. Those who left a donation in memory of a loved one also received, if they wished to, a Jersey Hospice Care badge as a thank you.

<http://www.jerseyhospicecare.com/fundraising/recent-events/light-up-a-life-evening-to-remember/>

A special thank you – St Barnabas Hospice

Supporters who choose to remember St Barnabas in their Will are recognised by St Barnabas with regular invites to events held in and outside of the hospice. In addition, they receive an exclusive pin badge and the choice of being remembered in their Book of Legacy open to view at the hospice when their legacy matures.



<http://www.stbarnabas-hospice.org.uk/get-involved/a-gift-in-your-will/let-us-say-thank-you>

International Roll of Thanks – World Wildlife Fund



To recognise those who have left a 'living legacy', donors can have their name written on the 'International Roll of Thanks' which is displayed at WWF's global head office in Switzerland. To be able to leave a 'living legacy' donors must 'grant a legacy' such as leaving a monetary donation or passing on their estate to WWF.

http://wwf.panda.org/how_you_can_help/support_wwf/legacy_gift/

Section 4 – Thanking an audience en masse

Many charities reviewed in this report used videos or a social media platform such as Facebook to thank their supporters. Most likely chosen for their reach and how quickly a video or status can spread, these videos certainly make for entertaining and heart warming watching...enjoy.

The National Autistic Society – 50th Birthday ‘Thank you Day’

As way of celebrating the National Autistic Society’s 50th birthday (NAS), NAS held a charity-wide ‘thank you day’ to say ‘thank you’ to their supporters. NAS HQ spent the day calling personally, emailing and writing to their campaigners, community organisers, fundraisers and financial advisers alike. Many supporters were touched that an actual member of the NAS team had taken time to call and say thank you instead of badgering for a donation. Similarly, the NAS team could hear directly from those who had benefited from their work. The 50th birthday ‘thank you day’ was a celebrated success not only because their supporters felt valued but it brought the team at NAS closer together; departments from across the company were introduced to each other such as Human Resources and the IT department.

As a result, ‘thank you day’ has become an annual event in the NAS calendar and most recently they held a ‘thank you day’ over the Christmas period. Amongst the sound of Christmas carols, a few mince pies and an array of Christmas jumpers, the team at NAS HQ got back to the task of making sure their supporters knew just how thankful they were. In case some supporters were unfortunate not to receive a call, letter or email there are two videos available on their website and YouTube which include a thank you message from Mark Lever, Chief Executive.

Carolyne Coupel, Head of Individual Giving reflected how internally successful ‘thank you day’ is for NAS and the success of their fundraising: acknowledging their supporters allowed them to find out exactly why individuals donate, campaign and fundraise – an effective tool for their communications policy (Couple, 2014, *How the National Autistic Society ran a supporter thank-you day*. Retrieved from <http://www.charitychoice.co.uk/the-fundraiser/how-the-national-autistic-society-ran-a-supporter-thank-you/372>). <http://www.autism.org.uk/get-involved/50th-birthday/thank-you.aspx>



Terrence Higgins Trust thanks each of their London & Brighton Marathon runners

Some of the team at Terrence Higgins Trust put their craft skills on show as they took to YouTube to thank personally 51 of their supporters who ran in either the London or Brighton Marathon. Holding up uniquely designed thank you placards, they took it in turns to thank or exclaim just how great their fundraisers were,



“Merlin you must be magic!” is one example. They also posted the video to their Facebook page which has now been ‘liked’ 116 times. Posting the video on Facebook allows the runners to tag themselves in the video so that friends and family can see that they have been acknowledged (as well as had 2 minutes of fame). Perhaps such a

personal message will encourage somebody else to run a marathon for THT or make a donation as they have been inspired by their show of appreciation?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yADgtkkgK3g&list=UUvDIu4SI_mKkD9uYFOqXutw

Friends of the Earth – Big-thinking Away Day

While on their ‘big-thinking away day’ the Communications, Fundraising and Activism team at FoE came to the realisation that to be able to win campaigns and to continue to pursue their work of caring for the planet, they need the aid of their supporters. And so, they put together a video to say ‘thank you’ for their support so far and to acknowledge how essential their continuing support is. They transformed a meeting room into an artistic calling hub where the team created gift cards and posters as well as calling personally their supporters. In response to our tweet Joe Jenkins, Director of Communications, Fundraising and Activism told us “it was fun!”



