



Alumni Network

Description

Continually engaging with alumni can be very beneficial to your organization, as they can often provide valuable knowledge and sometimes even a source of funding. Alumni can become involved in one-time initiatives such as speaking at an event or long term projects such as a mentorship program. This guide covers various topics such as how to engage with alumni and create a database, how to co-create value and best practices for different types of initiatives.

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About Re_Generation

[Re_Generation](#) is a Canadian youth movement that seeks to build a regenerative, sustainable, and just economy. We aim to reimagine our schools, repurpose our careers, and remodel our companies to be aligned with regenerative principles. In particular, we provide resources for individuals to launch impact-driven careers and advocate for change within their companies and schools. We also aim to advance public policies that promote regenerative and sustainable business practices.

Our successful 'Our Future, Our Business' Manifesto campaign received the support of 65 youth organizations, 130 high-level executives, and 100 civil society organizations recognizing the need for reform in business education on sustainability. After three years of existence as the Canadian Business Youth Council for Sustainable Development, we have changed our name to Re_Generation to become more inclusive of all youth, not just business youth.

We believe that the ideal society is a [regenerative](#) one. Regeneration to us means putting human and ecological [well-being](#) at the centre of every decision. It means restoring relationships, both within nature and within society, while helping all communities to thrive. Read more about our history and vision at our [About Us](#) page.

Value Co-Creation

Connecting alumni and students is not just value propositions, it is value co-creation.

Alumni will be able to show how one can potentially enter or navigate a specific career or industry. For instance, in school, we often learn the knowledge we need to do our jobs, but not the skills needed to turn that into a career.

On the other hand, the network will provide the opportunity for alumni to network with each other, which will lead them to fruitful professional connections.

Connecting with Alumni

There is so much power in the LinkedIn social platform to reach alumni who have 5+ years of industry experience.

Some tips regarding finding relevant alumni on LinkedIn:

- Optimize your searches through the filters in the search bar for greater relevance to your specialization and future aspirations
- Ensure your profile is kept up-to-date and shows your personality to an extent

Steps to identifying Alumni on LinkedIn

- Some of the search options in LinkedIn are only available to premium members. It might be worth your while to buy the membership for a month and go all-in in alumni identification during this period
- Search a keyword in the LinkedIn search bar (ex.: sustainability)
 - Click all filters
 - Select your school (sometimes a school can have multiple pages, Ex: "McGill University", "McGill University - Desautels Faculty of Management", ... so select all the relevant ones)
 - Select (or not) a location
 - If you need an in person speaker, or are doing an in person event
 - Note that the location filter doesn't always work as people don't always update it
 - Use the filter to search specifically in someone's connections, which is useful to narrow down the scope
- Use keyboard shortcuts to save you some pain (if you go through 500 profiles, every click you can save is worthwhile!)
 - Ex: hold command when you click on someones profile so it automatically opens in another tab – in mac

- If you have to set specific criteria for some reason, and find interesting alumni that you'd like to reach out to after you're done with the event, note their name and profile URL down in an excel so you have a list you can go through later
 - Even if it takes some time to do so, it's WAY better to do it like that than to go through the list of the 500 profiles a second time because you forgot

Furthermore, professors and school newsletters are also great sources to obtain alumni.

Once a list of suitable alumni is established, compile an introduction of two sentences as to why you wanted to talk with them specifically, and curate the messages to show your interest in recent and relevant works of theirs, whether at an individual or company-wide level.

- Prepare a generic message that works for everyone, and only change the first name of the message. Being too specific will become time-consuming and is not scalable.
 - The intro message on LinkedIn is limited to 300 characters, so the goal is to convince the alumni to accept your connection request so you can tell them more. Thus, say in the message that you would like to give them more info.
 - Here is the generic template that was used by Phillippe from DSN:

Hi [insert first name],

I am the director of alumni relations for the Desautels Sustainability Network. As you are a Desautels/McGill alumnus and seem passionate about sustainability, I would like to connect with you to tell you more about our network.

All the best,
Philippe

- NOTE: look up when to use Alumnus, Alumnae, and Alumni! <https://www.grammarly.com/blog/alumna-alumnae-alumni-alumnus/>
- Once they have accepted your connection request, follow-up rapidly (24-48hrs) with the info you wanted to share with them. It can be info about your club, your network, an event you have, etc (whatever you referenced in the connection message)
- If you want to invite them to a LinkedIn group:
 - Inviting them through the invite function (in your group, as an admin, you can send an invitation to one of your connections) may not be sufficient! It will only send them a notification, which is likely to get lost in their notification inbox if they are not the most active LinkedIn user
- Thus, we recommend *supplementing* (not replacing) the invitation by sending

the URL of your LinkedIn group (even if your group is private, it should work - try it out).

- We recommend supplementing and not replacing, because when the alumni will open the URL they will be able to “accept the invitation” instead of having to “request to join” the group (it’s the small things that make the difference sometimes!)
- If you invite them to the LinkedIn group, feel free to follow up with them a few days after the initial invite if they haven’t accepted it to remind them to accept it if they want XYZ (replace XYZ with your sales pitch/why they should join the group!)
- **Some of them might be less present on LinkedIn, so if you have their email, connect with them through email!

Try to complete with a clear call-to-action at the end, whether a 25-minute coffee chat or referring you to resources to learn more. Be specific and highlight exactly why they would be the best fit for what you are asking.

Lastly, don’t be scared to follow up with them!

