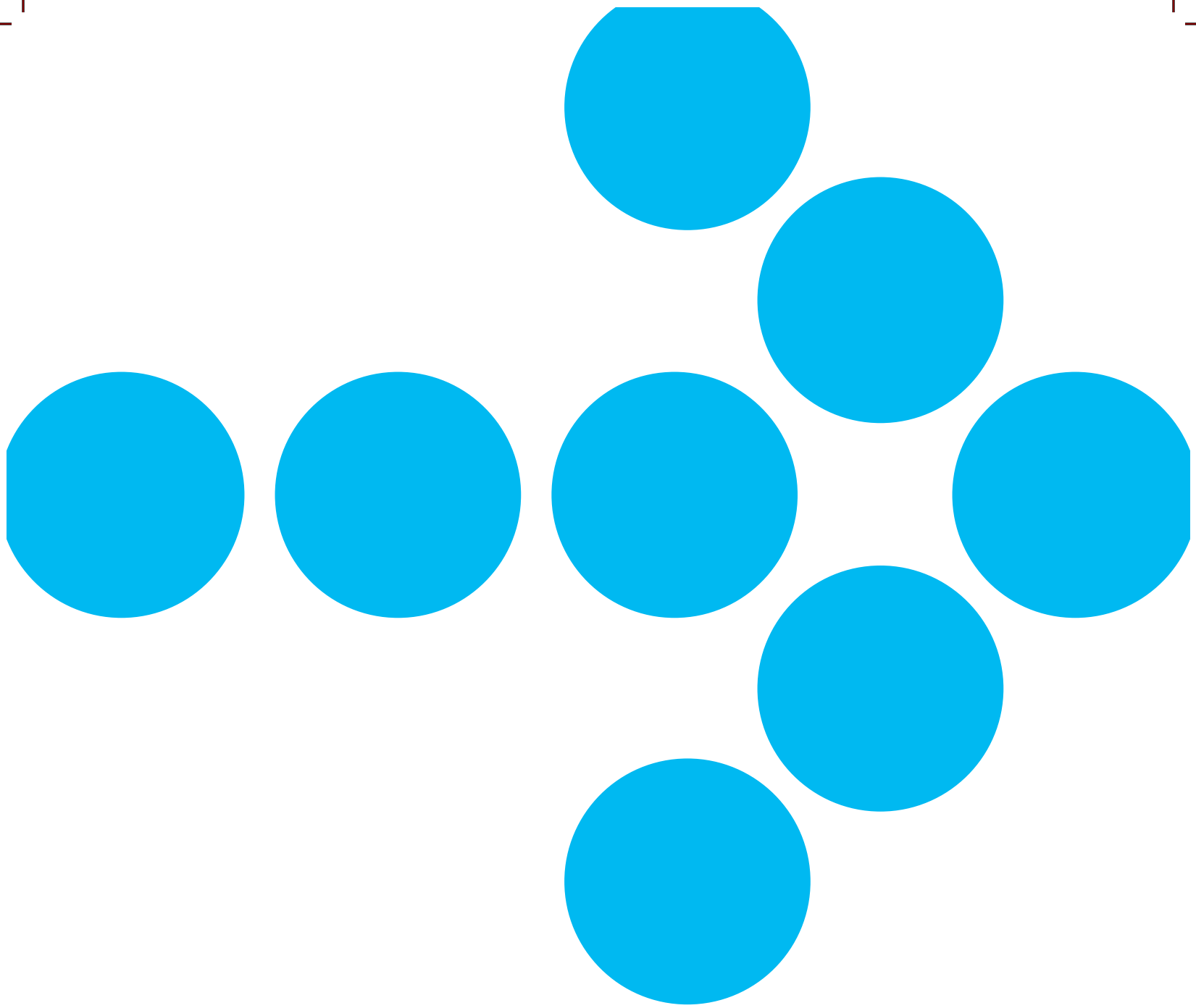




**FUTURE FIRST GLOBAL
IS NOW INHIVE.**

**THIS RESOURCE WAS PRODUCED PRIOR
TO THE ORGANISATION'S REBRAND.**





From Cohorts to Communities

**A GUIDE TO WORKING
WITH PROGRAMME ALUMNI**

About Future First Global

Future First Global's vision is that any school, anywhere, should be making the most out of their alumni. Former students can have a transformational impact on the learning experience of students, and their ability to make a smooth transition from education into employment.

Future First Global works across four areas: dissemination of best practice, consultancy, advocacy, and campaigning, in order to support different school systems supporting young people aged 11 to 25. The organisation has a commitment to fairness and, therefore, prioritises work in communities that might suffer from lower social mobility or higher levels of disadvantage.

Future First Global has significant expertise in alumni community building, having grown out of a UK charity working with over 400 government funded high schools, and it has done additional international research into different alumni models.

Our Thanks

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Introduction

Issues of impact, sustainability and community development have led to a marked increase in programmes looking to develop their alumni activities. This 'how to' guide is designed to help organisations take the next step, or even the first step, in building their own alumni programmes.

Amongst the 80 interviewees from Latin America, Europe, North America, Africa, Asia and Australasia who informed this report, there was a common pattern of questions surfacing. Questions such as: 'what's next for our participants?', 'what more can we do for our alumni?' and 'how can we mobilise support from our graduates?' are at the forefront for those running scholarship programmes, summer programmes, youth groups, fellowships, professional training programmes and more.

Conversations around the lasting impact of programmes over the past decade have led to more and more organisations looking to invest in longer term activities with their service users. These organisations are moving beyond managing mailing lists and tracking progress, and beginning to explore what longer-term engagement might look like. Indeed, the question of alumni has become such a current one that to draw a distinction between programme participants and programme alumni is to create a false separation.

Many social sector board rooms are currently considering the question: would we better fulfil our mission by increasing our programme participants by 10% or by investing that money in turning our programme into a longer term engagement?

Likewise, the issue of sustainability sits at the front of the minds of both social sector and public sector leaders. The idea of having an engaged cohort of supporters who give back to the organisation in terms of marketing, donating money, time and expertise, providing programme insight and governance support, is an exciting one in an age of austerity. Institutions from scout groups to teacher training programmes and scholarship providers often have as much a place in the hearts, minds and identities of their participants as schools and universities and – if they organise themselves effectively – could well benefit from every type of generosity from their graduates.

Finally, the movement towards an assets-based approach to development is highly relevant to the alumni movement. If we can find within our communities – however we define them – relatable role models, mentors, coaches and career development opportunities, then that is an exciting prospect that will always outweigh outside 'interventions'.

This guide will look at how organisations can develop their alumni networks. It uses insight from schools and colleges, but is tailored to an audience of people from outside formal educational institutions. These programmes often play as much a role in the identity of an individual as their former educational institutions and as such are often presented with the same opportunities as such institutions.

91% of alumni engagement experts interviewed for this study considered their alumni community 'essential' to their respective organisations. This guide will be a first step towards bringing that 'essential' value to any organisation that could benefit from it.

The process of building an alumni community around an organisation is quite different from doing the same in an educational establishment such as a school. An organisation might have participants involved in a variety of projects across a variety of locations, and so creating a central identity that alumni can relate to, can be challenging. This guide will set out how organisations can overcome some of these barriers to create cohesive alumni communities and cultures, by establishing systems, to ensure their communities are well managed, and provide long-term support to current participants, the organisation itself and the alumni community.

Often, projects with alumni begin with a modest investment of time, passion and perseverance, and, as can be seen in the guide, this can lead to incredible outcomes. We hope this guide will provide the necessary tools and information to get any volunteer, employee or community leader started on their community-building journey.

Executive summary

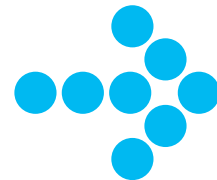
01

Purpose

It is important to identify a clear purpose for creating the alumni network - in order to ensure it is a cross-organisation initiative, you need to think about what it aims to achieve and where it sits within your wider organisation.

The earlier you establish the culture with participants the better - 87% of experts we spoke with told participants about the opportunity of becoming members of the alumni community whilst they were still on the programme.

Alumni communities can be effective mutual support networks - in addition to giving their support to the organisation and current participants, alumni are an excellent resource for one another whether as career mentors or a potential source of professional networks and business relationships.



