



Your NEXT-NET Thing!

Reinventing Your Alumni Association For The Internet Era

Don Philabaum, founder
Internet Strategies Group

YOU WILL LEARN:

- What is a NET-Centered Alumni Association
- Five Steps to Become NET-Centered
- Three Benefits for you

WHO SHOULD READ THIS:

- Vice Presidents
- Directors
- Assistants
- Web Managers



A NET-Centered Alumni Association...

...is one that is reinventing the way they do business by adopting Internet technology to serve a greater number of alumni than can be engaged through traditional events and activities.



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Introduction

Not everyone will agree with the recommendations of this white paper, but if it resonates with you, you'll be happy to know there are others like you who feel more should be done immediately to engage, involve, and connect with alumni using Internet technology.

This report suggests that in an era where the Internet is disintermediating hundreds of industries, and requiring companies within them to adapt their business model if they want to survive, that your alumni association too is at a crossroad, and must begin to evaluate the changes the Internet is having on your organization, your alumni, and your mission.

You will learn that you have a tremendous opportunity to reach a greater number of your alumni more frequently by shifting your resources, time, attention, and staff from traditional events and activities—to tools, services, and events delivered via Internet technology. Alumni Associations that move in this direction will increase registrations, participation, communication, connectedness, and contributions.

We will suggest that you will need to examine the processes, functions, activities, and responsibilities of your staff and volunteers, and begin to realign everything around the power and the potential of the Internet.

This report will show you how you can:

- Increase engagement, involvement, communication, and contributions
- Create written strategies to prove the need for more resources
- Strengthen your resume and earning opportunities
- Adopt Internet technology to better serve their alumni

NET-Centered Alumni Association reaps rewards!

1. An alumni association with 30,000 alumni receives \$1,000,000 in un-solicited online contributions.
2. Academy processes over \$500,000 in event registration payments automatically through their online community.
3. Private college registers 20,000 alumni in their online community in only 11 months.
4. State college has 9,000 alumni visiting their online community each month!
5. Private college alumni association has over 4,000 active volunteers.
6. Alumni association sends 200 emails containing 500,000 email addresses, saving \$150,000.
7. Ninety-nine percent of graduates register in private college alumni online community.

The Internet is opening an opportunity for you to engage more alumni, more frequently, for a fraction of what you are spending on traditional engagement activities. The Internet will enable you to engage alumni in small “time splices” and allow alumni to stay connected from wherever they are in the world, at any time.

However, few organizations are totally committed to an Internet strategy and reinventing their alumni association around the Internet. It’s ironic that many organizations **are committed to provide a world class alumni magazine, but willing to deliver a mediocre alumni website and online community.**

Our research is showing this is occurring because most alumni associations:

- Have a PATCHWORK Internet strategy that can’t keep pace with the rapidly changing technology, needs, and behaviors of their alumni.
- Are not AGGRESSIVELY adopting Internet technology to increase engagement, participation, and contributions.
- Are not reallocating RESOURCES from low “participation” activities like the alumni magazine to high activity communication channels like the website.
- Are not providing TRAINING to staff to help guide the development of a comprehensive Internet strategy.
- Have not received the DIRECTION or support to expand their relationship with alumni via the Internet.

Our white paper suggests that the patchwork/quick fix Internet strategy will result in more costs, reduction in efficiencies, and decreased engagement of alumni of all ages. Our goal is to provide ideas and solutions to each of these areas so you can lead your organization in developing a comprehensive Internet strategy that will position your alumni association for the next decade.

Your NEXT-NET Thing!

Reinventing Your Alumni Association For The Internet Era

“The important thing is to identify the future that has already happened.”

Peter Drucker

The above quote by Peter Drucker, author of dozens of books on business management, sets the tone for this white paper and summarizes its position. This quote summarizes the position of this white paper. The future is here. You need to understand how your alumni association needs to adapt to the disintermediating effects of the Internet.

The Internet is drastically altering your alumni behavior. As a result, new opportunities to reach a greater number of alumni are now available to your alumni association when you effectively integrate Internet technology.