<https://www.foe.co.uk/green-blog/big-thank-you>

charity:water’s 5th birthday with over 250 personalised video thank you messages



From scouring the web and calling out to our Twitter followers, it has to be said that charity:water’s crafts day and video thank you messages is the trend setter in how to thank donors. Back in 2011, charity:water celebrated its 5th birthday and did they celebrate! Aside from dedicating a whole week to writing, calling, emailing or drawing poster(s) to thank their supporters, they also made over 250 personalised thank

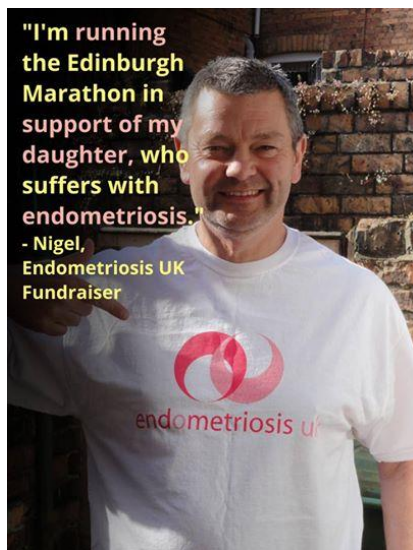
you videos. Every team member of the charity made a feature in a video. The videos varied from Michelle, Multi-Media Producer and Josh from Accounts competing to eat a hot dog in the quickest time; they were thanking a fundraiser who held a hot dog eating contest and raised over \$1,000, to a singing puppet show, thanking a three year old girl to dedicating her birthday to charity:water. With over 250 quirky videos floating around the World Wide Web it is no surprise other charities latched on to the idea of holding company wide thank you days for their supporters.

Oxfam's '547,000 thank yous from the Philippines'

For those who donated to Oxfam's they received 547,000 thank yous Philippines. A short video donations from Oxfam's have been put to use. A images show communities rebuilding houses, farmers replanting rice crops and families receiving hygiene kits. These images are matched with statements that read, "more than 200,000 people have clean water" and "farmers given equipment and training to clear fallen trees." In addition, children playing amongst the damaged land shout thank you at the camera as well as families queuing for aid speak directly to the camera to say thank you. This video is an effective tool to show Oxfam's supporters exactly what happens to their donation.



<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what-we-do/emergency-response/philippines-typhoon-haiyan>



Endometriosis UK- Case Studies

In response to our tweet, Endometriosis UK led us to their Facebook and Twitter pages. On these social platforms they recognise fundraisers, supporters and sufferers by posting regular case studies of their experience(s). As well as acknowledging their support and courage, Endometriosis UK is using these great platforms to raise awareness of a crippling condition.

<https://www.facebook.com/endometriosis.uk.org>

Section 5 – Awards & Accolades

As way of bringing together those affected and campaigners, award evenings are held to acknowledge their inspirational work. Within this section, the presence of celebrity is also drawn upon as an alternative way of thanking and encouraging volunteers.

Life After Stroke Awards – Stroke Association

The Life After Stroke Awards brings together survivors, campaigners, fundraisers, corporate supporters and community groups to recognise and award those who have been affected by a stroke or dedicated their time to supporting Stoke Association. A host of celebrities



and political figures present individuals and families with awards over an evening meal at the Dorchester Hotel, London. Aside from recognising inspirational survivors there also is an award category for corporate sponsor and community groups as well as a fundraiser of the year award.