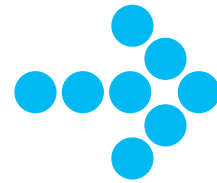
02

Passion

You need a passionate leader to drive forward any alumni network. This can be a member of staff, or a member of the alumni community itself. It is crucial that the leader understands the organisation and its culture, and how to foster enthusiasm.

Tap into enthusiasm - alumni tend to be most enthusiastic about their experiences with the organisation just after they complete a project or programme. To harness this passion, it is beneficial to offer ways in which alumni can continue to be involved with the organisation immediately.

Relationships must come before 'the ask' - all organisations emphasised the importance in investing in building communities, rather than just asking things of the individuals within them.



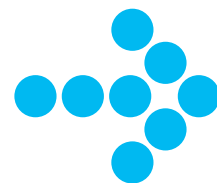
03

Communication

Data is crucial - all surveyed organisations had systems in place to store data, which was kept up to date, for more effective communication with alumni all over the world.

Communicate with alumni on the platforms they use and are familiar with - 94% of those we spoke with about social media emphasised its critical importance in their communications strategies.

Offer a range of opportunities to suit your alumni - alumni vary in age, interests and location so it is important to provide personalised engagement opportunities to suit them.



Building a culture



Successful alumni engagement begins with creating an environment whereby the expectation to remain a member of the community, is established at the outset, as part of the programme. This section discusses the different elements that are required to foster this environment. This includes: creating a vision, finding the right person to lead the engagement, and establishing a central culture with staff, current participants and alumni, regardless of project, cohort or location.

Creating a vision

Given that time and resources are invariably stretched, having both a clear vision and clear objectives are important for creating networks of former participants. We suggest the following steps for creating a vision for alumni engagement.

01 /

Articulate the mission of the wider organisation

- many organisations might have already set out an overall mission or vision. In this instance, map out how alumni support may assist with accomplishing this. We advise mapping out what success would look like over a three-year period, with time-specific actions attached to each objective. If you do not already have a mission or vision statement, you could start by setting out the priorities of the organisation and three key reasons you deliver your programmes. Then map out how alumni can help you achieve or enhance these.

Case study



'Teach for Bulgaria' is a graduate teaching programme in Bulgaria. It has a mission to improve the education system across the country. The organisation encourages alumni to continue to be engaged with this mission after they complete their two-year teaching commitment. Alumni are considered 'change agents' of the programme and its mission, and the alumni programme is built around fostering this commitment and supporting graduates, once they finish the programme, to find roles that continue to fulfil this mission.

02 /

Establish staff buy-in and set out how they may benefit

- this is essential if alumni engagement is to be sustainable and well-integrated in the organisation. If staff are involved in conceptualising the vision, they will both have greater ownership of the alumni strategy as well as ensure that objectives are aligned with those of the organisation more generally. Thinking about the specific challenges your

organisation faces is a useful starting point, when considering how alumni can add value.

03 /

Ask alumni how they would like to contribute and what they would be willing to support

- alumni have a unique perspective having completed one of the organisation's programmes, and have the best understanding of support they may have found beneficial. Bringing alumni together with staff can help harness enthusiasm and ensure that priorities between these two groups are aligned.

Case study



'IkamvaYouth' is a tutoring and employability skills after-school programme for disadvantaged communities in South Africa. They surveyed a number of their alumni to: assess their post-school progress; ascertain how the organisation might continue to support them; and ask whether they would be willing to be involved in supporting the next generation of students.

04 /

Do not try too much all at once

- initial activity needs to be centred on establishing relationships and on giving consideration to how both your alumni and organisation can benefit from the engagement. If objectives are too ambitious in the first year, they can be too difficult to accomplish and end up being both disappointing and demotivating.

05/

Build on nostalgia and existing organisational culture - what do alumni most remember about their experiences with the organisation? It is important to understand the essence of what made their experiences special and, since emotional affinity is what will help alumni to reconnect, to continue to bring this to life, through communications and activities. It is important to recognise that, perhaps more so than with a school, the organisation may have changed or developed over time and, therefore, experiences between alumni may vary significantly.

06/

Identify the right person to lead the alumni programme - it could be a member of the alumni community or a member of staff. It can be particularly beneficial if this person is both established within the organisation and well connected, as they will already have strong relationships with alumni to build on. Someone with experience of managing relationships and projects would also be advantageous, but passion is what is most important initially, to generate enthusiasm.

“Be willing to start small so you can test what works and what doesn’t work. Encourage alumni to give feedback on how you’re doing and reach out to other people who have done alumni programmes really well already.”

(Director of Alumni Relations, AIFS Study Abroad)

Creating a culture

Once you have identified the objectives for engaging with alumni, this vision needs to be communicated to the alumni, staff and current participants. This can be more challenging for organisations whose programmes take place in multiple locations. It is, therefore, even more crucial to identify this key vision, which all alumni can identify with, regardless of when, where or how they were involved as participants. Here are our top tips about how to do so.

01 /

Take advantage of social media – the immediacy of social media can help alumni feel connected to the organisation. You can post photos, news and stories on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, and YouTube can be used for live videos and testimonials.

02 /

Get local media on board – appointing a spokesperson amongst the alumni to speak to the media is particularly effective. Interviews, photos and coverage of any events can be particularly popular stories for the media.

03 /

Create visuals and basic branding - visual material can be powerful. Consistent messaging and online representation on the website and social media all help to spread and articulate the message.

04 /

Identify high profile alumni – not all organisations will have celebrity or high profile alumni, but if you do, it is important to reach out to them. They will not only have plenty of connections, but will also have the ability to raise the profile of the network and organisation more widely.

Case study



'Boys and Girls Clubs of America' are looking to reconnect with their alumni for the first time. They estimate that they have approximately 16 million alumni. In order to spread the word, they have identified 25 alumni who have followed diverse pathways and filmed these alumni answering a series of questions. These videos have been shared on social media. This has encouraged others to share their stories with the organisation, thereby building a visual identity of the organisation.

05 /

Put alumni engagement on the agenda at meetings – staff, volunteers, and trustees all have an interest in the organisation's wellbeing. They may be able to lend support as well as connect the network to alumni.

Case study



'NCS Trust' are a UK-based organisation that manages the National Citizen Service. Their programmes are delivered by 300 different organisations and so building relationships with alumni from each one has been challenging. NCS Trust have addressed this by building affinity through branding. Their recently developed Alumni Opportunities Hub has been strategically branded with the logo and messaging of NCS Trust. The Trust has also sent branding guidelines to all providers of the programme.

Current participants

It is far more time efficient and cost effective to foster relationships between the organisation and participants before they become alumni, rather than tracking them down in years to come. Recent alumni are often most engaged with their experiences of the organisation and well-disposed towards keeping in touch. We suggest the following steps for building current student engagement.

01 /

Communicate the message clearly - information should be given and expectations set whilst participants are still actively involved, so that, if they so wish, they have a clear idea of how they can continue to be engaged after they leave.

Case study



Noored Kooli ('Teach for Estonia') introduces participants to the concept of alumni during their initial training sessions. It is embedded into the culture of the organisation that the two-year teaching placement is only the first part of the participants' journey with the organisation, and there is an expectation that graduates of the programme will stay in touch and continue to be involved.

02 /

Celebrate positive experiences - alumni are far more likely to want to stay in touch if their experiences with the organisation are positive. Speak with up-coming alumni to understand what has made their experience particularly formative; alumni are likely to be most enthusiastic about the organisation immediately after the programme.

Creating systems







Effective alumni engagement depends on the establishment and maintenance of systems. This includes both how to get in touch with alumni, and what to say when you do. Successful communication, and the consequent benefits, hinge on alumni receiving relevant messages at the right time and in the right way for them. This section discusses how to plan a communications strategy, as well as the tools and knowledge required to ensure it is sustainable.





Communication

Before deciding about what and when to communicate with alumni, it is crucial to decide how. With digitalisation and the growth of social media, it is now easier and cheaper to communicate. 100% of organisations interviewed communicated with alumni through at least one online channel, with email and Facebook being the most popular.