Building a Database

- To start, select only a few KEY pieces of information that you will require.
 - If you choose too many key points, it will take way too long to build your database as you will have to input too much data
 - Some interesting information, from past cases:
 - Name
 - Email
 - The best way to collect the email remains a registration form (the email on the linkedin account is often old) – so you can gather a lot of them when doing events. Make sure you store them!
 - LinkedIn URL (it might save you a lot of time if you have them)
 - Graduation date
 - Their program of study at your school
 - Location (their current city)
 - Whether or not they are in your LinkedIn group (if you have one)
 - Whether or not they are a past executive of your club
 - Which events of your club they have attended/been a speaker for, in the past
 - The date at which the information has been updated the last time for a specific alum
- You can find most of that info on their LinkedIn profile
 - This is good because you don’t need to ask them to fill out a questionnaire and

to have to invest a considerable amount of time on the questionnaire/sending it/ following up

- This is also good because you're not asking them anything (so you're keeping your favour for something better) i.e. you're not disturbing them for something small
- If you have to do that for a lot of alums at a time (such as a couple hundred), ask for some help from ppl in your club, or look to see whether there's an affordable software solution that can help you out. It can be very long having to fill 6 data points for 500 people manually.
 - One recommended tool is [Phantombuster](#), which allows you to automate many processes for LinkedIn and other networks
- Update the info that needs to be updated (like the location,...) – some of it can be annually, after an event, etc.
- You could also look into whether a CRM software could help manage your alumni network (keep track of everything, mailing lists, etc.)
 - One recommended tool is [Hubspot](#), which allows you to store information in a customized manner (for free if you don't have too many contacts)

Inviting Alumni to an Event

- The two sections above remain very important. A few modifications:
 - In the connection message, mention your event! (Especially if it is for them, such as a networking event)
 - We wouldn't recommend asking someone you just connected with for a favor, such as being a speaker for an event (of course, depends on the event and on the alum)
 - Make sure you plan the outreach process *in advance*
 - It can take up to a week for someone to accept your connection request (after a week, I think it's fair to say you won't be accepted)
 - After they accept you, it may take you 24hrs to send a follow up message with more info concerning the event (since you're no longer limited to 300 characters)
 - It may take them a couple of days to see that follow up message
 - etc. etc. - the idea here is that it can easily take 2 weeks to go from connecting to RSVPing, so you want to make sure you start reaching out well in advance
 - If you are really planning ahead, then connect with them way ahead of the event to remove this step from the process closer to the event!
- Use a well-crafted invitation. Put all of the details so they don't have to ask you 2-3 clarifying questions, which will make the process longer (and take a lot of your time if you're dealing with 100-200 alumni for an event)

- Be sure not to have any typos.
- Only use very few well thought out emojis if you do. Messages in LinkedIn do not have formatting, so 1 or 2 emojis to bring attention to a key detail can be useful, but it's still a formal communication.
- Give them a link to sign up to your event
 - You can collect some of their info very easily in a registration form which means you don't have to do all the hard work
 - Such as: name, email, year of graduation, etc. (see database section)
 - Also, enable the "confirmation email" to the registration form so they have it in their inbox
 - Plus, them giving you their emails means you will have the good one (not an outdated database one or the one they created their linkedin with) – which means you can send them a calendar invite!
- Send them a calendar invite (from your university or club email, not your personal email)
- Send a reminder email 2 business days before your event. Include all the event details and any additional, relevant information. (send 1 big email with all of the alum in cci)
- Track who actually attended your event (at the door), as some of them will cancel at the last minute
 - Send a feedback form to the alumni that attended the event (which is why you want the list of who showed up)
 - Add the info to their profile in your database (see database section)

Best Practices for Alumni Events

Some best practices to keep in mind for an event involving alumni include:

- Properly introduce each alumni and have a topic of conversation picked out for people to talk about/to provide a guide for students of things they can ask alumni
- If the networking is online, have a student organizer there to facilitate conversation in case there are any awkward pauses
- Remind participants ahead of the event not to ask alumni for a job directly
- Have a back up plan for if an important participant such as a speaker cancels

Lastly, a social media group/chat is a powerful tool in event promotion. We have listed the dos and don't below that will assist you in maximizing the benefits that social media brings:

- Don't:
 - Post too frequently
- Do:
 - Post things that are relevant to most people within the group
 - Only tag people on posts that are very relevant to them

Being Admin of an Alumni Network LinkedIn Group

Some best practices for managing an alumni network group on LinkedIn are:

- Limit the number of posts (by you/your organization, and by others) – keep it a filtered channel of communication
- Plan your posts in advance. If you don't, you likely won't post
- Keep an interesting student to alumni ratio. If you have 20 alumni, then don't add 100 students just yet.
- Define clearly what your goals for this group are:
 - Examples: job opportunities, knowledge building, event marketing, ...
 - Remember that you want to create value for the alumni

Alumni Mentorship Program

An alumni mentorship program is a great way to connect students to alumni that can mentor them throughout a period of time, such as a semester. This promotes connecting students with a passion for sustainability to professionals that work in the industry.

Some tips for facilitating a mentorship program are to:

- Match students with mentors based on what kind of help/guidance the mentor is looking to offer a student and the kind of help/guidance a student is looking for
 - This can be related to knowledge, information, expertise, insight, etc.
- Ensure that the program does not require a lot of time from either party so that they can still participate, but ensure that they are putting effort into developing a relationship over the duration of the program
- Create an outline of the program with all of the relevant details that everyone will need to know
- Create an additional document for the mentees to help them throughout the process, as they may be nervous or uncertain of what to do with their mentors

A great resource to look at as an example is the alumni mentorship program that was facilitated by the John Molson Sustainable Enterprise Committee (JSEC). Their [program outline](#) and [mentee reference sheet](#) contain plenty of helpful information for the participants of their program, including:

- Description of the program
- Benefits to both parties
- Requirements of both parties
- Detailed responsibilities and tips for mentees

Resources

- [JSEC Mentorship Program Outline](#) and [JSEC Mentee Reference Sheet](#)
- [Successful Alumni Networking Event](#)