



# Preparing for Advancement's Digital Future

Lessons from the Leading Edge of Marketing and Engagement



**We help schools support students from enrollment to graduation and beyond**

➤ **ROOTED IN RESEARCH**

**7,500+** Peer-tested best practices

**500+** Enrollment innovations tested annually

➤ **ADVANTAGE OF SCALE**

**1,500+** Institutions served

**4 M+** Students supported by our SSMS

➤ **WE DELIVER RESULTS**

**95%** Of our partners continue with us year after year, reflecting the goals we **achieve together**

➤ Find and enroll your right-fit students

➤ Support and graduate more students



➤ Prepare your institution for the future

# Losing Mindshare

## Higher Ed is Losing Mindshare Despite Our Ongoing Efforts

### Alumni Don't Engage

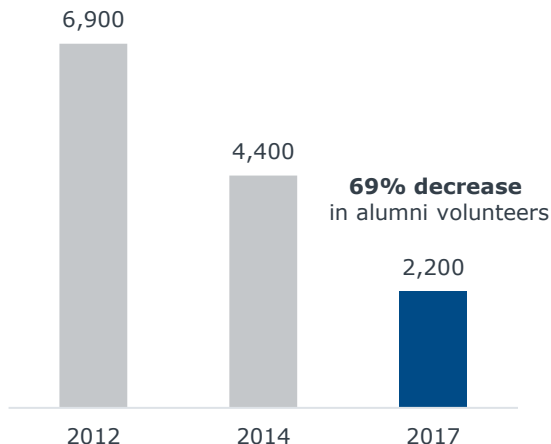
**80%** Of **alumni don't feel very connected** to their alma mater

**60%** Of alumni **have never been** to an alumni event

**68%** Of institutions report **decreasing or stagnant membership** for dues paying associations

### Eager Volunteers Disappear

*Number of Volunteers at One Private Research University*



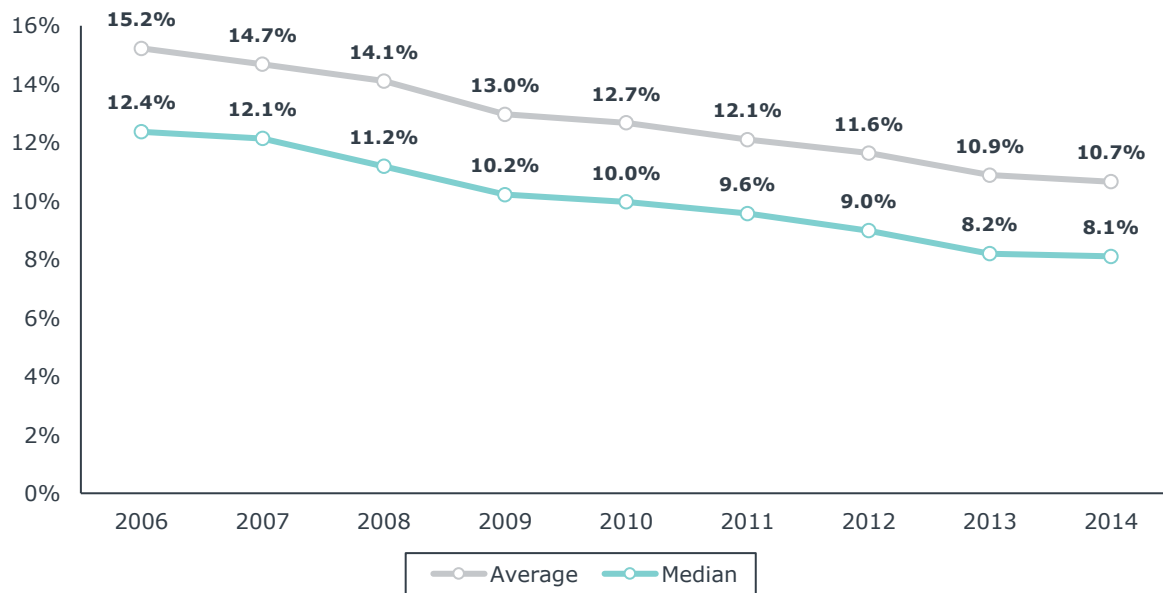
# APR Rates Continue to Decline



Fewer Alumni Gave During Recession; But Same Goes for Every Other Year

## YOY Change in Average and Median Alumni Participation Rates

*n=865 institutions*



# Major Gifts Depend on Early Acquisition

## Jane Q. Donor's Path to Major Giving

### First Gift

*Average first gift of major donors is **\$179***

### First Leadership Gift

*Donors on average take **seven years** to make a \$1,000 gift*

### First Major Gift

*54% of major donors **give for 16+ years** before \$25K gift*



### Consistent Giving While Young

*Donors who give every year for the first five years give **3x as much** as other donors by their 20<sup>th</sup> reunion*