Table 1 below sets out some of the communication tools available:

	Benefits	Drawback
Email 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low cost. • Can be sent to both individuals and groups. • Encourages interaction, easy to reply to. • Easier to personalise. • Instantaneous. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to ignore. • Can go into spam, trash, junk folder.
Printed magazine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older alumni respond better. • Stands out from mass of online newsletters. • People more likely to read more than once. • Can send to those who don't use email. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive to produce and send. • Lots of waste if returned mail and alumni have moved.
Online newsletter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good for general updates. • Good for engaging with alumni who might not be interested in being active supporters. • Lots of space for varied content to appeal to wide audience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to ignore. • Can go into spam. • Difficult to personalise.
Social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate contact. • Can conduct surveys and collect feedback easily. • Instant engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited audience. • Time intensive: need to post regularly engage people.

More specifics on social media in the next section.

	Benefits	Drawback
Website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good for creating the culture and ethos of the network. • Can engage with alumni without needing contact details. • Good for updating news and events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs updating regularly or can quickly feel dated. • Largely a one-way method of communication.
Telephone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can make individual 'asks' - financial or otherwise. • Immediate rise in engagement. • Personal touch. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time intensive. • Expensive.
Face-to-face at events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best for engagement and enthusiasm. • Individual asks. • Personal touch. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time intensive. • Can be expensive to put on.
WhatsApp 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instant engagement. • Easy to delegate. • Can message individuals or groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires a smartphone. • Difficult to manage centrally.

The methods you choose will depend both on resources and context, but it is important to consider which forums and platforms your alumni already use to communicate, since it will be easier to engage them on ones they already use. If this varies between generations, we would advise adapting accordingly to successfully reach as many of the alumni community, as possible.

Content of communications

Deciding what to say to alumni can be difficult, especially as their age and experience with the organisation may vary considerably. As a starting point, we would recommend consulting with alumni about what they would be interested in and identifying a small group who can help advise and put together communications. You need to balance their interests with news you want to share, and things you would like their involvement with, to make sure they keep reading the communications. Our suggestions for optimising engagement are to do the following.

01 /

Keep content of newsletters varied – whilst it is difficult to please all readers with every feature, we would advise keeping the content as varied as possible. Content could include: articles on alumni, updates from the organisation, information about events, and a variety of opportunities to get involved. In our research we found features with an alumni focus to be particularly popular.

02 /

Send invitations separately – whilst newsletters are one way of highlighting important dates for events, they can be viewed as a passive form of communication and the response rate is consequently lower. Sending invitations from an individual rather than from the organisation can help to build relationships and encourage more alumni to open and respond to them.

03 /

Tailor your invitations – whilst newsletters might be sent to the entire alumni network, you might think about ‘segmenting’ invitations, so that alumni only receive opportunities for things that are age and location appropriate. Although this might take a bit longer, it is likely to result in higher engagement.

04 /

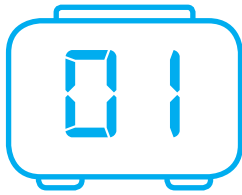
Find your style, and stick to it – it is important to remember that this is an audience you are not merely informing, but you are building relationships with. Find, and stick to, a tone that reflects this to build consistency.

05 /

Pay attention to subject lines – it might seem insignificant, but subject lines can have a considerable impact on whether alumni open emails. Organisations that put humour and personal touches in subject lines have found that open rates increase as a result.

Communication timeline

Thinking about when you send messages is also important. Here are some suggestions about mapping that out.



Communicate enough, but not too much - the ideal regularity of communication will vary between organisations, and we would advise asking alumni how often they would like to hear from you. On average, the organisations interviewed sent communications to alumni between every one to three months. Alumni experts suggest that engagement may decline if you leave communications longer than six months. You should post on social media platforms at least once per week, and ideally more regularly with Twitter.



Be realistic - resources are going to vary between organisations. If a newsletter is not initially possible, then disseminate content through social media and on the website to start with, rather than focusing resources on something that is just not sustainable. It is better that alumni receive little and often, rather than a lot, infrequently.



Build a calendar - once the network increases in size there is a risk of alumni becoming overloaded with messages from different people. It is advisable at this point to create a shared calendar for any staff who communicate with alumni. This will both regulate communications and avoid clashes.



Avoid sending on Mondays and Fridays - most people open an email within three hours of it reaching their inbox, so the days surrounding the weekend are not as successful. We would advise sending communications in the middle of the week for the best open and response rates.

Social media for communication

In addition to the suggestions set out above, this section looks at social media communication more specifically, since it operates a bit differently from email or post. It is a more immediate forum (which is beneficial for quickly generating support for the organisation, or a specific event) but it also requires regular content to be posted.

Whilst it has taken some time for social media to become commonplace, 94% of experts interviewed said it was an important way of engaging with alumni. It is not only a cheap resource with extensive functionality, but also the space where alumni are already in touch with each other. This section will look at the different platforms available, as well as how best to utilise them, to most effectively engage with alumni.

Alumni experts reported that Facebook was the most popular social media platform used for alumni engagement, with 92% using Facebook for engaging alumni on a regular basis. This was followed by LinkedIn, which 64% of alumni experts interviewed, use regularly.

Social media platforms used by interviewees

Facebook

92%

Twitter

31%

LinkedIn

64%

Youtube

14%

Instagram

11%

Pinterest

8%

It is worth bearing in mind that this is a rapidly evolving area and so popular platforms may change over time. To start with, we would recommend selecting a couple of the platforms most widely used in your community at the moment. Here are some tips on how to use them.

01 /

Enhance existing communities – Facebook can be a fantastic way of grouping people together and prompting conversations. Start by searching social media to see whether different cohorts or alumni from different projects, locations, or eras have already created groups to stay in touch with each other. If so, contact the administrators of the groups to see whether they could be responsible for prompting conversations and sharing updates and opportunities to get involved.

Case study



'1st Creigiau Scout Group' in Wales have found that solely having an email based relationship with younger alumni, was quite ineffective. Consequently, they set up a Twitter account and Facebook page and have found their alumni prefer bite-sized news items on social media, to a newsletter. They share the account responsibility across all group leaders and they all post regularly.

02 /

Use the communication functionality – social media can be an effective tool for engaging alumni on an individual or collective basis. You can both create messages or invitations to the whole group, or engage in one to one conversations through the messenger function, which can help maintain the personal touch.

03 /

Create groups where they do not already exist – depending on the size of the organisation you can have official groups, specific to location or cohort, or you can have one central page for alumni. It is important that the groups are active, so if you have multiple groups, make sure there is an administrator in each group who can keep conversations moving and post at least once per week.

Case study



'Raleigh International', a UK-based organisation enabling young people to volunteer in overseas projects, have a clear social media strategy to keep messaging streamlined. They have a LinkedIn group, where alumni can post their fundraising efforts (this is more professional than conversational). They also post opportunities here, if they are looking for a videographer to cover an event, for example. They have both centralized and regional Facebook groups. The regional groups take care of themselves, but the central team post regional opportunities, where appropriate.

Social media is the least expensive channel available, you can be really creative with it. It is possible to do much more with limited resources.

(National Director, Boys and Girls Clubs of America)

Databases

Successful delivery of your communications strategy will rest on a reliable and robust data management system. We would highly recommend setting up a system as a key priority from the outset, since it can become difficult and cumbersome to effectively manage the network without it.

There are three things to consider with alumni data:

1. where to store data;
2. which details to collect; and
3. how to keep this information current.

Many organisations may already have a database system through which to manage the details and progress of current participants. Where possible, it is strongly advised that you first investigate whether there is an alumni 'bolt-on' option, so you

can continue using this system once participants become alumni. This will save a lot of time both in relation to populating a new system and also training staff how to use it.

If you do need to set up something separate, there are several options available to manage alumni networks. These range from online networks and social media services that have no additional cost, to inexpensive tools like Microsoft Excel and Google forms, to more expensive bespoke software.

Table 2 provides a brief overview of the main options to consider when building a database to store alumni information


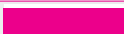








	Benefits	Drawback
Social Media: LinkedIn / Facebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic tools are free. • Widely used. • Easy to publicise. • Alumni keep details current. • In-built communication and events tools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to segment alumni for specific purpose. • Difficult to search. • Cannot record activities. • Cannot record how alumni would like to support you.
Microsoft Excel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inexpensive. • Easy to use. • Can filter easily. • Can record engagement and how alumni would like to support you. • Can communicate through mail merging. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would need to update details manually. • Need to input data manually initially. • No in-built communications or events tools.
Google Forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inexpensive. • Easy to input data - can integrate with website so link can be shared. • Can filter easily. • Can record engagement and how alumni would like to support you. • Can communicate through mail merging. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would need to update details manually. • No in-built communications or events tools.
Bespoke Software (Salesforce was the most popular with organisations we interviewed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to search and segment by groups. • Easy to record complex data. • Very effective with large networks. • Can track relationships between alumni and institution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be expensive but your organization may be eligible for Salesforce.org – a free version for non-profits. • Requires training to use.

