

A few responses from other Association of Donor Relations Professionals

My question to the ADRP members was this:
Fellow ADRP's...

One of our colleges is considering a donor wall and not using dollar amounts, cumulative or otherwise, but instead using font sizes to indicate large or small gifts. For instance, the major gifts will be a 96 font, large gifts will be a 76 font, the small gifts – say \$250 and below- will be on a list that is etched. I've attached a photo that looks similar to what they are planning.

Any thoughts on not using dollar amounts on a donor wall?

Jill Fankhauser '98 | Donor Relations Manager
University of Alaska Anchorage

Our policy is to indicate differences by font size. That being said we often put a thank you line or two on the wall explaining that the names on the wall represent gifts of \$10,000 (or any number you want to start at) or more. That way the viewer of the wall can make their own conclusions about which size font equals what size the gift is....

Susan T. deMuth
Director, Institutional Donor Relations
Johns Hopkins Institutions

This is how it is done in our performing arts center donor wall. The largest donor, after whom it is named, has the biggest plaque/font-size on the wall; the next biggest has slightly smaller, and so on. Lesser gifts are in columns that can be moved around, so that when we get, say, a new \$1,000 donor, the name can be engraved on one of the moveable brass plates. We don't use any \$ amount anywhere in the building.

Hope this is helpful.

Judy Browning
Whittier College

I think this looks really nice. Personally, I think it's probably ideal to use either the name of the giving level or the amount (or both) but I think in this example, it speaks for itself. Well done.

I'm seeing more donor walls done this way, and it's what we do as well. I think it's tasteful and gives donors more privacy (even if they haven't requested it).

Selene

Selene Hur
Manager, Research & Stewardship
YMCA of Greater Toronto

We are building a new hospital and have been given a similar sign display plan as well. I have mixed feelings about it and would be curious to know what the other organizations are doing. Could you keep me in the loop when you get the results?

Thanks!
Linda

Lynne M. Wester
Director of Stewardship and Donor Recognition
Office of Institutional Advancement
Yeshiva University

I think it depends on the unit. For my school, this would be good thing because our donors aren't as plentiful as other areas on campus and gifts aren't as large. So comparing us to other Schools wouldn't happen without dollar amounts. That's the internal argument! Externally, I also like the idea because it's not public exactly how much a person has given yet the display provide a general idea of the impact of the gift.

I'd definitely be interested in another responses you receive!
Natalie
Indiana University

I've seen something similar at the YWCA in Charlotte. Actually, I like the idea.

Denise Hart Howard
Director of Donor Relations
Davidson College

On our campaign commemorative marker we will be using _____ amounts.

We do not include dollar amounts on our donor recognition. We've done something similar to what you are suggesting in some cases and no differentiation in others.

Good Luck,

I like the idea. Our leaders do not like the idea of publishing or listing names of donors and this might be a really great way to make everyone happy.

I would be interested in your findings....

Thanks!

We have one CAMPAIGN wall that's like what you've described and it works b/c it represents gifts to that campaign ONLY vs. trying to guesstimate what type of "movement" might occur over time with cumulative giving. If your wall is to be "flexible" over time to represent cumulative giving, I'd explore all options for upgrading it.

For example, if your St. Clair Hospital Aux. group is already the largest contributor to date - what happens when their giving moves them to a new level of giving. Do you buy an even bigger size plaque or just increase the font size? Do you then have to remove the current size and replace with a blank one to maintain the design itself? Sometimes it can depend on how many plaques you're talking about that need to be upgraded/removed.

On our main lobby walls, we still do break them into cumulative* giving (*includes ALL gifts for all time, to any and all funds, campaigns, etc.) Societies. These Societies represent ranges of cumulative gift amounts and we don't include the \$\$\$ amount on display itself. They are broken into visible categories and the plaque size and its font distinguish the various levels.

Hope that helps, but if not, feel free to call or email -
Tracey Clayton
Manager, Campaign Shared Services
OhioHealth Foundation

We actually used this concept for the donor wall in our new Cancer Institute building (photo attached). A number of people were involved in this more than me since it was part of a large construction project, but I have not been made aware of any negative feedback. We are also in the process of building a new Children's Hospital and know that we also talked about the font size for donor levels for that wall. What we liked about it is that the names are randomly interspersed so if there is a need to add names later, it is possible to do so.

