

GUIDE TO CREATING AWARENESS OF YOUR ALUMNI NETWORK

Awareness is not just important at launch, but on an ongoing basis, to ensure that people know about your alumni community and can easily find where to sign-up.

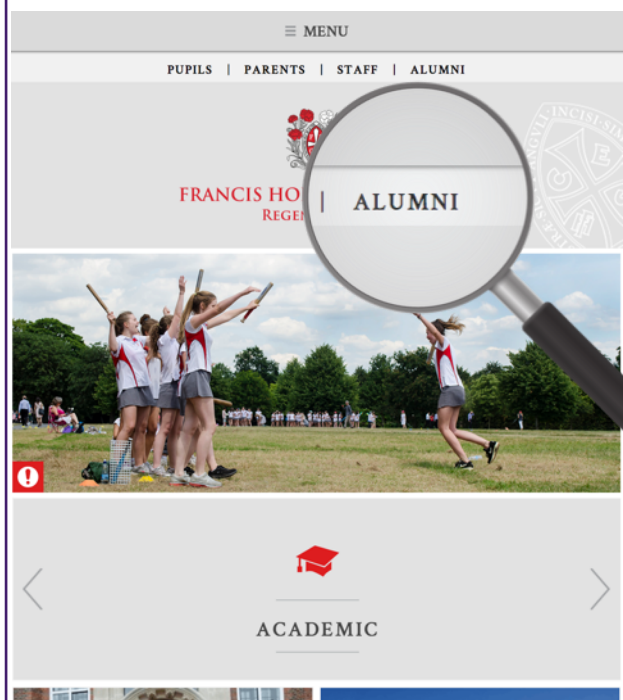
Many of the schools we work with host an in-school sign-up event (such as a leaving year assembly where students are encouraged to sign up to the alumni community on their phones/ iPads) – this is an efficient way of making an entire year group aware of your website and capturing them (with their latest email and consent preferences) before they set off for a new stage of life.

A launch email is also a popular tactic – a punchy welcome message to your former pupils/ staff/ parents to tell them about the online network, with a clear list of ‘benefits’ for joining.

Remember that someone may not join immediately from your initial launch mail, but if they’re subtly prompted repeatedly with opportunities to view ‘hidden’ news, book event tickets, make professional connections, view enticing photos etc – they can be persuaded to sign up when they want to access something of value to them.

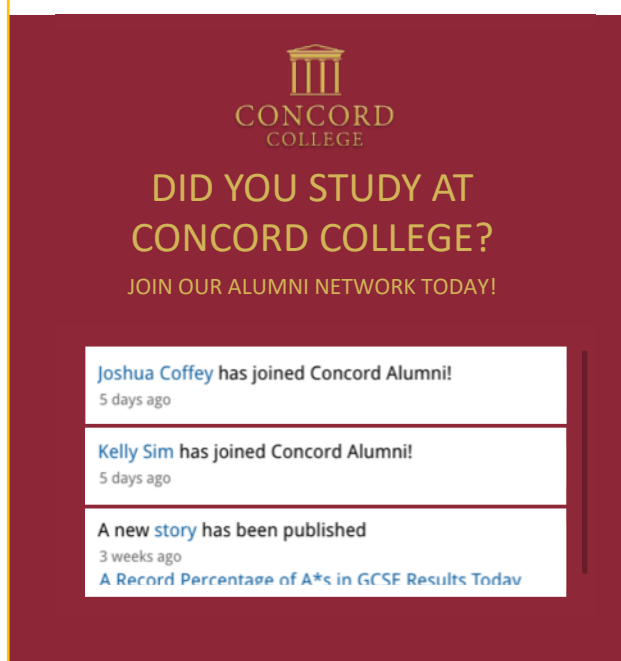
Link from main school/ organisation website

Is your network prominently linked from your main website – for example from the ‘alumni’ tab in your website navigation bar or footer?



