Bridging the Alumni Engagement Gap

If there is one simple truth to alumni fundraising, it’s that not all of your audience is engaged equally. While some alumni regularly attend college and university events, and contribute to fundraising campaigns, others do not respond at all. And somewhere in between, there may be a huge segment of graduates who are interested in contributing, but do not feel compelled to take action.

In today’s competitive higher education fundraising environment, segmenting audiences is not enough. You must keenly focus your appeals and broaden your channels to deliver impactful messages that initiate action. Below are Ai’s three tips to drive increased awareness, engagement and giving among your alumni.

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**1. OPEN THEIR EYES**

Studies show that nearly eight out of ten alumni feel good about their alma matter, yet less than one quarter actually donate to its alumni association or other university fundraising initiatives.*

To bridge this gap, colleges and universities should focus on growing alumni awareness about the benefits of being active in regional alumni groups, new scholarships awarded within their own field of study, or campus improvements that will benefit future students. Think of it as the beginning of a drip marketing campaign rather than repetitively asking for money.

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**2. BRING YOUR CHANNELS TOGETHER**

From phone-a-thons and direct mail to email marketing, SMS and social media, the methods of reaching audiences are as wide-ranging as ever. The reality is that they all have value, and your data should drive which mix of methods you use for each segment. You likely already know how to best reach highly engaged alumni, but others likely require a broader mix of messages across multiple, and maybe even all, of the channels you employ.

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**3. GIVE ALUMNI MULTIPLE WAYS TO RESPOND**

No matter how you reach alumni, it’s important to provide options to respond, donate or RSVP to an event, including mail, email, social media or a microsite. Today’s on-the-go graduates are increasingly likely to make a digital connection on their mobile device, so design your assets, including print pieces, accordingly to make that mobile connection as easy as possible, including using QR codes, personalized URLs and SMS.

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*Source: Corporate Insight’s Alumni Engagement and Giving study, 2015