

THE GRATITUDE COMPASS: AN APPROACH TO THANKING DONORS TO THE ROTARY FOUNDATION

"Showing gratitude is one of the simplest yet most powerful things humans can do for each other." - Randy Pausch

Governors-elect, your leadership can begin with gratitude. When we thank our donors, we do more than acknowledge generosity — we celebrate our belief in Rotary's purpose. Gratitude is not a gesture. It's a leadership practice. We know this about gratitude:

- Donor appreciation strengthens people's trust in Rotary and their long-term support.
- Gratitude builds deeper relationships and inspires repeat giving.
- District governors play a key role in modeling and encouraging appreciation.

This guide empowers Rotary leaders to express meaningful appreciation to donors, strengthen their relationships with donors, and foster a culture of generosity. Use the practical tips below.

Understand what motivates giving

A few notes about donor psychology and what resonates with different donors:

- Donors are inspired to give when they see their impact, trust the organization, and feel like they're part of something meaningful.
- Expressing gratitude increases member retention and encourages future giving.
- You can tailor your appreciation to a donor's communication preferences:
 - Send handwritten notes (a template is below).
 - Send emails or make phone calls (a script is below).
 - Use social media shout-outs or send video messages.

Set up digital tools and templates

Make showing appreciation easy and engaging by creating:

- Templates for thank-you emails
- Social media graphics for donor shout-outs
- Short video scripts for thank-you messages

Send handwritten or electronic acknowledgments

Think about how to use each example below and how you could personalize each template.

- A **handwritten note** may have a longer-lasting impression. Remember to:
 - Include the donor's name, gift amount, and the impact it will have.
 - Keep the tone warm, sincere, and purposeful.
 - If possible, use Rotary-branded stationery.
 - Send the acknowledgement within 48 hours of receiving a gift.
 - Include a personal story or anecdote.
 - Use wording like "Because of you" or "Your gift made this possible."

Here's a template you can tailor for handwritten notes, emails, or even short video messages:

Subject: Your generosity is creating ripples of hope

Dear [Donor Name],

On behalf of Rotary District [Number], I want to express our heartfelt gratitude for your generous support of The Rotary Foundation. Your gift is more than a donation — it's a catalyst

for change. Because of you, we're able to [insert specific details: "provide clean water to communities in need," "support scholarships for future peacebuilders," etc.]. Your commitment to Service Above Self inspires us all. Thank you for being a vital part of Rotary.

Sincerely,
[Governor Name]
District [Number]

- A **phone call or voicemail** can also deepen the connection donors feel to Rotary. It's good to:
 - Thank donors personally for major gifts or recognizing Rotary milestones.
 - Keep it short, warm, and specific.

Here's a script you can use as a starting point:

"Hi [Donor Name], this is [Governor Name] from Rotary District [Number]. I want to personally thank you for your incredible support. Your gift is making a real difference that will let us [insert specific details: "provide clean water to communities in need," "support scholarships for future peacebuilders," etc.]. I'm honored to share our gratitude."

- A **short video** from a governor can sometimes be more powerful than a long email.
 - Use one of the templates above to create your video script.
 - Make sure you're in a quiet place with no distractions as you film it.

Set up a gratitude calendar and monthly gratitude goals

Plan consistent appreciation all year. Use occasions such as:

- Donors' birthdays
- The anniversary of their first gift (This is a good time to talk about the impact of the gift.)
- Rotary observances and milestones

Celebrate donors in creative ways

Think about different ways to recognize donors, such as:

- Giving certificates of appreciation
- Spotlighting them in newsletters or at events (with their permission only)
- Giving small, branded gifts such as pins, bookmarks, or other Rotary-themed items

Make gratitude your leadership superpower

Use your gratitude journal to track your appreciation efforts. Note the date, the donor's name, the type of gift, the thank-you method you used, and what follow-up is needed (such as another message later about the impact of the gift).

Use these additional resources

- The Rotary Brand Center: my.rotary.org/en/rotary-templates
- Information about our Foundation: <https://www.rotary.org/en/about-rotary/rotary-foundation>
- Our Causes: rotary.org/en/our-causes

"Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it."

– William Arthur Ward