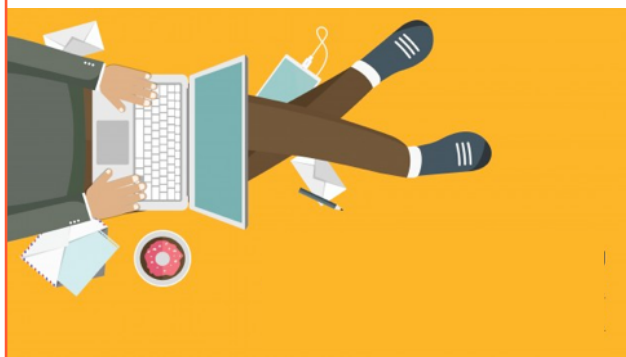
Embed a news feed widget in to your other website(s)

Use embed code to show a live data/ news feed from your alumni website on another website(s). This is a great way to showcase your alumni community, with constantly updated info helping to entice people to click through and take a look at the network.



Permanent link from your email footers

How many emails do you and your team send each week? Hyperlink from your email signature directly to your alumni website (and from your 'out of office' message and voicemail recording)



Link at the bottom of letters/ magazines/ general correspondence

Every time you post out a letter from the Development office or a big alumni magazine mailing, don't miss the opportunity to promote your online network – with a permanent link printed on your letterheads or a bespoke advert/ flyer to include in your mailings



Link from your social media channels

Clearly display a link to you alumni network from the info sections of any LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc channels – including school channels and your personal pages where appropriate



Creative reminders

Unleash your creative ideas and come up with fun and memorable awareness tactics – snazzy postcards, bookmarks or business cards included in your next alumni mailing, a punchy video message to distribute via email/ social media to promote the network, or even quirky gifts branded with the URL of your network (see Surbiton's much-coveted rubber ducks below!)



Partnerships/ barter exchanges

Are there any other groups/ mailing lists which you think might overlap with your alumni database? For example, maybe your next-door school has access to parents/ friends/ siblings of your alumni – would they send an email or postal advert on your behalf to spread awareness of your alumni portal via their network? Incentivising sign-ups to your network might help for this type of initiative – e.g. a special reward for anyone who joins because of a referral from the next-door school, or a unique offer for people that sign-up in the next month. There might also be local companies, business groups or informal old boys/ old girls associations that can help promote your school's official alumni network in return for promoting them/ featuring them in a news story, advert or something else?



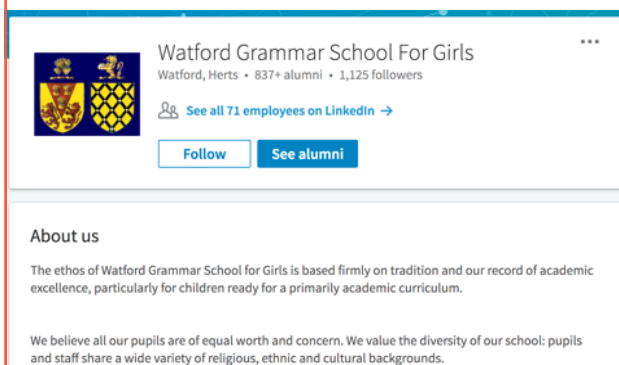
General online web/ search presence

What happens when someone searches for your school's alumni on Google? On Facebook? Have you done an audit? Can you do any work to improve your online presence, and direct the top search results and pages back to your official alumni network? Can you list your alumni website as a reference on your school's Wikipedia page and any other profiles where people may be looking for the school's alumni community?



Advertising

Paying for advertising probably isn't necessary given the very defined audience that schools are trying to reach for their alumni network, but you could try some targeted ads – for example LinkedIn direct mail or re-Marketing to anyone with your school in their Education history (and other demographic criteria). You could do some of this outreach for 'free' by personally messaging people who you've found on LinkedIn or other social media channels – although this can be time-consuming and restricted to message/ InMail limits.



Build awareness through news

We've written other guides on how to create awesome online content – so please check these out for more juicy details – but the basic principle here is simple: publish exclusive and interesting news stories that feature LOTS of your alumni and ask these alumni to spread the stories via their own social media channels. People generally love being interviewed for an article and if they're chuffed with the news coverage hopefully they'll share the story with their mates – many of whom will be fellow alum.... Locking part of the news content down - so that people have to register/ login to read it – and tagging people in to the story will help you convert news visitors to signed-up members.