### Frequent Upgrades

*Donors who **upgrade consistently** have a **9x better chance** of one day giving a major gift*

Source: Bingley C, Gawor B, "The Threat of Declining Alumni Giving Rates to Higher Education Fundraising," Ruffalo Noel Levitz Webinar, March 22, 2016, <https://www.ruffalonl.com/papers-research-higher-education-fundraising/2016/the-threat-of-declining-alumni-giving-rates-to-higher-education-fundraising>; Meer J, "The Habit of Giving," Economic Inquiry (March 2013): 6; Barry F, et al., "Cultivating Lifelong Donors: Stewardship and the Fundraising Pyramid," Blackbaud (2010), [https://www.blackbaud.com/files/resources/downloads/Book\\_CultivatingLifelongDonors.pdf](https://www.blackbaud.com/files/resources/downloads/Book_CultivatingLifelongDonors.pdf); Advancement Forum interviews and analysis.

# A Foundation Built on Volunteering

## Returns on Meaningful Engagement From Cornell

### A Snapshot of Cornell's Volunteer Giving

57%

**Giving rate among volunteers** compared to 36% from event attendees and 3% from alumni who are neither

10x

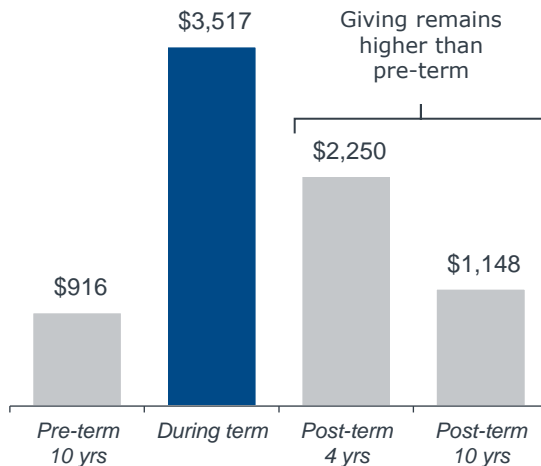
**Average differential in median gift size** between alumni who volunteer and those who don't

83%

Of top **donors who give >\$1M are volunteers**

### Upgrades That Endure

*Cornell Volunteer Leadership Annual Giving Averages*



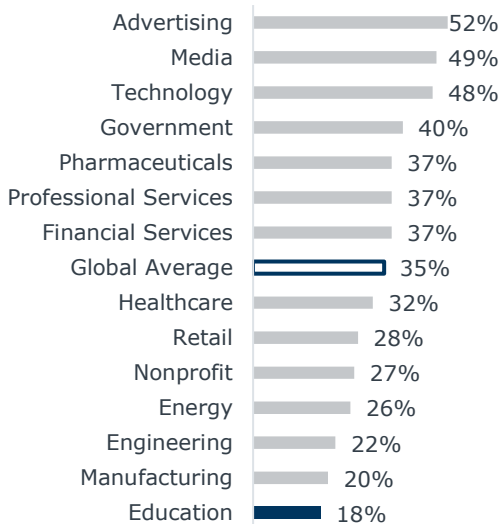


# Failing to Keep Up with the Pace of Change

## Higher Ed Least Likely to Have a Digital Strategy

### Adoption of Enterprise-Wide Digital Strategy Lags

% of Organizations Setting a Digital Strategy



### Widespread Denial of Digital Shift




**“On the whole, we are still in the denial stage of grief about digital. We are acting as if nothing is going to change.** We are using the same playbook we always have. We are pretending this doesn’t exist. There are some ‘alarmists’ who understand what’s going on, but everyone else doesn’t know what they don’t know.”

*Mark Koenig  
Assistant Vice President  
Oregon State University*



# Life Moves at Warp Speed

Fast, Remote Experiences Set the Bar Higher than Ever

|  | <b>Old, Slow Analog Model</b>                           |   | <b>New, Fast Digital Future</b>                       |
|--|---|---|---|
|  <b>Buying a Toothbrush</b>          | Drive to CVS, browse aisles<br>• <b>25 minutes</b>      | ➔ | Order with one click on Amazon<br>• <b>10 seconds</b> |
|  <b>Renting a Movie</b>              | Argue with family in Blockbuster<br>• <b>45 minutes</b> | ➔ | Argue with family on Netflix<br>• <b>25 minutes</b>   |
|  <b>Catching Up with a Classmate</b> | Go to an alumni event<br>• <b>4 hours</b>               | ➔ | Message them on Facebook<br>• <b>5 minutes</b>        |

## High-Speed Expectations Spill Over to Advancement

“When we surveyed our alumni, we found they wanted the same thing from us that they wanted from Amazon—**streamlined, customized, efficient, fast** engagement and giving.”