For our Cancer building we did not have a lot of capital gifts, so the wall was based on cumulative giving to cancer allocations. We had a period of time after the building opened

during which people could give in order to reach the level to be added to the wall. After that period ended, the wall became static and new names will not be added. For Children's we are considering two recognition displays -- one that will recognize capital gifts that helped build the hospital which will include gifts received up to a set cutoff date (not yet set) and then possibly another annual giving wall.

Regards,

Marcy
Marcy Maher
Coordinator of Donor Relations

We don't use dollar amounts, but instead use different sized nameplates. We were able to order a larger wall and leave space to add more names or move someone up as their cumulative giving increased, without having to redo the entire wall. Attached are 2 photos of one of our donor walls.

That's a really pretty wall!

Just a practical comment – we have such a long list of donors on our wall that we would have to put them all into groups anyway, no matter what the font size, just to get them all to fit on the wall space. Viewers would be constantly asking us what each group represents. So we may as well list the amounts.

From the point of view of encouraging upgrades, I prefer to list the amounts.

Stephani Agg, CFRE
Co-ordinator, Donor Relations
Canadian Cancer Society, BC and Yukon Division

It is wise **not** to use dollar amounts both for aesthetics and privacy sake.

Michele Arnold
Stewardship Manager
Rice University

In our work as donor recognition consultants, we see displays that do NOT indicate specific gift amounts (or even define the ranges of a giving category) more often than those that do. We have seen many formats where the size of the individual "plaque" and/or size of the font sets up a hierarchy similar to the example you included in your post. That hierarchy subtly communicates the different gift amounts without being specific about the range of the gifts.

There is another consideration to keep in mind with the example that you shared - the names are not listed alphabetically (in total or by gift category), which will make it challenging for

donors to find their names. We recommend a system where the plaques can be rearranged over time to present the names in an orderly fashion that allows a donor to quickly locate his or her name.

If you would like to discuss this further by phone, please give me a call.

Best regards,
Anne Manner-McLarty
VP/Creative

I don't like the design; however, not using dollar amounts is the classiest way to go - if you have the right design.

Jeffrey Aronoff
Senior Manager
of Donor Recognition
NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital
Weill Cornell Medical College

In my former position at The Putney School, we did something like this for a campaign recognition wall, within a performing arts center. It was very successful, and the donors really loved it.

The placements were random, also, as in the photo you sent.

Best of luck!

-Rennie

Ddonor wall for the last campaign ... all names, random order, no amounts.

Good Afternoon All,

Here at Rhode Island School of Design there was a Honor Roll printed many years ago listing all donors of \$ 1+ to the College. It was discontinued before my time here and from what I have heard there was never any backlash from not printing it any longer. Recently, it was proposed to bring the Honor Roll back as a section in our Alumni magazine. There is much debate of who should be listed, and everyone is being asked to weigh in. As the only Donor Relations staff member I am doing my best to help guide how I think the publication should be mapped out based on my background in producing Honor Rolls and from the information we all share with each other. Since we are starting fresh I think we have an opportunity to really build a strategy for how we do the publication and what the purpose of it is. We are running into much debate over levels. The Annual Fund feels very strongly about listing everyone, from \$ 1 and up. Major Gifts feels very strongly about keeping the lists tight and recognize starting at a certain leadership gift level. I have been advocating for starting at \$ 1,000 (which is our starting level for

our Annual Fund recognition society), and we are at an impasse. As you all well know Honor Rolls take a lot of staff time and according to research (especially from Penelope Burk) there is no solid evidence that they are the best thing to do and dedicate all the time to. If anyone has information on best practices for giving levels, or "back-up" on why starting at a certain level is the best strategy I would be extremely appreciative. Any further insight, feedback or anecdotal information would be very helpful as well for me to make my case.

Best,
Amanda

I've been noticing schemes like this in materials that vendors have brought by recently, and while I don't think it would work for us, I can see it working for some groups - such as in situations where you are not updating it annually. I would want there to be a key though - perhaps in a side-plaque? The reason I wouldn't use it is almost entirely tied to the issue of the logistics when running out of room. A more traditional modular arrangement might not eliminate that problem, but solving the problem probably wouldn't blow my mind in quite the same way! (Of course, I say that from a position in which I am currently facing that very situation.)

Laurie McMichael
Director of Stewardship
Office of Philanthropy
Rush University Medical Center
