How to Keep Your Alumni Donors with a Communications Calendar

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Slides and other bonus materials available at:
http://wildwomanfundraising.com/upcoming/alumni
About the presenter


Previously presented for the SBA, the SBDC, the IRS, The Center for Nonprofits, The City of Austin, and more.

Poll questions

What are some of your issues with your current alumni?

a) Not enough alumni giving

b) We don't have a process for thanking

c) We seem to lose alumni givers as fast as we get them

d) We don't have a process to follow up when they graduate

e) All of the above
Poll questions

What are you hoping to get out of the webinar?

a) Key tips to retain alumni givers

b) New ideas for making alumni happy

c) How to involve people in alumni retention

d) All of the above

e) A 30 minute break from reality...
What You'll Learn Today

☑ Elements of a good alumni communications plan

☑ How can you build stewardship into every aspect of your interactions with alumni?

☑ Starting with GOLD: Graduated Over Last Decade

☑ Making Better Alumni Relationships through communications

☑ Examples of communications to keep alumni engaged and giving
What is Stewardship and why should you care?

Stewardship is a multitude of ways to keep your alumni giving.

Why do alumni turn away from you?
Ways to Cultivate or Steward Alumni

E-newsletters
Surprise and delight
Surveys
Thank you notes
Ways to Cultivate or Steward Alumni

Create one of these emotions with every communication:

Anger
Exclusivity
Fear
Flattery
Greed
Guilt
Salvation
Ways to Cultivate or Steward Alumni

Get to know their preferences
Elements of a Good Alumni Communications Plan

Solicitations Calendar +
Event Calendar + E-News Calendar
= Communications Calendar

Events = Opportunities to cultivate

Surveys

Humor!
Keeping Your Alumni Interested

Humor:

Rejected Science Fair Projects
-- Which hurts more: falling off the slide or being pushed off the slide?
How can you build stewardship into every aspect of your alumni communications?

Remember, good customer service is often just deciding what you're going to be bad at, so that you can focus on the things that matter.

- *Uncommon Service*, by Frei & Morriss
Starting with Current Alumni: Who are your most loyal?

People who give multiple times per year.

GOLD
Making Better Alumni Relationships Through Communications
Communicate to keep your alumni

Communications calendar can include:

- Monthly e-newsletter themes
- Phone-a-thons
- Volunteer Appreciation Days
## Your Communications Calendar

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<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>E-News</th>
<th>Annual Report</th>
<th>Spring Appeal</th>
<th>End of Year Appeal</th>
<th>Phone-a-thon</th>
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E-Newsletters that help you keep your alumni: Write About

- Your School's accomplishments
- Threats to achieving your educational goals (is state funding getting cut?)
- Recognition of alumni's importance to your school:
  - Your school's efficiency as a business

Your school's vision
Typical flaws in alumni communications

#1: Doesn't deliver news alumni care about
#2. Doesn't put alumni center stage
#3. Isn't very friendly
#4. Skimps on emotional triggers
#5. Doesn't tell stories
#6. Expects people to read in depth
#7. Doesn't have real headlines
Websites to cultivate your alumni

Flaw #2: Doesn't put alumni center stage
Websites to cultivate your alumni

This should be a donate link

Lost opportunity for real alumni picture

Why I Give

Wednesday, September 26th at 11:22am:
“The University Honors College, with a special nod to Rebekah Lancelin and LeeAnn Baker, made a difference in my education and my career. They gave me encouragement and strength when I wasn’t sure where to go and was told that I didn’t fit.”
— Lauren D., Portland, OR

Tuesday, September 25th at 5:04pm:
“Higher Education is vital to our growing nation.”
— Lynn M., Marysville, WA

Tuesday, September 25th at 2:04pm:
“I get a letter asking me to”
— Diana H., Clinton UT

This should be a donate link
Websites to Cultivate your alumni

Put your donate buttons and most important information in the “F” shape.
Websites to cultivate your alumni

Flaw #2: Doesn't put Circle member center stage
Creating a campaign to get GOLD engaged

- Survey them
- Call them
- Ask them how you can do better
- Give them a reason why giving is urgent, NOW.
Poll Question

Which ones do you already do?

• Thank you notes
• Thank you phone calls
• Thank you emails
  (automated or personal)
• Thank you events
• Other
Thanking Alumni: A Quick System that Works

Thanking policies:

Over $100 Check: Thank them with a phone call & letter

Thank-a-thon
Thanking Alumni: A Quick System that Works: The Thank You Letter

Penelope Burk's list of the 20 things that make a thank you letter superior:

1) The letter is a real letter, not a pre-printed card.
2) It is personally addressed.
Thanking Alumni: A Quick System that Works: The Thank You Letter

• It does not ask for another gift.

• It does not ask the donor to do anything (like complete an enclosed survey, for example.)
Thanking Alumni: A Quick System that Works: The Thank You Letter

• It communicates the excitement, gratitude and inner warmth of the writer.

• Plus, in some circumstances, the letter is handwritten.
How to give offline experiences for your alumni

Create networking/community-building opportunities where people can talk about the school and spend time with like-minded people.
How to give offline experiences for your alumni

Quick little note just to say hi

End of year memento
Ways to Cultivate or Steward Alumni: Surveys

Give Them Choices!

1. Ask them how they want to be thanked.

2. Invite alumni to share their stories
Ways to Cultivate or Steward Alumni: Surveys

What interests you most about our school?

Which other schools effectively address the education you care about?

How do we compare to them?

Tell me the truth! I can take it!
Evaluating Your Stewardship Over Time

Ask your alumni these questions, in a survey or on the phone:

Which charities do you give to?

1. I used to give to _________ but now I don't because ______
2. I am a donor to _______________ because __________________
3. I am very loyal to _______________ because_______________
4. I used to not give to ________________
   but now I do because __________________
Establish a baseline of high value, loyal alumni now. In 2014, count your alumni donors. How many do you retain?

How many alumni donors did you lose?
Did you gain major alumni donors?
Did you gain monthly alumni donors?

Give your communications the “you” test. How many pictures of alumni and volunteers do you have in your communications in 2014 versus now?
Putting stewardship into practice NOW

1. What have you committed to doing?
2. What are some new things you could try?
3. Start with your communications calendar
Further Reading

1. Building Donor Loyalty by Sargeant & Jay
2. Keep Your Donors by Joyaux & Ahearn
3. Uncommon Service by Frei & Morriss
4. Cashvertising by Whitman
Thank you for coming today!

Any questions?

Let me know what you're working on: 512-763-5161
info@wildwomanfundraising.com

Get your bonus materials here:
http://wildwomanfundraising.com/upcoming/alumni