*Betsy Mennell, Former Vice President of Development and Alumni Engagement  
Northern Arizona University*





# Immune to the Noise

## Constituents Tune Out High-Volume, Sophisticated Communications

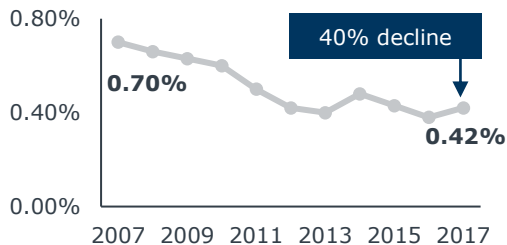
### Marketing Activity Across Sectors...

#### Nonprofits Ramp Up Volume

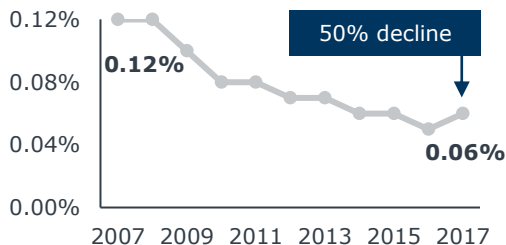
**57%** Increase in **nonprofit emails** per person, 2007-2017

#### ...Makes Audiences Less Responsive

Fundraising Email **Clickthrough Rate**



Fundraising Email **Response Rate**



Sources: Jason Wyatt Pro, "10 Marketing Trends to act on in 2018," *Become a Master Marketer*, 2018.; "2018 Nonprofit Benchmarks!," *M+R Benchmarks*, 2018, <https://mrbenchmarks.com/>.; "2010 Nonprofit Benchmarks!," *M+R Benchmarks*, 2010, <https://mrbenchmarks.com/>.



# The 'Just for Me' Era

Technology Enables a Personal Touch in Every Interaction

## Competing in the Personalization Economy



### Vinome Wine

DNA test forms basis for wine shipments



### Nura Headphones

Sonic range adapts to user's hearing profile



### Birchbox Makeup

Monthly boxes customized to individual preferences



charity: water

### Charity: Water

Dollar-level impact info for specific beneficiaries



## A Personalized Philanthropic Experience

"There are a lot of small nonprofits and charities that are **putting personalization at the center of what they do**. Someone will give, and they'll say, 'You built this well in Africa,' or 'You personally fed this child.' That's fascinating to me. It's not just companies that are thriving off of digital. Some newer entrants in the charity world are doing it, too."

*David M. Anderson  
Executive Director, Annual Giving  
George Washington University*



# Empowered with Information

## Instant Access to Intel Leads Constituents to Dig Deeper

### Constituents Research Everything...



#### Dining Out

**174M**  
monthly  
visitors to  
Yelp



#### Seeing Movies

**14M**  
monthly  
visitors to  
Rotten  
Tomatoes



#### Buying Umbrellas

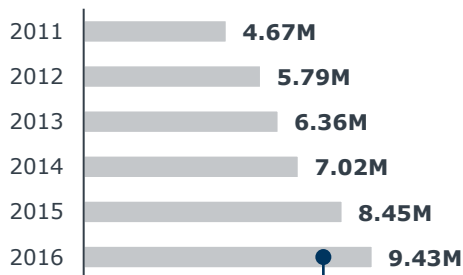
**140%**  
growth in  
searches for  
"best"  
umbrella<sup>1</sup>

“Consumers now research **even the smallest daily decisions**. It's not a surprise to us that some of our customers research a bottle of water as deeply as they research an expensive bottle of wine.”

*Antonio Sciuto  
North America Executive CMO  
Nestlé Waters*

### ...Including Giving to Charity

Charity Navigator Annual Visitors



**102% increase** since 2011

**48%**

Of middle-income people want to **restrict gift use**  
(v. 38% of high-income)

Source: "An Introduction to Yelp Metrics as of March 1, 2018," *Yelp*, March 1, 2018, <https://www.yelp.com/factsheet>; Brooks Barnes, "Attacked by Rotten Tomatoes," *The New York Times*, September 7, 2017.; "2016 Annual Report," *Charity Navigator*, 2016; "The Next Generation of American Giving," *Blackbaud Institute*, 2016.; Advancement Forum interviews and analysis.