We would advise organisations with minimal resources to opt for a two-fold approach: integrate Google forms into the website, to allow for collection of email addresses for a centralised database; and create Facebook and LinkedIn pages. This allows alumni to both be connected and to communicate in a way that suits them. We would recommend having multiple methods to communicate with alumni where possible, such as email address and social media links, so that if one becomes outdated, you can still get in touch with them.

01 /

Decide which data to collect – at the very minimum we advise collecting full name, (including maiden name if appropriate), e-mail address, years when actively involved with the organisation, location, project name alumni were involved in, as well as current occupation.

Data Interviewees Collect from Alumni

Email Address		98%
Phone Number		65%
Postal Address		60%
Social Media Details		25%
Years of Involvement		78%
Current Occupation		73%
Job History		60%
Support Offered		20%
Historic Support		35%
Interests		18%

02 /

Identify a time to collect data for those who will soon become alumni – it is more effective and less time-consuming to collect data from participants before they become alumni. You could also identify a group of ambassadors from the group to help sign up their peers.

Case study



'Virtual Enterprises International', an entrepreneurship and employability programme for school students in the U.S., have an exit survey for students when they leave the programme. All students are required to take this before they complete the programme. The survey includes information about continuing their relationship with the organisation, and the option to join the alumni network. Students are able to either opt in or opt out.

03 /

Consider data protection – it is important to refer to local legislation requirements surrounding data collection and data storage. Depending on this, you may need to set out how alumni data will be used and stored. Alumni will need to agree to these beforehand.

Maintaining data

Keeping the data current once it has been collected was cited as one of the greatest challenges for even the most established alumni networks. 76% of alumni experts we consulted used at least two different approaches for ensuring their data is current. We suggest identifying at least three of the following methods to ensure details are as accurate and up-to-date as possible.

01 /

Send out surveys – whilst these will not necessarily let you know if email addresses change, they can be a great way of keeping other details current, such as existing occupation, location and interests. You can also ask for a secondary email address.

Case study



The head office at IkamvaYouth distribute a survey every three years to get up-to-date information about their alumni. This reduces pressure on the individual tutoring branches, who can instead concentrate on the current students. IkamvaYouth find one of the main challenges with data maintenance in South Africa is that phone numbers often change as alumni switch between telecom companies. Having a survey that goes out via email, therefore, does not rely on the phone numbers being correct, although they do still face the challenge of people changing their email addresses.

02 /

Encourage alumni to self-identify when details change – with an integrated form on the website so that alumni can update their details if they change. This does not require a current email address in the same way the survey does.

03 /

Set some monthly or annual goals – try and contact a set number of alumni each month to verify contact details, and follow-up on any e-mails that 'bounce'.

04 /

Split the responsibility – ensure that all staff engaged with alumni relations know that it is part of their role to: ensure details are kept up to date; and edit records that change. If you have an alumni committee or any ambassadors, they can be instrumental in keeping tabs on their peers too.

05 /

Make use of face-to-face contact – if alumni attend or assist at events, make a habit of checking that their information is current.

06 /

Demonstrate value – alumni will want to stay in touch and update their details, if they see the benefit of doing so. This will be further discussed in Section 4.

07 /

Social media – setting up a LinkedIn page and connecting to alumni will allow you to monitor any updates for individuals as they change their profiles. LinkedIn also allows you to filter by profession and location of alumni.

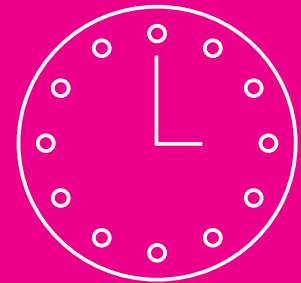
Case study



Camfed' are an NGO that support vulnerable girls to attend school when they might otherwise not have had the opportunity, or seen the value of doing so, in remote communities across five countries in Africa. Camfed's alumni network, known as CAMA, has over 30,000 members and struggles to maintain alumni details once the girls complete their education. They now employ a number of methods to keep details current. Camfed have recently created a bespoke social network for CAMA members, which works on low bandwidth, so those in rural areas are also able to communicate with their peers. Alumni get an ID number that is not linked to their mobile number, to ensure that they can still be located if the SIM cards change. This reduces the possibilities of people slipping under the radar.

There is no 'one-size fits all' answer for data maintenance, which means you are able to select the solutions that work best for you in your context, since different alumni will respond to different methods. We would recommend trying as many as possible and ensuring that updating and editing is prioritised as an ongoing process.

Time and Talent



This section will discuss some of the ways that you can benefit from the support of alumni, and how to put these ideas into practice. Whilst alumni support has long been associated with fundraising, especially in education institutions, it is often their time and expertise that can actually add the most value.

Ambassadors and advocates

Alumni are the experts when it comes to talking about your programmes, as they have experienced them first hand. One of the most popular ways alumni can lend their support is as ambassadors and advocates for the organisation. As one organisation mentioned: “alumni are our best asset” – for spreading the word about the programmes and enhancing the reputation of the organisation. The alumni voice can give insight into their experiences and what programmes are like in reality. 71% of organisations interviewed for this guide benefited in some way from public support from alumni.

Creating an ambassador programme was the most common way to harness support from recent alumni. Not only is this a good opportunity to tap into the alumni’s enthusiasm and experience, but it also helps new alumni to develop themselves professionally too. Here are our suggestions about how you create an ambassador programme.

01 /

Decide on purpose and length of the programme

– it is important to establish why you would like to have an ambassador programme. Identify two or three key activities that help to achieve this purpose and then structure a programme around this. In order to maintain the enthusiasm of alumni throughout, set a clear end date to the programme.

Case study



‘Scope Global’ is an Australian organisation that runs a programme for skilled volunteers to undertake a long-term assignment across a range of international projects. Their volunteers often spend a number of years overseas and so the organisation established an ambassador programme that allows the volunteers to share their experiences in a formal way, and encourage new volunteers to sign up. The organisation nominates 18 recently returned alumni every year and ensures there is at least one volunteer in every state. The main role of the ambassadors is to run events for potential and past volunteers in their local area. They are expected to run six to ten events across the year, which equates to about five hours of support each month, to organise and facilitate these events.

02 /

Get the right alumni involved – not all alumni will want to be ambassadors, and it is important to identify individuals you are confident can represent the organisation well. This is a much easier task when staff can personally identify individuals who they would recommend. However, once the programme grows, you will have to be more strategic when identifying the right alumni to be ambassadors.

03 /

Support the alumni throughout their commitment – whether this is an official training session, a half way point get-together or a more informal arrangement, it is important to ensure that alumni are well supported whilst representing the organisation. This not only helps to keep the messaging consistent, but also helps them deliver an effective programme.

Case study

'AIFS', a study and volunteer abroad programme, offers a formal training session for their alumni, who take part in the ambassador programme. During this session the alumni review a 'plan of action' with the office. They then implement the plan throughout the course of the year with help from AIFS and the students' home universities.

If you do not have the capacity to run an ambassador programme, there are a number of other ways alumni can support the organisation as advocates:

01

Write about their experiences – personal testimonials can be an easy way of showcasing what it is like to be involved with the organisation. Blogs, articles or profiles can be publicised: in newsletters, marketing materials, on the website, social media and training materials. This allows alumni who are not in close proximity to be involved too. We would recommend having short and snappy questions for visual displays and to save longer text testimonials and stories for newsletters and the website.

02

Be a media spokesperson – quotes and interviews with alumni make for a much more compelling media story for the press. Try and identify a few alumni who would be comfortable reaching out to their local press, or being contacted by journalists to share their story.

03

Face to face recruitment and retention – alumni can support in the recruitment of new participants, or encourage those already involved to remain. Alumni can attend events to speak with potential participants about their experiences, and how the programme prepared them for what came next.

04

Advocate for the organisation – the collective voice of a group of alumni can be a powerful one within wider society. As your biggest stakeholder, alumni can collectively be a powerful political voice for the institution, advocating for key issues and raising the profile of the organisation. However, we note that to ensure that alumni advocates reflect a message that is consistent with that of the central organisation, a high degree of coordination is required.