When you stop and think about who benefits from the Internet strategies that have been adopted by the alumni industry, it's easy to see the scales tip in favor of the alumni association and the college. Alumni associations are:

- Reducing their mailing costs
- Communicating more frequently with alumni
- Reducing labor costs by taking registrations online
- Obtaining unsolicited contributions by alumni who are visiting their online community

While we are still in the early stages of adoption, it is becoming apparent that once an alum has visited the alumni website a couple of times, there is no compelling reason for them to return. **This represents a significant issue for any alumni association, as the investments most are making are based on the assumption they can continue to increase participation and decrease operating costs.**

The fact that there is no compelling reason for alumni to return to the alumni website is supported by the fact that, in surveys we've conducted, the average alumni association has less than 20 percent of their alumni registered in their online community. With limited strategies to increase participation,

alumni professionals are beginning to recognize their online communities will need to become more “centered” around alumni needs, and that their communities need to provide benefits and services that will improve the lives of their alumni.

The three primary goals of a NET-Centered Alumni Association are to:

- Engage and involve a greater number of alumni with less cost and effort
- Gain a better ROI from their current investments in their Internet strategy
- Focus on providing alumni with services that will benefit them

For this to happen, an organization must re-evaluate their goals, strategies, and commitments to their Internet strategy. Doing so will help organizations reach a greater number of alumni, personalize their relationship with them and, more importantly, provide practical tools, services, and connections that will improve their lives.

Our suggestions are based on a decade of experience in working with alumni associations around the world, work by noted authors, and research organizations. The methodologies are not designed to be the “only” way—but they do offer your alumni association a road map, or a blue print, from which your NET-Centered Alumni Association business process can be built.



Commitment to change is more important today than ever!

Over the past one hundred years, Alumni Affairs has benefited from thousands of bright professionals who have innovated and developed new ideas, introduced concepts, and pushed to get them adopted at their college. Along the way, the industry has learned how to share best practices and ideas in order to help friends and colleagues at different colleges.

For most alumni relations offices, their primary goal is to hold events and activities that connect and engage alumni. Driving this desire to connect with alumni was an understanding that a more connected alumnus is a more giving alumnus and one that is receptive to the institution's needs.

The wisdom of many has ratcheted up the effectiveness and professionalism of the industry. Simple low cost newsletters became world class expensive magazines, annual giving grew from simple person-to-person requests, to direct mailings, and later, phone campaigns with ever more sophistication. Gatherings became events with ever increasing budgets and staff increased (sometimes), as the mission and size of the alumni base grew. Each of these activities has grown over time to be institutionalized in budgets.

However, the techniques, concepts, and business processes developed in the past 50 years may not be as effective or necessary in a day and age when the Internet is changing literally everything, including your alumni behavior. Consider the challenges alumni relations and your annual giving office is facing today that will increase in complexity and intensity tomorrow:

- Alumni are abandoning land lines or hiding behind their caller ID
- Postage, paper, and printing continues to increase, making it more expensive to reach a growing alumni base
- Alumni are showing a preference for online consumption of news and information
- All generations are developing relationships and networking opportunities in competing online communities

Our message, *become more NET-Centered*

The position we are taking in this whitepaper is that the time worn, proven techniques and methods of running alumni relations needs to be re-evaluated.

Because 90 percent of alumni are web savvy, and at least 70 percent are accessing the Internet via broadband, they are “always on,” and are always available. As more content and information is available, the time they spend online is taken away from reading magazines and watching TV. Their behavior is changing. As their behavior changes, you should be too!

An Alumni Association that continues to focus primarily on events and activities will lose an opportunity to reach out to a significantly larger share of their alumni.

Today, NET-Centered Alumni Associations are seeing the power of reaching quadruple the number of alumni, and are keeping them engaged and involved in ways they never dreamed possible. For example, one of our clients has been averaging 8,000 unique alumni visits per month. **Imagine if you had 8,000 alumni visiting your alumni house.** The number is so great; you’d be putting new hinges on the door and replacing the carpet at least every six months!

Migrating to a Virtual Alumni Association

We think alumni relations has an opportunity to change from being focused on location based events and activities to virtual events and activities. We are not suggesting that alumni relations walk away from the events, activities, etc that have become ingrained in their culture, but we are suggesting that you consider the cost you commit to these, weigh the results, and in times where budgets are limited, decide if some events and activities could be discontinued in order to serve the “greater good” via online events and activities.

The Internet is disintermediating industries and creating new opportunities at the same time. The phone, news, radio, TV, magazine, and other industries are finding their industries radically changing almost overnight, because consumers, your alumni, are adopting new behaviors and adopting new technology to shop, research, entertain themselves, and communicate. Each of these industries is investing time, talent, and treasure to reinvent how they are doing business with your customers. Are you?