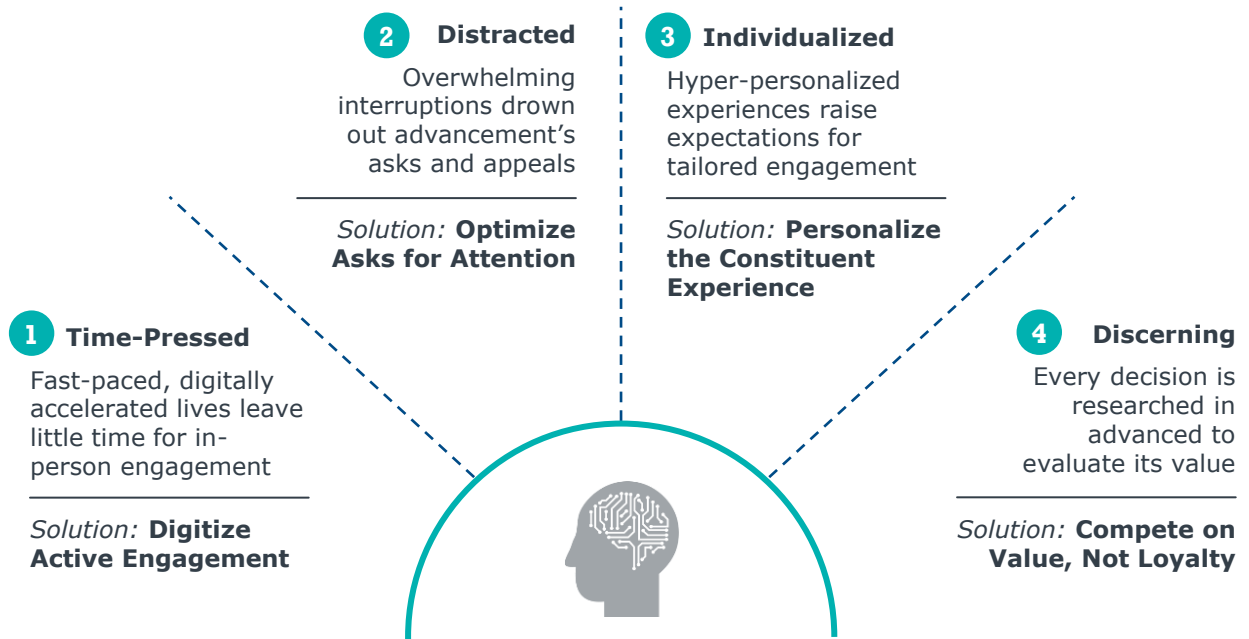
1) Data from 2015 to 2017.

# Preparing for Advancement's Digital Future



## Lessons from the Leading Edge of Marketing and Engagement

### Today's Constituents Are...





# The Time-Pressed Constituent

Digitizing Active Engagement

---

SECTION

1

# Where Is Everyone?

## Events Across Sectors See Decline in Attendance as Competition Grows

### Demand for Events Dries Up...



*"Olympics 2016: Why All the Empty Seats?"*

**Bloomberg**

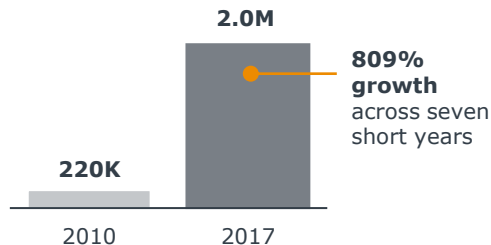
*"Moviegoing Slumps to 25 Year Low"*



*"A New Survey Finds a Drop in Arts Attendance"*

### ...Yet Supply Grows Unabated

*Events Hosted Through Eventbrite, 2010-2017*



### The Beginning of an Arms Race?

80%

Of organizations **intend to increase events** next year

88%

Of event organizers struggle with **greater competition**

Source: CNN, Bloomberg, and the New York Times; "Empty Seats Galore," Twitter; "Eventbrite's Extension Developer Partner Program," Eventbrite US Blog, May 16, 2018, <https://www.eventbrite.com//partner-program>; "The Pulse Report: 2018 Event Industry Trends," Eventbrite US Blog, 2018.; Advancement Forum interviews and analysis.