Case study

In the past year, alumni of Camfed in Zimbabwe have supported 154,000 girls to stay in education who might otherwise have struggled to do so, as a result of social and financial pressures. As alumni of these communities, the women were able to understand the pressures the girls were facing, and consequently put together a programme of support to encourage them to return to education.

Mentoring

Mentoring can be a rewarding and beneficial way for alumni to support current participants. Mentoring can either take place online or in person. Mentoring can be time intensive and there are a number of potential pitfalls to avoid. We suggest considering the following for establishing a mentorship programme.

01 /

Decide on a format – mentoring can be a formalised scheme, or a less formal opportunity for alumni to share advice. Informal mentoring is more ad hoc, and may just last for a couple of meetings or email exchanges. A formal scheme will require more time to set up, need a robust matching process and last for a set period of time with specific goals. Often one type of mentoring may feed into another.

02 /

Set objectives and expectations – we would suggest attaching some measurable goals for the mentor and mentee to focus on, so that both parties are aware of measures of success and can work towards them together. Mentoring is often more effective, if the regularity of meetings and specific timings are agreed in advance. The mentee should come to these meetings prepared.

Case study

'Australian National University' have run a mentoring pilot program focusing on global careers. 30 mentors took part and they all had two or more years of international work experience. Mentees were either current students or recent graduates. ANU facilitated introductions to mentor and mentee after matching them, and then left it to them to meet face to face, by telephone and/or through Skype. It was resource intensive, but alumni have now given 800 hours to the university

03 /

Carefully consider matching and training – where mentoring has been successful, this is often attributed to effective training and matching. Understanding your alumni before matching them with a mentee is very important. If an alumnus is not a suitable match, there may be alternative ways they can support the organisation.

Case study

'Advance', a network of alumni from Australian schools and universities who are living overseas, helps to pair up young alumni with those who are more experienced in their industries. Three young alumni recently approached Advance seeking assistance with their respective fashion businesses. Advance was able to pair them with someone in the network who had been in the industry for much longer than them. The mentor was able to advise them in regards to branding and PR, and shared other insights on how to build a fashion business in the U.S.

Careers support

In addition to mentoring, there are many shorter time commitments alumni can make to support current participants looking to secure employment. Here are our suggestions.

01 /

Careers talks.

Giving careers talks about what they have gone on to do since completing the programme can be one of the easiest ways to involve alumni and allow them to share their post-programme experiences, for the benefit of current participants. This could be as a guest lecturer giving a talk, or in an interactive workshop for a smaller number of participants.

Based on our experience in the UK, we would recommend taking the following steps to ensure a successful session.

- **Have a facilitator** – they can help keep the session both engaging and to time.
- **Identify objectives and share with alumni** – this will keep the session on track and relevant for the audience.
- **Brief the alumni** – they are likely to be able to share more relevant information and experience if they can prepare in advance.
- **Make it interactive** – audiences tend to take more in when they have the chance to chat with alumni directly, to ask questions, or undertake an activity together.

Case study



'AIFS' offers a series of webinars and development opportunities for alumni who have recently graduated from their programmes. For example, they organised a panel webinar about getting involved with international education, and three alumni working in the sector participated as panelists. The webinar was available both for current participants of the programme and alumni. The organisation tries to ensure that alumni benefit from staying involved. Their limited budget keeps them resourceful and creative.

02 /

Skills Development.

As well as imparting knowledge about their careers and the different employment sectors, alumni may be helpful in assisting with skills development and 'job-readiness' for young alumni, or current participants, looking to develop their CVs, and how to frame their experiences in a professional context.

Case study

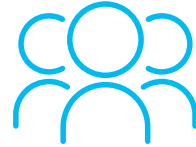


'Advance', found that one of the challenges for those returning to Australia was learning how to frame their international experiences. Alumni help those more recently returned in writing their CVs and presenting their achievements in ways that are applicable to the local labour market.

More ways to mobilise alumni

01

They can run a local 'chapter' – if a large number of your alumni have moved away, they might want to engage with each other locally. You could nominate someone in each hub to be a chapter leader and organise events, so that they continue to be engaged, in spite of their physical distance from the organisation. They can organise networking events and also feed back to the organisation about what alumni are doing and how else they might like to assist.



02

Run training sessions – as well as promoting the organisation, alumni ambassadors can also assist with training new participants. As former participants themselves, they will be aware of the skills required to undertake the programme.



Case study



'Student Hubs', an organisation that runs social action projects with university students, use experienced alumni from a specific project to help future cohorts understand the context and social challenges of that project. Alumni also assist with training and skills development for new students to ensure they are able to successfully undertake the placements. These include, for instance, classroom skills and interacting with different members of the community.

Fundraising

Asking for financial contributions takes significant time and effort for an organisation, and in order to do so successfully you will need to ensure that the context is prepared and alumni are willing to be asked. This section explores ideas that create the environment for fundraising and suggests some starting points.

01 /

Establish whether the organisation is ready to fundraise – before spending the resources, it is important to consider whether you are ready to fundraise from alumni. You must have systems in place both to receive donations and thank alumni, before you start asking. You must also have a clear idea what you are going to be asking for, and why.

02 /

Ask alumni if they are interested – you could send a survey out to alumni to ascertain both whether they would consider donating to the organisation, and if they would, what projects they would be interested in funding. You can then build your campaigns in response to their answers.

Case study



'IkamvaYouth' in South Africa initially focused all their efforts on encouraging alumni to become tutors and share their expertise. However, following a recent survey, over 80% said they would be 'likely' to support IkamvaYouth financially if they were asked. As a result, the organisation has recently embarked on their first fundraising campaign.

03 /

Cultivate a habit of philanthropy with current participants – research shows that if alumni donate

for four consecutive years, they are likely to be a lifelong donor. Start by asking for a small gift of a couple of dollars and the chances of then soliciting larger gifts later on, is much greater.

04 /

Wait some time before fundraising if re-establishing contact – if you are re-establishing contact with alumni who left some years ago, asking for a financial contribution should not be the first ask. It is important to build the relationship and demonstrate the organisation is a worthy cause and a trusted recipient of funds. A period of two years is the recommended time to re-establish relationships before asking for financial donations.

05 /

Demonstrate need – it is important for alumni to understand why you are fundraising, what the funds will be used for and the impact the funds raised will have on the lives of future participants. Fundraising requires a story which shows impact.

06 /

Make friend-raising a priority – this is absolutely essential for successful fundraising. Take advantage of opportunities to make personal contact at events, and be as personable as possible in communications. It is also important not to rush. Potential donors might take time to consider giving a gift. It may be months or even years before a gift or donation is made, after being initially approached.

How to ask

Once the context is set for fundraising and relationships have been developed, there are a number of ways you can make the ask. Most organisations surveyed used multiple methods for asking. These are listed below.



Letter or email

This is the most popular way to generate support for specific causes, since it offers the opportunity to map out the need and the way in which donations will be used.



Social media campaign

Social media is a great way to supplement wider campaigns, but should not be the only way that you reach out to alumni. The Central European University in Hungary utilised social media to promote their 'day of philanthropy' when they encouraged students and alumni to make a small donation towards a specific project.



Events

Although events can be time and cost intensive, existing events in the calendar could provide opportunities for fundraising and also for raising awareness of campaigns, or for raising small amounts of money.



General marketing

Promoting fundraising on the website helps to raise awareness of the organisation's need. It allows alumni or other members of the community to make donations when they want or are able to.

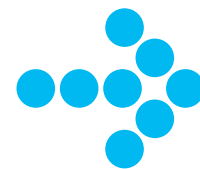
Thanking alumni

In addition to asking for and receiving financial gifts, it is crucial to consider how you will recognise the donations and steward the relationships, so that these alumni are encouraged and motivated to continue their support. Some key steps to consider are as follows.

01

Send personal 'thank you' messages

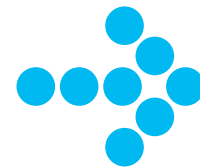
An email or phone call, especially to larger donors, is a way of recognising the support straight away.



02

Invite donors to special events

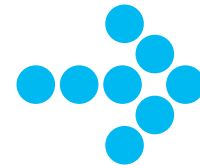
You could invite donors to drinks receptions, quiz nights, and any celebration events.