Anyone who thinks an alumni profession is “different” and is insulated from the **changes that are affecting other industries risks alienating huge numbers of alumni (including young alumni) who would be receptive to a more virtual relationship with the college.**

We’ve reached a time when alumni relations should take a serious look at the “business as usual” approach to alumni relations, and reorganize the way they do business by aligning all responsibilities around the Internet. We are also recommending, at the same time, that you identify services and Internet tools you can provide alumni that will benefit them. It’s time to start thinking about becoming a virtual alumni association.

On your watch, you literally have a chance of a lifetime to build a strategy that will set the stage for how your alumni association serves, engages, and builds relationships with alumni over the next half century. Failure to develop a comprehensive Internet strategy will make it harder for your alumni association to catch up to the growing changes in your alumni “social behavior,” **which could result in a decreased percent of alumni participating in events, activities, and contributions.**

We live in different times!

Do you agree with this statement?

“The challenges you face today are significantly different, and more complex than any your predecessors faced.”

The alumni relations industry has benefited from the development of business processes, techniques, and methodology hammered out over the past five decades. However, we live in a time when traditional organizations are finding their core customer/member has changed. Robert Putnam, in his book, *“Bowling Alone; America’s Declining Social Capital,”* discusses the decline in “social capital” in the United States since the 1950’s.

Among his many points, he suggests the rise of woman entering the workforce, the spread of suburbs, and the rise of technological “individualizing” of our leisure time (TV, radio, now Internet) has decreased the time people take to interact in groups and activities. Small things like self serve gas stations, ATM banks, and vending machines all reduce human interaction with others. His book suggests different aspects of technology can increase social capital within an alumni association.

Additional research by the Olson Zaltman Research Company discovered that alumni were looking for a more personal relationship their alumni association, and were looking for help from their alumni association as they went through various phases of their lives. Most of those interviewed wanted to see their alumni association as a resource provider, yet felt the alumni association was more of a resource depleter, because of the continual request for contributions, volunteering, or support for issues.

Based on this and other research, we are suggesting a NET-Centered Alumni Association **has an opportunity to realign their priorities using Internet technology to provide the personal experience and resources alumni need.**

This may be difficult for most alumni associations, as few industries can stand behind, *“We’ve always did it this way”* and still survive. For the most part, alumni associations can continue to do business as usual, but they do so at the risk of continuing to alienate large groups of alumni when they could be reorganizing themselves to serve a greater number.

A way to do business or THE way to do business?

In December of 2000, I was asked to join a panel discussion on how Internet technology could benefit alumni and advancement programs. The event was held not far from Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco and, despite the incredible tourist opportunities available, the room was packed with alumni professionals who had spent the last 3-5 years fielding phone calls from vendors and organizations offering them a myriad of Internet tools and services to help them connect with their alumni. They were looking for answers and were possibly curious to put a face to the messages, emails, and information they had been receiving at such a steady rate they were beginning to feel like purchasing agents.

This panel was particularly interesting to them as it gave them an opportunity to hear from the leading providers of online communities, email address services, online contributions tools, and to be able to hear each of their responses. The hope of those in attendance was to shed some light on the direction they should be taking, which technology to adopt, and to gain a better understanding of the buzz words, vernacular, and concepts that were flooding their email boxes and desks.

They were curious, yet suspicious as the dot com crash effect was beginning to send tremors in the financial markets so powerful that the NASDAQ peaked at over 5,000 on March 10th 2000 and dropped below 1500 within months. The Dow Jones peaked on January 14th at 11,722.98, and began a long hard fall that wiped out hard earned retirement accounts of millions of Americans who were giddily caught up in the excitement and "greed." (Incidentally, the Dow Jones took 6 years to reach the 2000 peak).

One of the questions posed to the panel was in light of the significant corrections and crash of Internet stocks and folding of companies left and right, should alumni relations and advancement officials continue to adopt online communities and Internet technologies?

While most panel members suggested that Internet technology should be looked at as a tool to help alumni professionals run their alumni office, **I suggested that alumni professionals look at the Internet differently and to be frank, completely reorganize their office around the power and potential of the Internet as a relationship building, networking, and communication tool.** In a book I wrote in 1998, titled *"Create a NET-Centered College Campus,"* I suggested colleges use Internet technology to do more than administrative tasks like register for classes, collect payments, and review grades, but to provide online communities for prospective students, parents, students, and alumni. I tried to convey the same message to the group of professionals in the audience.