# The Paradox of Event Attendance

## Constituents' Reported Desires Don't Match Attendance Patterns

### Constituents Say They Want Events...

**70%** Of alumni say it's **important to attend** non-sports events

### ...But Then Forget to Attend Them

**60%** Of alumni **have never been** to an alumni event



### Do As I Say, Not As I Do

"These data consistently show that alumni want their institution to conduct more events, and that they think more alumni should attend those events...Yet efforts to increase event attendance consistently meet with disappointing results. Apparently **the "should" applies to other alumni, not necessarily to me.**"

*Alumni Attitude Study  
"Solving the 'Paradox of  
Event Attendance'"*

# Rethinking Engagement's Business Model



## COVID-19 Brings 'Creative Destruction' to the Alumni Relations Playbook

### From Broad-Based Programming...



#### **Time-Intensive and Location-Specific**

Attendees for whom location or time doesn't work are locked out



#### **Broad Theme for Mass Appeal**

Topics must be broad enough to appeal to wide audience



#### **High Cost**

Venue, event staff, and catering drive up costs for events



### ...To Targeted Prospect Engagement



#### **Quick and Accessible**

Recordings and livestream enable engagement at any time or place



#### **Volume Enables Niche Programs**

High-volume programming allows for smaller, more targeted engagements



#### **Low Cost**

Elimination of overhead brings lower cost for engagement activities



# An Explosion of Innovation

## Digital Landscape Opens New Possibilities for Engagement

### Innovative Digital Programming from Peers Around the World

#### Flipped Presidential Interviews



President hosts monthly interviews with alumni, attracting hundreds of viewers



#### Themed Focus Groups



Alumni hold virtual focus groups with students on topics ranging from job searching to moving to a new city

#### Virtual Internships and Mentorships



Alumni and local community networks tapped to provide virtual professional development opportunities for students



#### Digital Donor Drop-Ins



President drops-in to thank donors during Zoom meetings for five minutes if unable to attend the whole meeting



# Quick, Digital Opportunities



## Active Engagement from the Comfort of Your Couch



### "Day After Graduation" Podcast

**Longwood University** interviews young alumni for 30-minute podcast about their post-grad experiences



### Digital Memory Timeline

The **University of Miami** asked alumni to contribute memories to a virtual university timeline



### Crowdsourced Reunion Playlist

**Northeastern University** creates a collaborative Spotify playlist for alumni to add their favorite songs to

## Micro-Engagement Opportunities: 6 Key Elements



1. **Well-defined** ask
2. Average time commitment of **30 minutes** or less
3. **Active engagement**, rather than passive consumption of content
4. **Shareable** end product
5. Marketed and completed primarily on **digital channels**
6. **Low cost**, broad reach



# The Individualized Constituent

Personalizing the Constituent Experience

---

SECTION

3

## Higher Ed's Not Exempt from Personalization Pressures

“People now expect personalization from their alma mater. They expect us to **keep track of their interactions and preferences, and tailor our offerings** to meet their needs. It’s not just about changing how we talk to people. We have to create more customized offerings to begin with.”

*Jennifer Campbell  
Associate Vice President,  
College Relations and Communications  
Ithaca College*

# Constituents Hungry for Personal Outreach

## Lacking Personal Connection

The average American **receives a personal letter** once every...

1987



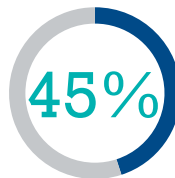
2 Weeks

2011



7 Weeks

## Distrustful of Mass Marketing



Of all global email traffic is spam

“People are so inundated with spam nowadays, they often hesitate to open email from unfamiliar senders—and **they’re more likely to trust a personalized sender name and email address** than a generic one.”


*Lindsay Kolowich  
Senior Manager, Content Strategy  
Hubspot*


Sources: Lindsay Kolowich, "19 Simple Email Marketing Tips to Improve Your Email Open and Clickthrough Rates," *HubSpot Blog*, June 21, 2016, <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/make-emails-more-clickable-list>; "Average US Households Receive a Personal Letter Just Once Every 7 Weeks," *Daily Mail Online*, October 03, 2011, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2044652/Average-US-households-receive-personal-letter-just-7-weeks.html>; "Spam Statistics and Facts," *Cyberbullying*, <https://www.spamlaws.com/spam-stats.html>; Advancement Forum interviews and analysis.




# Putting a Name to a Campaign

## From a Generic Institutional Email...


 **University of Florida** → 11.4%  
<ufgiving@ufl.edu> open rate  
*Last chance to join us in 2014!*


 **Warrington Alumni News** → 18.4%  
<ufalumni@ufl.edu>  
*Warrington Wire: Specialized Success*


 **University of Florida** → 13.8%  
<ufgiving@ufl.edu>  
*UF is rising and shining*

## ...To a Personalized Sender

 **Leslie Pendleton** → 38.3%  
<ufgiving@ufl.edu> open rate  
*The next 10 years*

 **Heather Greig** → 47.4%  
<ufalumni@ufl.edu>  
*Following Up*

 **Emily Behrens, c/o 2016** → 37.4%  
<ufgiving@ufl.edu>  
*Be our partner in the Gator Good*

**2.5x** Higher open rates when using a person's name as the sender 

# 'Who Made a Difference to You?'

## Notre Dame Stops Talking and Starts Listening

### Request for Feedback Sent to 35,000 Alumni



- How do you feel about Notre Dame?
- How do you feel about giving back to the university?
- What activities, groups, parts of campus, do you care most about?
- Who at Notre Dame made a difference in your life?