03

Thank alumni publically

If formal and public recognition is appropriate, donors can be thanked at events and in newsletters.



Our advice is that you need to have donor journeys mapped out before you ask for money so that you're able to say thank you properly.

(Individual Giving and Communities Manager, The Scout Association)

Keeping alumni engaged over time



Until now we have largely focused on how alumni can support you, but this engagement will be short-lived if alumni do not recognise what is in it for them too. This section explores how you can ensure your volunteers are well looked after, and some of the benefits they can enjoy, as a result of keeping in touch.

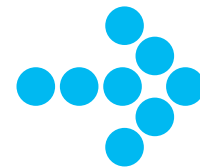
From the outset it is useful to track which alumni respond to different communications and invitations and to note any general trends as these may feed into your alumni strategy, going forward. Interviewees noticed that engagement tended to peak for most alumni in the first couple of years immediately after becoming alumni. It becomes difficult to engage alumni over a much longer period of time, unless there is something in the relationship for them.

Volunteer management

Recognising and thanking alumni for their support is important. It will help ensure they 1/ have a good experience, and 2/ are open to giving feedback about the programme. They are far more likely to volunteer again in future if they feel appreciated and are reassured they have had a positive impact. Cornell University continues to enjoy the support of their alumni for decades after they graduate. They put this down to ensuring that they are offering meaningful opportunities for engaging alumni. Here are our suggestions for effective volunteer engagement.

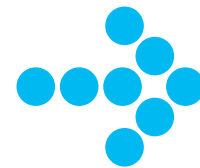
01

Make sure your 'asks' are appropriate – potential volunteers can become despondent if the opportunities offered to them are not relevant to them. For example, if someone is living and working several hours away, they may not be able to attend a training session for new participants. Tailoring the asks to the appropriate audiences often yields positive results and sustained engagement.



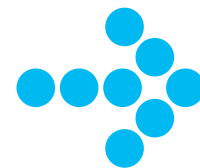
02

Give plenty of notice – the more alumni become involved, the more they will want to stay involved. However, many alumni will be busy and unable to support without ample notice. Six to eight weeks is the recommended lead time to send an invitation for an event to allow alumni plenty of opportunity to make arrangements. It can be effective to build a calendar of opportunities for the year, so that alumni can plan in advance.



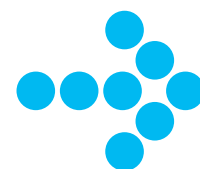
03

Highlight the benefits of volunteering – volunteering can help alumni to develop skills such as public speaking, leadership and communications. If alumni are long-term volunteers then perhaps you could offer a reference, or encourage them to include the experience on their CV.



04

Offer ongoing opportunities or leadership positions – alumni like to feel challenged and also rewarded by their volunteering experiences. Once one project is completed, their support and input could be recognised by offering them a more advanced level of responsibility. For example, if they have been an outstanding ambassador, they could offer training for future ambassadors.



Segmenting Alumni

It is important to recognise the diversity of alumni within your network. Here, we offer some suggestions for some effective ways of segmenting the alumni community, to better cater to their needs and interests, and ways you might want to manage this.

01 /

Age – more recent alumni can offer a different type of support to those who are established in their careers, or even retired. Current participants may relate to them better, as their experiences are much fresher. Some organisations have put together a specific young alumni ambassador programme to ensure this group stay engaged from day one.

02 /

Location – if a large number of alumni have moved to another part of the country or overseas, it can be a little more difficult to engage and involve them in person. This group can sometimes be more mobile and change their contact details more frequently, which is why it is even more important to give them a reason to stay involved. You could offer them opportunities to get involved online, as an ambassador or as an online mentor. If there is a sizeable group of alumni that has relocated to a certain place, then you might want to consider setting up local hubs or groups, so they can support each other and stay connected to the organisation.

Case study



'Raleigh International' has over 16 national societies across the world, including one in each country where Raleigh runs programmes, which volunteers can join on their return. These are all run by alumni, who monitor Facebook groups. Through these groups, they are not only able to organise local social events, but also community projects. These allow alumni to continue to engage in volunteer work long after their experience abroad has ended. Several societies also help recruit and prepare volunteers to take part in Raleigh expeditions.

03 /

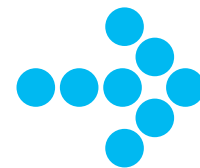
Historic support – it is crucial to maintain records of how alumni have supported you in the past, so that you can ask engaged alumni to support you in a similar way again. We advise against messaging alumni who have helped before as if for the first time, or you risk having them feel undervalued, and not wanting to contribute again.

Social events

Maintaining social connections with their peers might be one of the main reasons alumni want to stay in touch. Having been through what may have been a very formative experience together, the relationships that alumni have made with their cohort or group can be long-lasting. Many organisations we spoke with had a calendar of events that they put on across the year, to ensure alumni have the opportunity to see each other. This section will suggest some ideas on how to keep these events simple and cost effective.

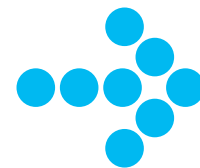
01

Invite alumni to existing events – rather than spend the money and resources organising something separate, why not extend them an invitation to events that are already in the calendar? This provides them with the opportunity to see their peers, as well as the opportunity to share their experiences and advice with other potential participants or other stakeholders.



02

Encourage ad-hoc events – this is a good way for alumni to meet up with each other without the expense and time it takes to organise wide-scale events. Try and identify alumni who would be keen to organise something in a location that is accessible to a large number of alumni. If they do not have access to the contact details of the alumni, you can offer to send something out on their behalf to publicise the event.



Case study

'Noored Kooli' (Teach for Estonia) have an annual summer conference that alumni are invited to attend with their families. They also have two other types of events throughout the year: education discussion evenings every two or three months, and learning trips for investigating innovative educational practices across Estonia. The main purpose of these events is to bring people together so they can talk about what they are doing, share initiatives, and foster the commitment to the organisation's mission, i.e. strengthen the education system in Estonia.



We're looking to organize some low-key networking happy hours for alumni to get together in more of an informal environment. We won't do anything except provide location and give a short talk at the beginning to explain how they can continue to be involved with the organization. It's important for developing the 'community' aspect of our alumni engagement.

(Director of Alumni Relations, AIFS Study Abroad)

Alumni to alumni support

In addition to supporting the organisation, alumni can also benefit from staying in contact with each other. They can share career insights and the network can also serve as a potential source of business relationships. The benefit of having a professional network to tap into may encourage alumni to stay in touch. Here are our suggestions on how to go about this.

01 /

Start a LinkedIn page – LinkedIn is the most used online tool for professional networking globally. If you do not already have an account for your organisation, we suggest that you create a group that alumni can join to interact with each other.

02 /

Peer to peer support – if recent alumni are looking to secure employment after completing a programme with the organisation, they could be a huge support to each other. They could share job opportunities they come across, offer feedback on each other's CVs, and boost each other's resilience. This is most successful when it happens organically, but you can encourage alumni to create Facebook groups, WhatsApp threads or email chains where they can stay in touch and support each other.

Case study



'IkamvaYouth' continue to support alumni after they matriculate by offering networking opportunities in locations where several alumni live, after 81% of alumni said they would be interested in attending. They recently hosted an event in Cape Town, that provided an opportunity for alumni to network with each other. One former participant of IkamvaYouth was particularly looking for someone who works in project management to mentor her through her final year of University. She was able to connect with a mentor through another former participant at the event, who identified someone he knew from his own cohort.

03 /

Online forums – to build on the informal support alumni offer to each other, you could create a more formal online space where alumni can share job opportunities, connect with alumni from other cohorts, and share career resources. However, before investing in an online forum or portal, we would advise consulting with the alumni to gauge how interested and involved they would be. To be effective, a forum should be well-used, monitored effectively and updated regularly – which takes time.