“Stop thinking of the web as an administrative tool to benefit your goals and strategies and look at it as a tool to improve the lives of your alumni!”

My position then, as it remains today, is that the Internet was going to radically change the way their alumni lived, worked, and entertained themselves. My point was that a seismic shift was happening, that if they took advantage of would give them an opportunity to develop stronger relationships with their alumni than any of their predecessors had ever dreamed of. To take advantage of that, they needed to embrace the Internet, not toy around with it.

As an example, I suggest you evaluate the cost effectiveness of some of your events and activities last year. Have you ever evaluated the actual cost per person for the events and activities you put on? For example, the dinner in Chicago for 20 alumni that cost \$1,500, not including your \$500 in travel expenses, had a \$100 cost per alumni, not to mention the two day's it took you out of the office. Was it worth it?

A NET-Centered Alumni Association would balance traditional alumni networking events with events and activities that can be held online. In lieu of low performing events and activities, your organization should offer as many of the following:

1. Series of Webinars that feature fun, educational or informative lectures by popular professors
2. Podcast interviews featuring famous alumni, athletes or visiting dignitaries
3. Online business and career networking opportunities
4. Daily focus on recognizing alumni for their achievements in all areas
5. Opportunity to promote alumni blogs, books, art, music and crafts
6. Multiple volunteer opportunities
7. Network Weaving techniques to increase alumni connectedness
8. Mashups with 3rd party websites like LinkedIn, Facebook, MySpace and others
9. Ongoing training on networking techniques to students and alumni
10. Continually capture data through online surveys

Looking at how you do business today, to determine if the business process and concept is as relevant today as it was 50 years ago is important. Chance are, you will begin to realize that you could be spending your staff time more wisely and you could be spending your money on Internet events, activities, and engagement techniques that will be far less time consuming, far less expensive, and yet reach FAR more alumni.

What is a NET-Centered Alumni Association?

A NET-Centered association is one that is reinventing the way they do business by adopting Internet technology to serve a greater number of alumni than can be engaged through traditional events and activities. Three of your first steps should include:

1. Using Internet technology for career development, networking, amplifying nostalgia, provide learning opportunities and helping alumni transition in the different phases of their lives
2. Integrating Internet technology in each department within the alumni association
3. Partnering with social/business networking communities and relevant websites

① Using Internet technology for

1. career development,
2. creating a sense of nostalgia,
3. learning opportunities and,
4. helping alumni transition through life phases

In a course I created for Internet Strategies Group, *"Secrets to Make Your Online Community a Destination,"* I suggested that colleges build their online community around these four very unique services for alumni.

A NET-Centered organization focuses on providing alumni with technology that will not only help them get a job, but to do business with each other and to mentor each other. A few years back, I attended a venture capital "get together" in Cleveland, Ohio, and was mingling with the crowd when I was introduced to a group of people who were looking for funding for an automotive venture.

One of their members was a Harvard grad. I mentioned that I was involved in the online community industry, and he mentioned he used his Harvard Alumni Online Community nearly every day. When I asked him why, he responded, *"Because it's an easy way to find people to do deals with."* His response made me realize that some institutions have, over the years, if not decades, have done a great job teaching their alumni the value of networking. Others have done little to nothing to build a culture that focuses on helping and encouraging alumni to network.

The Stanford Shyness Clinic has conducted research over the years, and has discovered that 60 percent of Americans consider themselves shy. In my book, *Alumni Online Engagement, "101 Strategies to Engage*

Alumni from Cradle to Grave”, I suggest that organizations utilize volunteer Network Weavers to proactively introduce alumni that are reluctant to network with each other. Research by Valdis Krebs, President of Orgnet.com, has indicated proactive networking strengthens networks and increases participation.

While there are thousands of online communities alumni can participate in, NET-Centered alumni associations find ways their community can provide social networking opportunities that are unique and unavailable from others. Providing technology and tools that enhance and give alumni a sense of nostalgia is a key way to accomplish this. A common “truism” in business is that it’s less expensive and more profitable to sell new services to existing customers. Your alumni association is in a terrific position of being a liaison with campus and deliver fun, entertaining learning opportunities to your alumni.