### An Outpouring of Enthusiasm

“Something interesting happens when you lower the barrier to providing feedback. You not only get more feedback, but the **feedback trends more positively**, too.”

*Patrick Richer, Chief Client Officer  
HundredX*

46%

**Response rate** to emails

8.7K

**Faculty and staff recognized** as having made a difference

10K

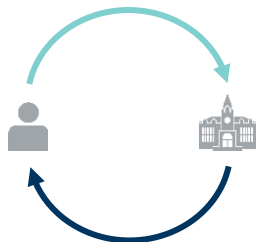
**Alumni interests** identified

# Closing the Feedback Loop

Infographic and Personal Outreach Signal to Alumni, 'We Hear You'

## Follow-up Touches Demonstrate Notre Dame Was Listening

1 Alumni say  
**what they feel**



2 Notre Dame says  
**what they heard**

### One to One



**Personal outreach** (email, phone) to dissatisfied alumni

▶ *"I wanted to follow up to address your concerns..."*

### One to Many



**Infographic** featuring key takeaways sent to all alumni

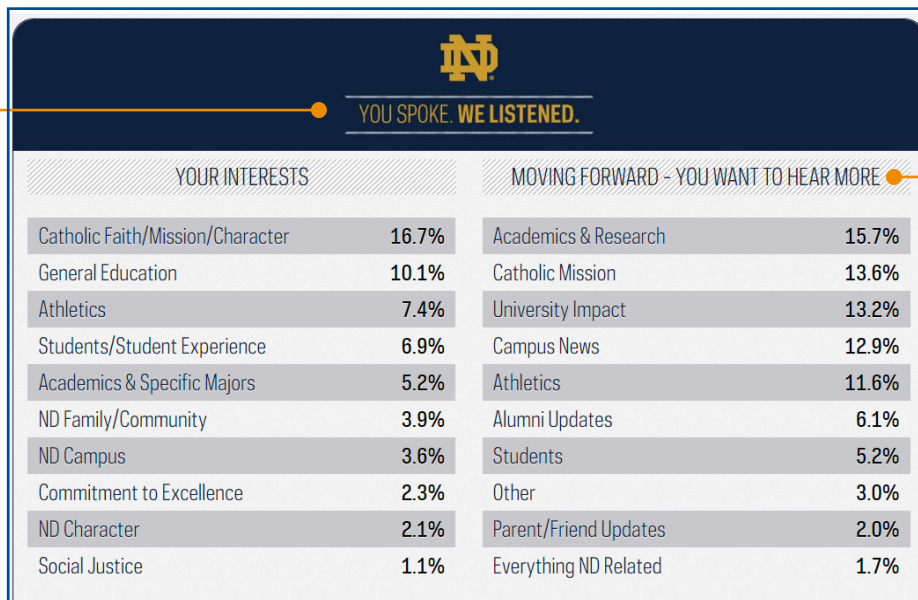
▶ *"Father Hesburgh was recognized by over 700 people..."*



# A Snapshot of Constituent Sentiment

## Listening Campaign Infographic Broadcasts Results for All

Thoughtful branding



Preview of upcoming content offers reason to tune in

Granular data on constituents' interests

# A Sea Change in Communications Strategy

Advancement Leaders Look to Engineer the Right Ask



## Moving Toward Interest Segmentation

"We need to get to a point where, across campus, if someone has said they're not interested in athletics for example, we don't email them about athletics. We need to be sensitive to what people tell us they care about. **The more we treat individuals as individuals, the better.**"

*Brad Goff  
Senior Director, Organizational Effectiveness  
University of Notre Dame*