Case study

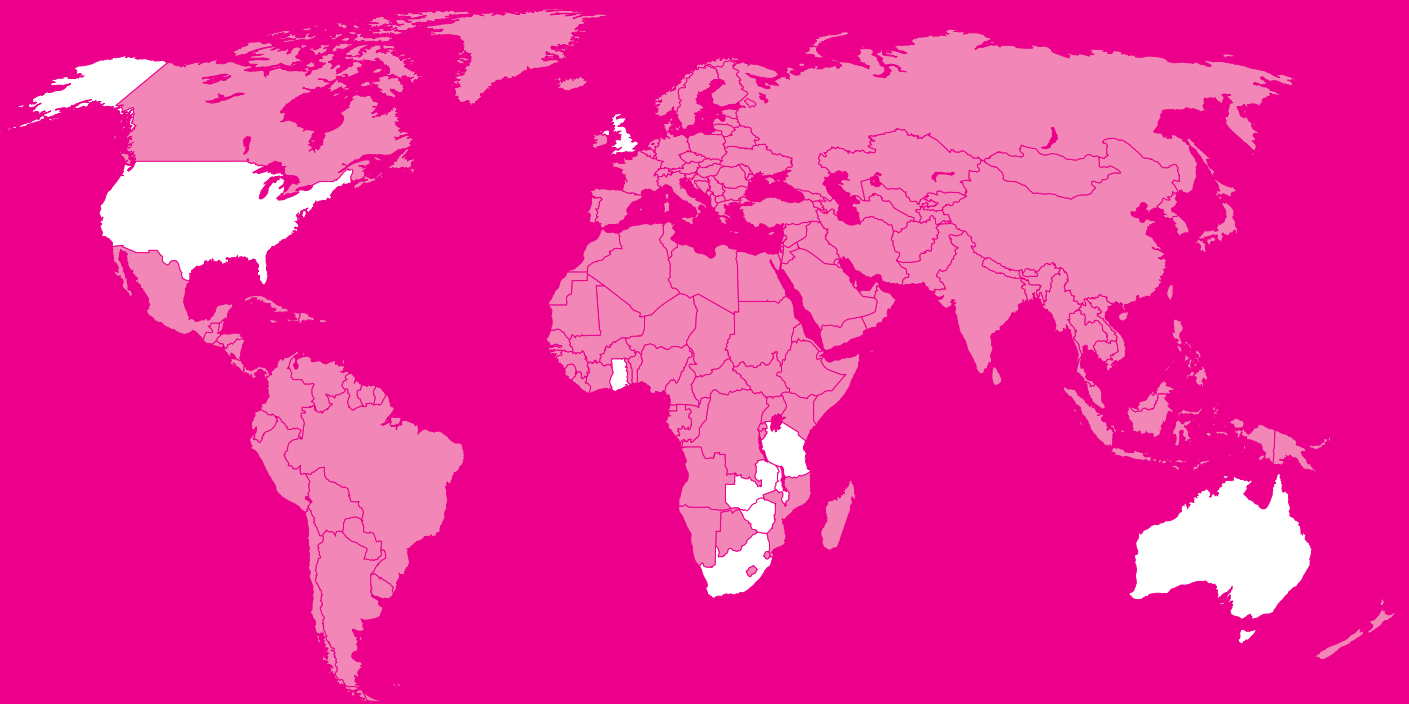


'NCS Trust' have created an 'opportunity hub' that graduates of their programmes can access online. This resource has been designed to help to connect young alumni with employment opportunities and a series of career resources. To ensure that the resources and opportunities are useful and relevant, NCS Trust sent alumni a simple survey of 10-15 questions about their interests and aspirations. Over 4000 have already completed the survey so far.

04 /

Professional networking events – these can be valuable to alumni needing to build contacts in a certain field or location, or to those who would like to make a career move and build their knowledge of different roles and sectors. Rather than creating a calendar of networking events, we would advise letting alumni take the lead; they will know where and what would be useful to them. You can support their initiatives by promoting events to other alumni in certain regions or sectors.

Case studies



CAMFED

Camfed is a non-profit organisation, which works to tackle poverty and inequality across Africa, by supporting girls through education. CAMA is an alumni association for women who have been supported through their education by Camfed. The association was started in 1998 by girls who were graduating from school in Zimbabwe, and now has 33,000 members. CAMA is predicted to grow to 130,000 by 2020.

The association started because the first cohort of girls had benefitted from being part of a wider group and from the mutual support of working through education together. They wanted to maintain these relationships once they finished school, even more so since the transition between school and the wider world is a challenging one for young women where Camfed operate.

CAMA is managed through a series of democratically elected committees. A CAMA member sits on the Camfed board at a district level and there is a CAMA member on all the national boards as well, so alumni are able to contribute to policy and programme planning. The role of CAMA is two-fold: the women support each other as part of the community, and they also support the girls who are still in school and will become alumni in the future.

Alumni are an absolutely essential part of our organisation. It's the part that has the potential to be completely transformative and can affect cycles in the future.

One of the most effective ways that alumni are able to support current students is by taking part in wellbeing programmes. To date, 2,500 CAMA members help deliver their 'life skills' programme. It develops a set of social and business skills required to be successful in transitioning from education to employment. As well as supporting the girls in person, alumni can also donate to the philanthropy programme, which helps particularly vulnerable young women go to school, and affords them the resources and uniforms they need.

Once girls finish school, there are a number of additional programmes that help them secure employment and that see them through the first stages of their career. One of the challenges for girls in rural communities is finding out about job opportunities, so alumni in professions share job adverts from their respective sectors, support the young women with their applications, and conduct practice interviews. Where needed they also lend clothes to the young women who need them for their interviews.

A strong culture has emerged between women in business supporting each other's enterprises. More established women in the community help the younger members with starting new businesses and pairing them up with industry mentors to guide them through the early years. Young CAMA members are also able to apply for small grants to get their businesses started. In many rural communities, there may be few formal job opportunities, and so CAMA members inspire and support each other to start their own businesses. The alumni network then supports these business women with advice, information on new markets and pricing competitively.

The number of Camfed educated girls who then become active CAMA members is very high. About 80% of the girls who have received an education thanks to Camfed are active alumni that support each other and the next generation of girls.

IKAMVAYOUTH

IkamvaYouth are a South African based organisation that works to support disadvantaged young people in local communities through tutoring, life skills sessions, career guidance and mentoring. Historically, volunteers who deliver their programmes have been local professionals, university students and international volunteers. IkamvaYouth have recently setup an alumni network so that former participants help deliver programmes for the next generation.

IkamvaYouth have around 1,200 alumni on their network, with new matriculating students joining the network each year. Each of the 13 branches collects current contact details of the graduating cohort before they matriculate. IkamvaYouth then distribute a survey every three years to capture up to date information from alumni. These surveys are sent from the central office to reduce pressure on individual branches and ensure consistency across the whole organisation. Where contact is lost, IkamvaYouth tap into alumni and parent communities to try to reconnect with lost members.

The organisation wouldn't exist without the tutors who do so much of the work, they run the organisation and offer the programmes... the most dedicated tutors are the ones who have been through the programme themselves.

IkamvaYouth communicate through Facebook, email and Salesforce. They communicate with alumni about twice per month, although this can vary depending on the location of alumni. The Facebook page is for all alumni, whereas the emails are specific to alumni in different geographical areas. Those who volunteer as tutors might also receive additional emails regarding their involvement.

Alumni are able to volunteer in a number of different ways, but coming back as after-school tutors is the most popular option. Alumni normally volunteer in the branch where they were supported. One of the big challenges for IkamvaYouth is that alumni stop volunteering if they move away from the area, and one of the priorities in future will be to inform alumni about other centres across the country where they can volunteer, if they do move.

IkamvaYouth offer all their alumni training before they become tutors. The training equips them with necessary teaching skills and helps them establish professional relationships with their students, many of whom they might know from their time as a student. The organisation finds that alumni tutors tend to be more relatable to the students, having experienced the process and its benefits themselves.

IkamvaYouth have recently started considering fundraising through alumni, but only on a small scale, since many of their alumni are still at university and are not yet established in their careers. Alumni responded positively to a survey asking whether they would be willing to donate, and they have since launched an individual giving campaign, #fundafuture.

IkamvaYouth thank alumni for their support both by running tutor appreciation sessions, and by providing opportunities for alumni to support each other. IkamvaYouth have hosted networking opportunities in various locations where alumni are densely populated, and are organising a CV and job application workshop to support alumni looking for work.

The Scout Association and 1st Creigiau Scouting Group

The Scouts are a collection of youth groups for young people between the ages of 6 and 25, and have been active for over 100 years. Around 450,000 young people every year are involved in local Scouting.