<http://www.stroke.org.uk/involved/life-after-stroke-awards-2013>

Celebrity



Chief Scout Bear Grylls Tour of London and the South East to thank volunteers – The Scout Association

Using a bike, helicopter and pair of walking boots, Bear Grylls made his way around Scout groups in London and the South East to inspire Scout groups and thank adult volunteers for their time, commitment and support.

Appearing at an award reception at the Science Museum in London, he met with the Queen's Scouts. Helicopting onto Frylands Wood Campsite, Croydon, he met with parents and Scout leaders to thank them for their support. At a new activity centre in Braid Wood, Buckinghamshire, Grylls reflected on his tour and delivered a speech to thank adult volunteers for their support which is essential to the success of the Scouts.

Section 6 – Saying thank you with a gift

Thanking a major donor with a gift was the most common way charities acknowledged their charity partners. The variety of gifts makes for interesting reading. Moreover, partners and major donors are encouraged to get involved with the work of their charity which can develop a reciprocal relationship.

Teenage Cancer Trust thank Bank of America Merrill Lynch for their partnership with a tube of Smarties

Teenage Cancer Trust was voted by staff at Bank of America as their charity of the year. As a result, they began a two year partnership with Teenage Cancer Trust in which they aimed to raise £100,000. However, in the first year of the partnership alone they raised over £300,000! Bank of America has raised the money by holding a variety of fundraising events such as a Dragon's Boat Race and 33 teams from their UK offices riding 853 km in a stationary bike race. To say thank you to Bank of America for choosing TCT as their charity, TCT sent a tube of Smarties to each employee. After they had devoured the sugar covered chocolates they were asked to fill the tubes with loose change which raised over £11,000 - a great way to start the partnership.



Major Gifts – The Salvation Army.

A donation of £5,000 + falls under The Salvation's Army category of 'Major Gifts'. Those who donate a Major Gift are recognised by The Salvation Army in a variety of ways. Aside from regular postal updates and invites to special events, donors are encouraged to visit centres and corps. By doing this, supporters are able to see firsthand how their contribution helps the work of their selected project or area of work.



http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/uki/Major_Gifts

Leaders in All Fields Fair – Teach First.

Teach First have a well established relationship with large companies who have chosen Teach First as their charity partner. To recognise this partnership, Teach

TeachFirst First offers their partners free stands at their annual careers fair, 'Leaders in All Fields'. This career fair is attended by over 2,000 Teach First graduates who are looking to progress their career after completing the graduate scheme – a great networking opportunity for graduates and Teach First's partners alike.

<http://www.teachfirst.org.uk/support-us/business-support/meet-and-recruit-our-ambassadors>

Garden Parties – Springboard Project.

Nigel from the Springboard Project responded to our Tweet and told us that aside from sending emails and posting regular photo updates they invite supporters to garden parties.



<http://www.springboardproject.com/news>



Christmas and Easter gifts and garden picnics – Action on Disability and Work UK.

Despite being a small charity, Geri Bowie, Business Development Manager for Action on Disability and Work UK, got in touch to let us know that during the Christmas and Easter periods they reward their volunteers with small gifts such as an Easter Egg. During the summer months, paid staff get together to prepare a picnic for the whole team to enjoy.

<http://www.adwuk.org/Home.aspx>

Section 7 – Conclusion

This report has found a diverse range of how charities recognise and thank their key donors.

There clearly is a social media trend which is to be appreciated; charities 'thank you' messages are able to spread much further. Charity partnerships and major donors receive a more extensive thank you to encourage a continued partnership/ repeat donation.

Charity wide 'thank you' days are a popular way of recognising donors. The reflective comments from Carlyne Coupel from the National Autistic Society suggests how internally successful these events can be for improving company cohesion and developing communications policies.

Above all else, it is refreshing to find that there is a culture of saying thank you on every level, from a single donor to corporate charity partnerships.

Lastly, if there are ways in which you recognise your donors which we haven't included please get in touch and let us know.

If you have any further comments or queries please do not hesitate to get in contact with Joe Saxton (joe.saxton@nfpsynergy.net).

