

Alumni networks: Re-imagining the employee experience



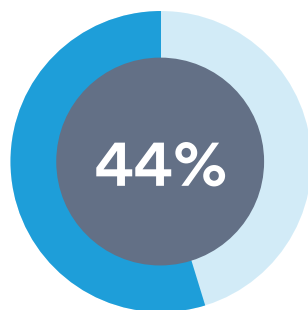
‘Lifelong relationships’ and ‘engaging employees for life’ are themes gaining popularity

as organizations realize the benefits of maintaining a strong relationship with their employees even after they have left the business. The changes in the market landscape as a result of a global pandemic have caused HR teams to swiftly review and adapt their talent practices. It has also provided organizations with an opportunity to take a step back and reconsider their employee experience.

This experience no longer needs to end when an employee leaves your organization. Rather, it can seamlessly continue into a mutually beneficial relationship for both parties. For the alumni, it provides a community of networking and professional development which is particularly important during these uncertain times. For the organization, it amplifies employer brand. Engaged alumni are brand ambassadors, they are also an untapped pool of passive qualified talent.

Emerging labor trends are also pushing organizations to rethink their alumni strategy. The baby boomer generation is retiring from the workforce with approximately 10,000 baby boomers reaching retirement age daily. The medium tenure for employees is down to 4.2 years – for millennials, the average tenure is even shorter at 2.8 years.

With continuous demand for talent and increasing skills gaps left by baby boomers retiring, alumni networks have a key role to play in an organization’s talent toolkit. A robust alumni network helps to reduce talent and knowledge gaps, reduces time to fill and time to productivity and promotes retention.



Typically, alumni rehires have a 44% higher retention rate.

An alumni network allows organizations to engage and nurture past employees through targeted and proactive outreach, supported by technology. They typically cultivate networking and professional development opportunities and keep alumni informed about the organization through virtually hosted events, blogs, newsletters, and videos.

How technology can help

Embedding a technology platform like a recruitment marketing solution to support your alumni network is ranked consistently in the top three most valuable alumni benefits. From both an alumni experience and organizational perspective, the benefits of using a platform to engage and nurture your alumni network are highlighted below.



🔍 From the alumni lens:

Dedicated alumni landing pages deliver an engaging and memorable experience by recommending personalized jobs and content to each alumni. These landing pages can prompt people to join your alumni networks, and sign up for job alerts through targeted calls-to-action. They also keep alumni up-to-date with organizational news, virtual events, networking and professional development activities – all while showcasing your employer brand and creating a highly engaged alumni network.

🔍 From the organizational lens:

A recruitment marketing solution can help organizations to **automate**, **manage**, **track** and **analyze** their alumni process and demonstrate the business return on investment of the system. It drives efficiency, reduces time and cost, and makes the alumni network more sustainable in the long term.

- ✓ Easy content management makes updating or changing the alumni landing pages simple
- ✓ Automation through the nurture workflows and ‘SMART’ pipeline lists engages alumni with minimal manual intervention
- ✓ Powerful analytics dashboards help to understand traffic on alumni landing pages and highlight which content is getting the most engagement.

The return on investment (ROI) is well worth the effort

Engaged alumni can deliver significant ROI for the organization. Top business benefits include:

- **Brand Advocacy:** engaged alumni are 86% more likely to provide positive reviews of the organization and culture
- **Business Development:** alumni are 76% more likely to recommend the products and services of the organization to others. This can also have a positive impact on current client relationships
- **Talent Acquisition:** recruiting from alumni networks can lead to 66% savings in costs, including reduction in time to fill and time to productivity
- **Employee Engagement:** alumni rehires typically have a 44% higher retention rate over 3 years

The key to success is ensuring that your alumni not only see the value but are also receiving the value from this network. It's important to keep your former employees at the center of your design process and ensure they are receiving a great experience.

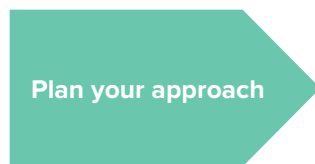




The building blocks of a successful alumni network

Building an alumni network can be a daunting process but you can see from the return on investment above that it's worth the effort. To support you in this process, we've developed the key building blocks to creating a successful alumni network. We'll also share key considerations and tips across each of the stages. We hope this guide helps to get you started building a successful alumni network.

Let's get started! Here are the 5 main stages of building a successful alumni network.



Planning your approach is the critical first step in developing your alumni network. It defines the purpose and benefits for your alumni and the organization and establishes measures of success. This stage can also be used as a stakeholder engagement exercise to bring key stakeholder groups along on your alumni journey. Use the following as a worksheet and checklist:

1. Define your objectives

Use these questions as a guide to build out your purpose and strategy.

- What are the goals for implementing an alumni network
 - For your organization
 - For your alumni?
- What are the benefits?
- What is the alumni demographic?
- How will you determine eligible candidates for the alumni network?
- How do you want to engage with your alumni?
- What resource will manage the alumni network?
- Define the measures of success for the alumni network

2. Seek buy-in from senior leaders and other key stakeholder groups

- Identify your key stakeholder groups – educate them on the business benefits and value of the alumni network.
- Seek out their experiences and insights – what have they seen work well and not so well?
- Conduct virtual focus groups with employees and former employees – understand what they would be looking for in an alumni network.
- Circle back to these stakeholders with progress updates. You may even invite them to participate in your alumni network.

3. Target specific alumni talent segments

Use these questions to build out your alumni strategy.

- Identify two or three specific alumni talent segments that could be a priority to your organization and create the most value. For example:
 - Identify skill sets that will be critical to business success in the next 2-3 years.
 - Identify senior roles with succession gaps.