Knowing that 17-19 percent of Americans move every year, and nearly every one of your graduates, NET-Centered Alumni Association take advantage of Internet technology to assist alumni as they move from city to city and, more importantly, as they move through the various phases including work, family, health, and retirement.

② Integrate Internet Technology in each department in the alumni association and departments on campus

Each department, each person in your office, should begin thinking about how they could better accomplish their goals and responsibilities with Internet technologies. Old rules and old programs have to be rethought on their effectiveness and attempts need to be made to find ways to use Internet technology to reach a larger audience. For example, those involved in event planning should evaluate all events in the previous year and identify the cost benefit ratio of the event.

The goal would be to find 25 percent of the events that are the least productive, and reinvest the time and money to develop online events and activities to reach a greater audience with greater impact. For example, you could develop a series of webinars or podcast involving interviews of campus sports, administrators, visiting celebrities, or famous alumni. Another option is to offer a lecture series that features well-known professors on “fun,” interesting topics. Yet another is to organize online networking events that would help alumni meet others who are looking to expand their business or personal interests with others. A book I am just finishing, *Create a NET-Centered Alumni Office* provides examples and insights to alumni organizations who are working to build their responsibilities around the power and the potential of the Internet.

You should begin reaching out to other departments to see how they can help you and how you can help them. Chances are you will find other departments willing to pay for your services. Your online community and alumni could help the admissions office recruit more students. You could promote participation in athletic events to your alumni and you could help your career center find mentors for students.

③ Partnering with social/business networking communities and relevant websites

Since 1995 we've suggested alumni associations create their own password protected online communities to engage and involve them, not only to protect their brand—but to benefit from the vast amount of data alumni share. A number of industry changes have occurred that have changed our opinion.

First, social and business networking sites, entered into their third phase, (see Online Communities in the Pioneer Days) and grew by unprecedented rates. Today over 300,000,000 people are registered and participating in online communities around the world. (Contrasted to less than 10,000,000 in 1995.)

Second social and business networking sites are opening their sites and encouraging organizations to write programs to tap into their data base to in effect build "mini communities" within their communities. Google has led a group of social networking sites, including LinkedIn, Hi5, Bebo, MySpace and others in an initiative called Open Social. Open Social will enable organizations to write programs that enable them to connect and engage with members of any website that participates in the Open Social platform. Open Social will enable your organization to write one program, make minor modifications to work on any Open Social website.

Facebook in May of 2007 announced the Facebook Platform that provides your organization an opportunity to write a program to tap into their data and use it, however you see fit. In any of these platforms you could use the friends list to challenge alumni to give, encourage them to attend events, ask their help in attracting new students, assisting in getting the message out and even increasing registrations in your online community. You have to learn to play where your alumni play. Creating a strategy to engage them at other websites should be a high priority for you.

Five steps to become a NET-Centered Alumni Association

Becoming a NET-Centered Alumni Association is not as difficult to do as you might suspect. We've already evaluated the benefits and understand the risk of not advancing your Internet strategy. Organizations, if left on their own, will stumble forward with a rudimentary Internet strategy that will fail to open new channels and opportunities with alumni

Here are the 5 basic steps you will need to take to put your alumni association in a position that it can develop a 24/7/365 connection with your alumni.

1. **Develop a comprehensive Internet strategy**
2. **Realign all positions around Internet technology**
3. **Continual improvement of web products and services**
4. **Commitment to training for alumni, your team, and yourself**
5. **Financial and resource support by upper management**

① **Develop a comprehensive Internet strategy**

You've heard the sage old advice, *"How can you know if you have arrived if you don't know where you are going?"* To many organizations, the web strategy has been a loosely created series of tasks and goals that is infrequently evaluated to determine what modifications and or changes should be made.

If you are reading this, your organization has a choice to make. If you are the leader of your organization, or are responsible for leading your Internet strategy, the decisions you make on your watch could affect the future relationship your alumni association has with alumni for decades to come.

The very first thing you would need to do to become a NET-Centered Alumni Association is to develop a comprehensive—written Internet strategy. The goal of creating your strategy is to provide a repeatable, measureable, and predictable process where you can effectively determine your ROI and make adjustments in order to reach your goals.

Just as importantly, your strategy will have to outline what you want to accomplish in the remaining four areas.