Section 8 – Acknowledgements & Sources

Many thanks to the below charities for getting in touch and letting us know the many different ways you recognise your donors:

Joe Jenkins – Director of Communications, Fundraising and Activism, Friends of the Earth.

Nigel Scott-Dickenson – CEO, Springboard Project.

Laura Morgan – Digital Communications Officer, endometriosis uk.

Geri Bowie – Business Development Manager, Action on Disability & Work UK.

Carolyn Coupel for her excellent blog on thanking donors at NAS.

And lastly thanks to Helena NacNeary who was with us for 4 weeks research experience. She did a great job in a short time on this report and is looking for an entry level position to work in the charity section. Look up her up on LinkedIn or email her at helena.macneary@myport.ac.uk .

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About nfpSynergy

nfpSynergy is a research consultancy that aims to provide the ideas, the insights and the information to help non-profits thrive.

We have over a decade of experience working exclusively with charities, helping them develop evidence-based strategies and get the best for their beneficiaries. The organisations we work with represent all sizes and areas of work and include one in three of the top 100 fundraising charities in the UK.

We run cost effective, syndicated tracking surveys of stakeholder attitudes towards charities and non-profit organisations. The audiences we reach include the general public, young people, journalists, politicians and health professionals. We also work with charities on bespoke projects, providing quantitative, qualitative and desk research services.

In addition, we work to benefit the wider sector by creating and distributing regular free reports, presentations and research on the issues that charities face.

Our size and our story: nfpSynergy was created in 2002 as a division of the Future Foundation. Two years later, the founder Joe Saxton led a management buy-out. We now have an annual turnover of **£1.4 million** and **18 staff members**, including a variable number of interns. We also own our own premises in Spitalfields.

Tracking research: We run tracking surveys that monitor the attitudes and opinions of key stakeholder groups relating to the not-for-profit sector. The research is carried out on behalf of a syndicate of participating charities who share costs and data. The aim of our tracking studies is to provide lower cost, more frequent and more detailed research than any organisation could achieve by acting on its own. Our monitors include:

- 🕒 Charity Awareness Monitor (CAM) - the general public
- 🕒 Journalists' Attitudes and Awareness Monitor – journalists
- 🕒 Charity Parliamentary Monitor (CPM) - MPs and Lords
- 🕒 Youth Engagement Monitor (YEM) – young people
- 🕒 Brand Attributes (BA) – brand awareness among the general public

In addition, we have developed syndicated tracking studies on local authorities, politicians in the devolved bodies, the general public in the Republic of Ireland and regional audiences across England.

Qualitative research and consultancy: Each year we deliver around 30 projects for non-profit clients. We carry out focus groups, conduct face-to-face and telephone depth interviews, run workshops and perform small and large scale desk research projects. Our clients include charities, housing associations and public bodies who use our research to inform their strategies and planning.

Our consultancy work and projects cover a vast range. For example, we have recently worked with The Scout Association to develop a new membership strategy with current and former members, parents and Scout leaders. We have worked with Macmillan Cancer Support on a number of projects enhancing their service provision and delivery using qualitative research. Last year, we completed a piece of work for Scope, evaluating their vital 'Face 2 Face' befriending service for parents of disabled children.

Some of our clients include:



Social investment: Our social investment programme runs as a thread through every aspect of our business. At its core is the range of free research reports and briefings we produce each year to benefit non-profit organisations, which can be downloaded from our website. We use evidence from our research to campaign on behalf of charities on key issues, such as reducing the costs charged by mobile phone companies for charitable donations by SMS. We also support small non-profits by providing free places at our seminars, giving talks to groups all over the UK and through pro bono research assistance. In addition, we support CharityComms (the sector body for communications) by providing them with free office space. Our approach to business shows that even a small company can put social investment at the heart of a business, contribute a huge amount to help voluntary and community organisations and still be profitable.

Topics on which we have produced free reports include:

- understanding young people's help seeking behaviour
- volunteering
- branding
- how charities use the internet and new technology
- fundraising
- governance

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