



ASK the experts

Can You Acknowledge Donors Via E-mail?

Are electronic gift receipts legal?

Q:

We are a small organization seeking funds. We don't have the time or money to mail acknowledgment letters to all donors. Our question: Can we issue receipts for donations through e-mail? If an e-mail acknowledgment is O.K., can you suggest the form it should take? Thanks very much for your help.

A:

You're in luck. A recent law—the Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act—recognizes the legal validity of electronic transactions. Experts say that

this law should cover donor receipts. Without ruling on the subject, the IRS says it would “probably” accept an e-mail receipt and suggests that you include a unique serial number with each e-mail acknowledgment you send.

Assuming that donors aren't receiving any goods or services in exchange for their donation, your receipt might read as follows: “Thank you for your contribution in the amount of \$100. We have not provided any goods or services in consideration of your donation. Therefore, your entire contribution is deductible as a charitable contribution for federal income tax purposes. For identification, please use the following receipt number: 123100.” ■

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