The Scout Association is a federated organisation. Whilst some individual Scout Groups have alumni networks of their own, the Scout Association serves to keep them all connected, primarily for fundraising towards the development of Gilwell Park, where UK scouting originated. They estimate that there are around 10 million former Cubs and Scouts in the UK, but they have lost connection with many of them. The Scout Association have always had a small number of donors to the organisation, but are now looking to increase fundraising efforts to develop an education and heritage centre, invest in more support for training and also develop a fund that Scouts can apply to for hardship grants. Each individual Scout Group is a charity in their own right, and so they are responsible for raising funds for their own Group.

The Scout Association is currently putting the processes in place to ensure that they will be able to start fundraising in a more focused and systematic way. Special emphasis is being paid to the quality of the data, and ensuring that they have correct email addresses and contact details for the alumni. The Association is also developing a communications strategy, as well as a survey that will go out initially to all alumni, to establish how they would like to be involved. The communications strategy will take into account the age of alumni, and the geographic location of where they were a Scout or Leader. The organisation is also going to map their donor journeys before building relationships with alumni to ensure that the relationships are properly managed and donors appropriately thanked. The Association have an annual event called 'Reunion' during which all past and present Leaders are invited to camp to see the facilities that donations will go towards developing.

As well as a centralised alumni network, each of the individual Scouting Groups can keep in touch with their alumni. There is no requirement to do so, and so alumni engagement varies across the groups. One of the groups, 1st Creigiau Scouting Group in Wales, is an example of a club that keeps in touch with alumni. One of their biggest challenges is a lack of volunteers and so alumni (which include past Scouts, Leaders and parents) are an invested group, who are able to support them. Alumni support the group both as regular volunteers, as leaders, and also at events.

The Scouting Group send out two newsletters per year to update alumni about local news, scouting news, and any upcoming events. In addition to the newsletters, they send personal emails with particular asks. The group also have a Facebook page and a Twitter account where they post regularly in order to engage with the younger alumni. The responsibility of social media is shared so that all leaders and regular volunteers are able to post.

It's much easier if you maintain contact over the years – both from our perspective, but also from the alumni perspective; they will also feel more comfortable getting back in touch after years, to volunteer again if some connection has been retained throughout.

Whilst most of the opportunities for alumni to support the group have been in person (at events or as leaders) they are also considering how they can create opportunities for volunteers to support from a distance, since the group is in a rural community and some alumni have moved away.

Teach for Australia

Teach For Australia is an entrepreneurial non-profit organisation working to help break the cycle of educational disadvantage through improving teacher quality and leadership. Teach For Australia recruits and trains some of Australia's most talented graduates, young professionals, and career-changers, to teach for two years in schools serving low socioeconomic communities, thereby delivering improvements in student and school outcomes.

Alumni continue to play a significant role for the organisation once they complete the two-year programme. They help Teach for Australia further its mission of tackling education disadvantage by driving change and innovation through their leadership roles in education, and as ambassadors for the organisation.

The alumni network currently comprises over 200 members, with about 50 new members every year (which will increase as the programme increases in scale). Whilst engagement between alumni is high and around 90% of alumni are satisfied with the organisation, Teach For Australia is facing additional challenges in managing the alumni network as it grows. Many of the relationships between alumni and the organisation depend on personal contacts and relationships, and as the organisation continues to grow and diversify across new regions, this could become more difficult. To address this, Teach For Australia conducts an alumni reconnection campaign once a year and is establishing affinity groups, that encourage alumni to engage on issues of common interest.

Participants are introduced to the idea of the alumni network from the very beginning of their journey with Teach For Australia. Having recently gone through what can be a very intensive and difficult two-year programme themselves, alumni play a key role in recruiting, training and leading future cohorts as part of a formal mentoring programme. More specifically, Teach For Australia involves alumni in the selection process, not only as ambassadors to try and encourage graduates to apply for the programme, but also as recruiters who are able to identify which candidates would be well suited to teaching in challenging or low-income communities.

Teach For Australia has also started involving alumni in their fundraising efforts. Last year, alumni were responsible for organising a fundraising gala ball to raise both awareness and funds for the organisation. The event raised A\$15,000, and was successful in helping to favourably change the mentality around financial donations, and in increasing commitment to the organisation and its mission.

Alumni are the movement, they are our future leaders. We want to empower them as leaders who drive classroom, school and systems changes to break the cycle of disadvantage for Australia's children.

As well as supporting current participants, the alumni network also facilitates alumni to support each other. Whilst this has been quite informal to date, Teach For Australia does help alumni develop new education initiatives. They give former participants the opportunity to hone business skills such as planning, fundraising, marketing and evaluation design, by connecting alumni with organisational partners with expertise in these areas.

Raleigh International

Raleigh International is a sustainable development charity, which connects young volunteers and communities to overseas development projects. They have been engaging with alumni since the organisation was founded in 1984 and currently have 42,000 alumni. The relationship with alumni starts when they are still on their placements, to encourage them to become active citizens in their local communities when they return home.

Raleigh International keep records of which projects, countries and activity streams alumni were part of. Regardless of which programme they participate in, volunteers become part of a collective group of Raleigh International alumni when they return home. To promote alumni connection and collaboration, Raleigh International uses social media and hosts face to face events with the aim of inspiring creative, positive change.

Raleigh International has designed a communications schedule to ensure all alumni hear from them regularly. They send a newsletter every two months to all alumni they have an email address for, which has an average of 30% open rate. They also send out 'Connections', a bi-annual magazine, to all alumni postal addresses – and digitally to those on the e-mailing list. A weekly alumni blog is also shared on the website. Alumni might receive additional communications related to their projects or the countries where they undertook them.

Alumni can continue to support Raleigh International in a number of ways when they return from their expeditions. Many alumni advocate for the organisation, volunteer at open and training events for new participants, and run activities in their national society. Advocacy is one of the most popular ways to support the organisation. Whilst still on their expeditions, alumni are asked whether they would be interested in speaking to the local media about their experiences, talking with new cohorts of volunteers, or writing a testimonial for the website, for example. Raleigh International maintains a record of those who are interested in supporting in specific ways so they can tailor their communications and requests accordingly.

“Alumni are definitely the best communications asset we have, and we are very proud of that.”

Raleigh International offers a number of opportunities for alumni to stay connected with each other after they return from their expeditions. Alumni who volunteer regularly at events are invited to regular social events as thanks for their continued support. Alumni also have the opportunity to join a national society comprising other Raleigh International alumni, when they return from their expeditions. These societies run separately from the central organisation and provide both social opportunities and the chance to continue to give back to their local communities. Whilst the central team offer some support and advice, the success of the societies rests on the enthusiasm of the volunteers in their respective locations. In 2015, Raleigh Kuala Lumpur organised a successful fundraising campaign to support flood victims in Malaysia, whilst Raleigh China contributed 87,000 hours of volunteer service.

API Abroad

API Abroad is a U.S. based organisation that facilitates overseas experiences for undergraduate students. The reason for maintaining contact with alumni once they have returned to their home universities is two-fold: API Abroad can continue to support the students, providing them with re-entry programmes, so they successfully adjust back to life in the U.S.; and also so they can share their experiences with future cohorts of students who go abroad.

API Abroad maintains contact with all alumni and keeps them updated about news from the programmes, stories from the next cohort of students who go abroad, and new opportunities to get involved with. Alumni are contacted via email, Facebook and LinkedIn, although Facebook is the most popular choice for publicising opportunities. API Abroad posts multiple times per week on social media, citing job openings in the field of international education and interesting articles or international opportunities within the organisation.

API Abroad offers three different ways for alumni to support the organisation:

- A year-long mentor advocate programme started in 2007 – this serves as a professional development opportunity for alumni and also as advocacy support for the organisation. Successful applicants are flown to the headquarters in Texas where they have three days' training to become ambassadors. The ambassadors are then expected to run a series of events across the year to engage peers and potential future participants on their university campuses. They also complete a research project on international education.
- A semester-long mentor advocate programme – this lasts just one semester for students who have returned recently. Alumni are invited to feed back on their experiences, share their story on the website and social media, and invited to a local re-entry event.
- An API alumni specialist programme - this is for alumni who have participated in the programme and have already graduated from university. The programme is particularly valuable for under represented groups. It allows them to share their experiences and become role models for students from different campuses.

API Abroad schedule monthly check-ins with all the ambassadors, to ensure they feel well supported and that their messaging to potential applicants is consistent with that of the central organisation.

In the future they would like to start offering social opportunities for alumni to meet up once they return from their time overseas, and create an alumni-to-alumni mentoring programme to support recent graduates.

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