② Realigning all positions around Internet technology

When was the last time you did a job assessment to determine if the things on your team's job descriptions are relevant? It is important to periodically review job descriptions and make changes based on the myriad of market changes and or organizational changes within your association or campus.

③ Continual improvement of web products and services

Your alumni are spending less time watching TV, and more time on the Internet researching, shopping, entertaining themselves, reading, and networking with others. Your website has to continue to improve in functionality, and offer valuable services in order to keep up with their expectations.

Your strategy should include adopting tools and techniques to make your alumni online community more of a destination for your alumni within areas that not only benefit them, but that they can't get anywhere else.

④ Commitment to training for your alumni, your team and yourself

Stop and think about how much training you and your staff have had in understanding Internet technology, e-marketing, tools, and services. If you are like most, you and your team are learning on the job. Not only does this take longer, but mistakes happen. More importantly, your alumni have become savvy Internet users and your website could give them a poor reflection of who you are. Think about how hard your administration and magazine team work to ensure your alumni view a high class alumni magazine. Why would you settle for less for your online community?

⑤ Financial and Resource support by upper management

A NET-Centered Alumni Association has the commitment from upper management to provide the staff, finances, expertise, and resources required to fulfill the comprehensive Internet strategy. This group understands the investment in the website will pay back handsomely for years to come.

Why should you become a NET-Centered Alumni Association?

In the last decade I've worked with alumni professionals, I've noticed a dangerous trend by upper management to under fund and staff their emerging Internet strategies. The situation is puzzling, as nearly every alumni online community was producing quantifiable ROI, albeit at a fraction of what could be accomplished with a written Internet strategy and the right amount of resources.

I frequently refer to the huge investments that are made in annual giving and the alumni magazine, and am routinely baffled at the under funding of the alumni Internet strategy. In a report I co-wrote with Revel Barker, former Alumni Director of Open University, of Milton Keynes, England; Revel and I built a case that there is empirical evidence that a significantly growing number of alumni, and definitely young alumni, are rapidly changing their reading consumption habits and migrating to online news sources.

One strong point we like to bring out frequently is that the time is right to begin shifting some resources from the alumni magazine to the web strategy. When you think about it, all of the news stories, photos, and class notes can be effectively shared and consumed by alumni online.

Aside from that, we see 5 reasons why you should become a NET-Centered Alumni Association:

1. You will engage more alumni.
2. You can offer benefits and opportunities never before dreamed of.
3. You will reduce costs.
4. You will increase communication with alumni.
5. You will increase contributions and stewardship.

1 You will engage more alumni

When your students leave campus, that strong bond that held them together is immediately stretched by time, distance, responsibilities, families, and personal commitments. The fun times, the learning moments, and the groups and organizations, along with the events and pubs they frequented that cemented them together as a group, are only a faded memory. When you become a NET-Centered Alumni Association, you will focus on teaching your students and alumni of the value of being part of a strong network of alumni. As alumni realize that the alumni association is a resource provider, rather than a resource depleter, they will participate more.

② You can offer benefits and opportunities never dreamed of

We are just beginning to understand some of the opportunities the Internet will enable you to provide alumni. Up until this point in time, most alumni online communities have been focused on “what’s in it for the alumni association,” but will gradually shift to a focus on the alumni. Technology is now available to help your alumni get jobs and do business with each other, emerging technology and systems will deliver fun, informational lectures from the professors they most admired, and in the not too distant future, new services will become available that will provide them tremendous help as they transition from city to city and through phases of their lives.

③ You will reduce costs

We’ve conducted research with a number of our clients and have found the average value of an email address ranges from \$14 per year to over \$30 per year. Why? Because these organizations identified the savings in postage, paper, and printing costs. Additionally, they found that having an email address of alumni, along with thoughtful communication that provided the “good news” that was happening on campus, (not always requesting financial support), increased online contributions. Additionally, they found that having an email address reduced office labor and increased efficiencies. A NET-Centered Alumni Association knows the value of an email address to their institution and works aggressively to get all alumni registered in their online community.

④ You will increase communication with alumni

We are all living in a transition period. Most institutions have not identified what their official written communication policy is with alumni. Research by Jerrod Pearson, of the Stanford University Alumni office, has found that the more you communicate with alumni the more they give and the more frequently they give. Not a bad response to sharing the great news on campus.