### Old Model



**One-size-fits-all** strategy  
yields low returns



### New Model



**Interest-based segments**  
meet personalization need



# The Discerning Constituent

Competing on Value, Not Loyalty

---

SECTION

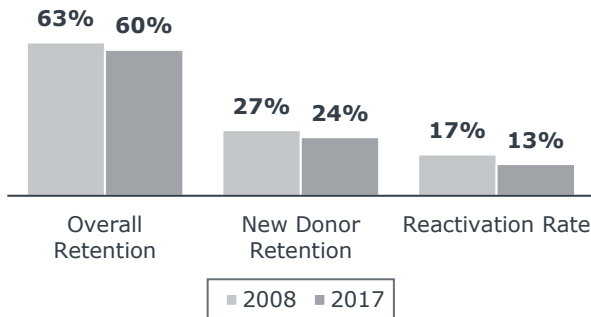
4

# Higher Ed Feels the Heat from Loyalty's Decline



**Harder than Ever to Hold Onto Donors...**

**...And Few New Donors to Fill Gap**



**-15%** Decline in new donors, 2008-17

## What's Driving Away Our Loyal Donors?



**Digital platforms** give every nonprofit global fundraising reach



**24/7 news cycle** inspires impulse gifts, draws attention to causes



Loyalty-based **case for support** hits dull note with new generation

# A Crisis of Value

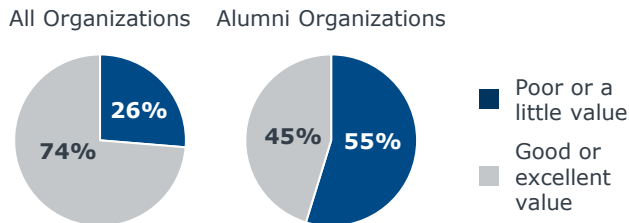
## Engagement Teams Dubious that Programming Meets Constituent Needs

### Little Understanding, Even Less Value

“From 1 to 10, how well does your organization **understand the needs** of its members?”



“How would your constituents rate the **value of the benefits** you offer?”<sup>1</sup>



“

The **digital age has stripped many [alumni] organizations of their value proposition**, as they are no longer the exclusive providers of content, communication, and connectivity...

“Despite having little to offer alumni in the way of valuable benefits, many institutions seem to have overlooked the fact that alumni expect more than a one-sided relationship.”

*Access Development  
“Bridging the Leadership/  
Membership Gap”*

”

Source: “Bridging the Leadership/Membership Gap,” Access Development, 2018, <https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/263750/Access%20Development%20Member%20Leader%20Gap%20Book%20ALU%20v1.pdf>; Advancement Forum interviews and analysis.

1) Benefits defined broadly to include career/professional benefits, social/cause-related benefits, philanthropic/altruistic benefits, monetary/economic benefits, and other benefits.



# Revamping Programs to Meet a Need

University of San Francisco Asks, 'What Do Mentorships Do for Mentors?'

## Diving Deep on Mentor Motivations

“ We were having difficulty retaining mentors. We needed to understand **what need mentorships filled** for the mentors themselves.”

*Dr. Jay Le Roux Dillon  
Director of Alumni Engagement  
University of San Francisco*

## An Unexpected “Job to Be Done”



### What They Thought

*Mentorships Are About **Career***

- Resume reviews
- Interview coaching
- Job placements

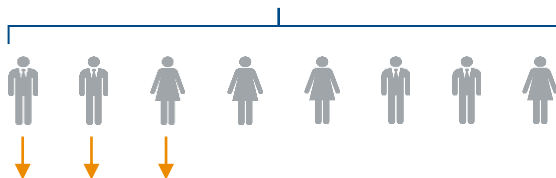


### What They Learned

*Mentorships Are About **Connection***

- Life advice
- Navigating interpersonal conflict
- Educating the whole person

### 1 Survey mentors about their experience



### 2 Follow up for **deep dive** with those who had a positive experience

# Redesigned Program Supercharges Participation



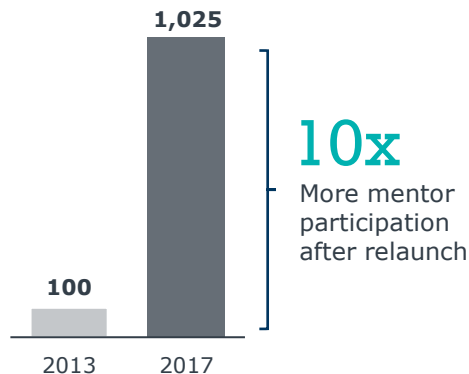
Putting the Needs of Mentors First Elicits Increased Volunteering

## Program Rebuilt to Meet Mentor Needs



## Acquisition and Retention Grows

Number of Mentor/Mentee Matches, 2013-2017



# A Tale of Two Boomers

## Demographic Segmentation Misses Some Important Details

### What Do a Rock Musician and a Prince Have in Common?



**Ozzy Osbourne**

- Born in 1948
- From Great Britain
- Successful, wealthy, celebrity
- Loves dogs and the Alps



**Charles, Prince of Wales**

- Born in 1948
- From Great Britain
- Successful, wealthy, celebrity
- Loves dogs and the Alps