4. Create your alumni marketing plan of action

The next step is to brainstorm different ideas with your team members.

- Create a communication plan including the type of content, timeframes and different modes of delivery.
 - Consider newsletters, blogs, virtually hosted events, individualized emails, job postings, alumni success stories and videos.
 - Communicate via your alumni platform, email, SMS and/or social media channels.
- Encourage leaders to get involved in any virtually hosted events, blogs, videos.

5. Consider recruitment marketing technology

Recruitment marketing technology can automate key tasks and free you from manual intervention. Using this technology, you can:

- Update your alumni landing pages easily to amplify your employer brand.
- Leverage automation to:
 - Nurture alumni segments with targeted content
 - Create 'SMART' lists for your alumni pipeline
- Utilize Calls-to-Action (CTAs) to join your alumni networks and sign up for job alerts.
- Track and measure the alumni traffic coming to your landing pages, including what content people are interacting with.



Establish your alumni network and implement your alumni program of work so that you're prepared to press "Go" when the time comes. Consider your alumni's experience at first interaction and have the next steps and nurture workflows ready to go.

1. Create your alumni landing pages with lots of WIIFM (What's In It For Me?)

Use these questions as a guide to build out your purpose and strategy.

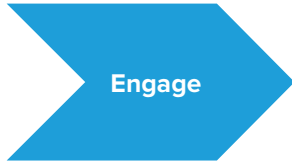
- Create 'sticky' landing pages with targeted content that engages at first interaction.
- Make your CTAs stand out
Examples include: Join our alumni network, sign up for job alerts, participate in professional development or networking events.

2. Invite participants to your alumni network and create awareness of the network

- Invite your alumni talent segments to your network. Explain the program, its benefits and then link to the alumni signup page.
- Share your alumni program on social media.
- Let your employees know about your alumni network.
- Register your new alumni using your internal exit interview checklist.
Work with your HR team members to update the exit interview checklist to include the link to the Alumni network and the benefits for joining the alumni.

3. Ensure your nurture workflows are ready to go

- Set up the first few nurture workflows to engage your alumni the minute they join your alumni network.
A short video from the CEO welcoming them to the alumni network could work well as a first follow-up.



Engage your alumni with targeted content that amplifies your employer brand, delivers value and builds a pipeline of talent. Implement your communications plan to deliver a personalized and engaging experience for your alumni across various channels. Leverage analytics to track progress and make informed decisions based on what content is resonating best.

1. Put your communication plan into action

Implement your communication plan, starting with the first 3 months of content you plan to share.

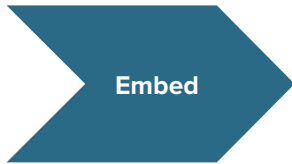
- Share relevant alumni-focused content including blog posts, articles, newsletters, virtual events, job postings, surveys, RSS feeds to social media sites.
- Refer back to your analytics – what pages and content are your alumni engaging with most? This will inform your content curation, ongoing communications plan and deliver the best ROI.

2. Build out your alumni talent pipeline

- Share job postings and ask for referrals from your alumni cohort.
- Use 'SMART' list automation to create your pipelines and deliver targeted communications.
- Create proactive outreach strategies for alumni with high interaction scores.

3. Survey your alumni on their experience

- Conduct surveys to understand the alumni experience and ensure it's hitting the mark.



The key to the success for any program of work is embedding it into business as usual (BAU). A well-managed alumni network delivers value for all involved. Conduct regular reviews to ensure both the alumni and the organization are receiving value from the alumni network.

1. Keep your stakeholders updated and engaged

- Maintain ongoing updates to your stakeholder groups, highlighting key wins and alumni success stories.
- Utilize individuals from these stakeholder groups as potential contributors to the alumni network.
- Keep your HR and Talent Acquisition teams up-to-date with the alumni network and how it's tracking.

2. Conduct 3 month and 6 month check-ins and a 12 month review of your alumni network

- Conduct regular check-ins during the initial phases of implementation to ensure you are on track.
- Continue to review the analytics to gain insights on alumni traffic, conversion ratios, content engagement and make changes if necessary.
- Conduct a more detailed 12 month review seeking feedback from your alumni and the organization.
- Understand levels of effort required to deliver the alumni network to ensure it's still in line with agreed resource requirements.
- Reflect on any changes to the industry and/or market landscape, its impact to your alumni network and adjust accordingly.





Use the data to understand your alumni's journey and behavior, track your measures of success and be agile enough to adapt where necessary.

1. Understand what's working well and what isn't and adapt accordingly

- Analyse the data to understand the following:
 - How many alumni are visiting your landing pages?
 - What content and landing pages they are interacting with?
 - What is the click through rate?
 - How many alumni are being rehired?
- Review outcomes of virtual events and other alumni activities.
- Adapt the content and your approach based upon your results and feedback from the alumni.

2. Assess progress towards your measures of success

- Track the measures of success and your benchmarks against your alumni data:
 - Increase in the number of alumni participants
 - Engagement levels
 - Number of rehires and referrals made through your alumni network
 - Alumni talent pipelines built
 - Increase in traffic to your alumni landing pages by % and number of drop-offs
- Don't forget to share your wins not only with your organization and key stakeholders but also with your alumni.

Final thoughts

Re-imagining the employee experience and continuing the relationship as 'life long friendships' not only amplifies an organization's employer brand. It also develops a community of individuals who feel strongly connected to the organization and its continued success. The business benefits of establishing an alumni network are many. Perhaps most importantly, it delivers a passive pool of qualified former talent that are pre-vetted, culturally aligned and 'ready to go'. Leveraging technology to support your organization's alumni journey helps to deepen these connections with your alumni, meaning your organization always has the talent it needs to succeed.

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