

A Recipe for Success: Essential Ingredients for an Effective Alumni Program

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Action Items for Alumni Program Roll-Out

Planning Stages

- Internal Listening and Research
 - What has your firm already done for alumni?
 - What individual alumni relationships does the firm hold?
 - Who at the firm is already interfacing with alumni?
- External Listening and Research
 - What are other firms doing?
 - Conduct online research and talk to other alumni relations professionals about what an alumni program looks like at their firm.
 - Survey alumni for their ideas and input.
- Set Mission/Goals
 - What does your firm want to get out of the program?
 - There are many differing overarching goals for an alumni program. Think through and investigate what your firm is looking to accomplish.
 - Examples: business development, relationship building, lateral recruitment, market visibility, brand promotion.
 - Alumni programs are a cultural enterprise. Align your vision with your firm's culture.
- Identify the Building Blocks of Your Program
 - What will your alumni program be comprised of?
 - External Elements
 - Common components: alumni dedicated website, events, newsletter, career services, social media, benefits/discounts, professional development resources.
 - Internal Elements
 - Departure procedure/exit forms
 - Data/alumni contact information
 - Dedicated alumni professional
 - Alumni committee
 - Identify and make a clear decision on who your firm's alumni are.
 - Lawyers only? Paralegals? Staff?
 - Processes for addressing exceptional circumstances.
- Collect and Analyze Alumni Data
 - Ensure before launch you have verified, up to date, and accurate contact information for your alumni population.
- Alumni Program Champions
 - Identify firm leaders who support your agenda and plan.
 - Be sure that at least some champions hold alumni relationships which will be crucial for data integrity, outreach, and program promotion.

- Get to know your CRM team, Professional Development team, Marketing, HR, Recruiting and other support staff members who can contribute to the program.
- Identify alumni champions/alumni committee who can serve as a sounding board.
- Make an Action Plan
 - Phased approach
 - Once you have identified the universe of possible initiatives, rank/order your priorities.
 - Identify timelines as appropriate.
 - Set SMART goals.
 - Determine how will you define success and program milestones.

Building Your Strategy & Program

- Alumni Dedicated Website
 - Vendor search
 - CRM integrations and support
 - Who to include (internally and externally)
 - Develop a content plan
 - Professional support to manage the website
- Events
 - Alumni events – by region, practice, affinity group
 - Include alumni in general firm events
- Communications Plan
 - Newsletter
 - Email strategy
 - Social media strategy
- Metrics/ROI
 - Determine your measures of success
- Maintaining Data Accuracy
 - Track/update information as soon as it goes out-of-date
 - Utilize lawyer relationships
 - Review results from communications and conduct research to update contact information – returned/undeliverable emails
 - Leverage technology (RelSci, Google alerts, LinkedIn) for contact updates
 - Events can focus the review of a subset of contacts
 - Website or newsletter contests/reminders
- Common Mistakes to Avoid
 - Mimicking other programs
 - It is important to do what will work for your firm and culture. Every firm is different so be sure to take on only what you have the resources for.
 - Launching too soon
 - Make sure you have all of your research done and resources established before publicly launching.
 - Talking too much about your firm
 - Keep the focus on alumni and their news.
- Challenges you may face
 - Nay-sayers

- Some will disagree with you and the alumni program. Be prepared and don't be disheartened.
- Capacity and Budget
 - Many firms don't realize the amount of time and money it takes to run a successful program. Manage expectations and create a budget breakdown.
 - Track and share successes to gain internal support.

Getting Your Message Out

- Internal Launch
 - How will you launch the alumni program to your firm?
 - Firm-wide communication or notify employees in stages?
 - Partner meeting presentation
 - Pre-access to web portal
- External launch
 - Telling alumni about new program and resources.
 - Announcement to alumni
 - Kickoff event/contest
 - Website launch

Additional Resources

- NALP Legal Employer Alumni Relations Section
 - Find us on NALPConnect!
- CAPE - Corporate Alumni Programs Exchange
 - LinkedIn Group for alumni relations professionals across industries.