“They must basically be the same.  
**Let’s put them in the same segment.”**





# Competing on Value, Not Loyalty

## Cultivating Today's Discerning Constituents

### 1 Sequence Communications to Build a Case for Support

#### Short Term

- ▶ Use light, frequent touches across multiple channels build momentum
- ▶ Share impact stories upfront to capture non-donor mindshare
- ▶ Pre-empt the ask with an engagement communication campaign

#### Long Term

- ▶ Create adaptive email journeys that react to digital behaviors
- ▶ Build segment-specific communication plans based on depth of engagement

### 2 Realign Programming Around Constituents' Needs

#### Short Term

- ▶ Conduct program value analysis to determine constituent motivations
- ▶ Assess programming to identify potential what needs it may currently fill
- ▶ Collect data on non-demographic alumni characteristics, such as anniversaries

#### Long Term

- ▶ Develop psychographic or "life context" personas for segmentation
- ▶ Redesign programming to align with results of program value analysis

# Most Pressing Concerns Emerging from COVID-19

88

## How EAB Can Support Your Efforts to Navigate the Crisis and Beyond



### Strategy and Organization

- How should we deploy **federal relief** funds for optimal impact?
- How do we address immediate **cost-cutting** needs while preserving strategic options for the future?

How can we use this **crisis as a catalyst** to prompt difficult decisions or enact **bold change**?

What **enduring changes** will carry into the post-COVID-19 world, and how can we prepare?



### Undergraduate Recruitment

- How can we adapt our **yield, financial aid, and net tuition revenue** models for COVID-19?
- What **virtual** methods and strategies can we use to effectively **engage prospective students** and their parents?
- How can we convey an authentic, honest, and **meaningful portrayal** of our institution in a **virtual world**?
- How do we **augment our future prospect** pool when Search names are delayed?



### Student Success

- How can we address the **needs of underserved** student populations hurt most by COVID-19?
- How do we **virtually onboard** new students most effectively, so they don't reconsider their decision to attend?
- What do we do now and over the summer to **reenroll our fall class**?
- How do we use the lessons of the spring to **protect course completion** rates in the fall?



### Adult Learners

- What **educational offerings** will adult learners need most **amidst economic uncertainty**?
- What strategies will allow us to **expand** our adult learning efforts **within a cost-constrained** world post-COVID-19?
- How do we improve our **flexible and online delivery capabilities** to meet students where they are?

### Select EAB Resources



EAB's Coronavirus Resource Center on EAB.com



Enrollment Services, Financial Aid Optimization, and Agency Services



Navigate (Student Success Management System)



Adult Learner Recruitment Marketing



Academic Performance Solutions and Education Data Hub



YouVisit Interactive Content and Virtual Tours



Student Success Playbook



Market Responsive Program Design

# EAB's Ongoing Support for Advancement Teams

## Advancement Investment and Performance Initiative

- Explore the staffing and investment decisions that lead to fundraising growth
- Understand individual fundraisers' activities and outcomes on the front lines

How EAB Can Help

### Identify opportunities to shift investments

Discuss your data and benchmarks with EAB experts, and determine next steps on campus based on priorities and challenges

### Review Related Resources

- [What Distinguishes High-ROI Advancement Shops?](#) (infographic)
- [Optimizing Advancement's ROI](#) (on-demand webconference)

## Long-Term Impact of COVID-19 on Fundraising

- Prepare for how the current crisis will impact fundraising returns

How EAB Can Help

### Brief Your Board or Cabinet on the Current Environment

Request 20- to 30-minute presentation on lessons from the Great Recession and the results of a survey of 110 advancement leaders

### Support MGO Work in a Virtual Environment

Schedule a conversation with an EAB expert to discuss how to ensure MGO productivity and efficiency while frontline fundraisers and their managers are all working remotely

### Audit your Giving Website

Get a customized analysis of your giving website to ensure it is optimized to encourage online engagement and giving

## Upcoming Virtual Events

- Connect with peers and learn from experts in during EAB's virtual sessions



### Adapt to Advancement's New Era

With the advent of the COVID-19 era, much of advancement leaders' attention has shifted to the pipeline. There, they are finding a bleak picture: too many future major gift prospects go overlooked by frontline teams, and this neglect is undermining long-term revenue goals.

In this meeting, we will explore strategies for pipeline development in the donor-investor era. We will also dive deep into how advancement's response to the coronavirus crisis could change the face of the industry for years to come.

[Register here for the executive roundtables.](#)



See more resources in EAB's [COVID-19 Resource Center](#)



# Preparing for Advancement's Digital Future

Lessons from the Leading Edge of Marketing and Engagement