⑤ You will increase contributions and stewardship

Sure, it’s nice to get data updates online, network alumni and be able to communicate with them more frequently, but a growing benefit of all of that will be the contributions your organization will receive from alumni who experience your online community as a valuable resource tool and are compelled to invest back into it to help you continue to develop it. Because of the low cost in communicating with alumni via the Internet, you will find it easier to develop their sense of stewardship over time.

Summary

You have a once in a lifetime opportunity to REINVENT your alumni association around the power and potential of the Internet and to build relationships with more alumni, including your very NET-Centered young alumni.

If properly executed, you would be able to develop a new relationship with alumni that keeps them connected 24/7/365 days a year. You could be introducing new concepts and ideas that will build stronger ties with alumni and setting up larger gift giving opportunities in the future. You would be able to personalize your communication and allow your alumni to personalize their relationship with you. The first step you need to take is to develop an overall strategy.

We live in exciting and yet stressful times. **The old order, the old way, while it has served generations well, may not be the most effective “business model” to continue to build your alumni relations office around.** You have a once in a lifetime opportunity to reorganize the way you do business and create an alumni relations office that is more personalized, engaging, and valuable to your alumni.

Using the principles we have shared with you in this white paper, you have a blue print to follow that will positively change the way you serve your alumni. Research shows what you sow, so shall you reap. Or to put it another way, by building your Internet strategy around giving back to your alumni, they will be more inclined to give back to you!

Making a decision to become a NET-Centered Alumni Association is one of the least risky things you could decide to do. Look at the way you are using the Internet today. Think about the things you are hearing are coming, and then reflect on the fact that you have a unique opportunity to build instant relationships with your youngest alumni.

It’s an exciting time to be in the driver’s seat. Enjoy the ride!

About Don Philabaum



Don Philabaum founded IAC in 1995 to provide online communities to groups and organizations worldwide. After entering the social networking industry, he recognized the industry did not have expert advice and information to help organizations make sound, logical decisions on the implementation of Internet strategies. Author of over a dozen white papers, his books include: *Create a NET-Centered College Campus*, *Alumni Web Strategies*, and *Alumni Online Engagement*, "101 Strategies to Engage Alumni from Cradle to Grave". He is currently finishing up another book, *Create a NET-Centered Alumni Association*. Don also authors a blog that provides industry best practices, www.wiredcommunities.com, and in late 2006 he founded a new firm, Internet Strategies Group, www.internetstrategiesgroup.com, that helps organizations develop comprehensive Internet strategies.

Don is also author of the blog www.onlinecommunities.com that provide best practice examples to business and is finishing another book, *Customer Online Engagement, Amplifying Word of Mouth & Buzz Marketing with Social Media Tools*.



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Become a NET-Centered Alumni Association

Engage MORE alumni, increase stewardship and contributions

Twenty One different ways we can help YOU!

The Internet Strategies Group is one of the few organizations in the world with the experience and understanding on how you can engage a greater number of your alumni using Internet technology. We can help you become a NET-Centered Alumni Association. Take a moment to identify where you want to get started. Full details of each of these can be found online at www.iaccorp.com/consulting

- **Web Management & Training**

- 1. Web 101 – Introduction to Online Community Management
- 2. Monthly, Quarterly & Yearly review of Web Stats
- 3. Dramatically Increase Online Registrations
- 4. Integrating Your Alumni Magazine Online
- 5. Create a Young Alumni Online Strategy
- 6. Develop Coordinated ePhilanthropy Strategies
- 7. Determine the Right Staffing & Funding
- 8. Develop Online Volunteers to Get More Done!
- 9. Create Email Use Policies and Gain Control
- 10. Use New Media Tools to Increase Participation
- 11. Effective eMail Marketing Strategies
- 12. Teach Students & Alumni How to Network Online
- 13. Create a Back to Campus Lecture Series
- 14. Become a NET-Centered Alumni Association
- 15. Outsourcing your eMarketing Responsibilities

- **Online Contributions & Stewardship Consulting**

- 1. Develop Coordinated ePhilanthropy Strategies
- 2. Technology & Ingenuity Builds Young Alumni Stewardship
- 3. New Media 2.0 Tools for Your Capital Campaign
- 4. Annual Giving Internet Strategies
- 5. Internet Strategies to Engage Parents & Increase Stewardship
- 6. Generating Revenue from Your Online Community

Name: _____

Title: _____

Phone: _____

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Fax this to 800-968-0001 or complete this online at www.internetstrategiesgroup.com/consulting