Case Study: Concord College

About Concord College

Concord College is a leading international day/boarding school located in Shropshire, England. It welcomes students from all over the world to its vibrant and varied community. With its exceptional alumni living globally, **Concord College** runs a stellar development programme to keep in touch and find out about the wonderful achievements of their former students.

The Alumni Team at Concord College consists of three staff members: Vanessa Hawkins (Head of Marketing), Joshua Coffey (Digital Marketing Officer) and newly appointed Alumni Officer, Laura Kingsley. Concord College brings its alumni together with a range of annual and biannual events, and have hosted reunions all over the globe, including Dubai, Singapore, Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Kazakhstan, Bahrain and back at Concord College. They also fundraise for the Concord College Anthony Morris Foundation - a foundation named after former Principal Tony Morris, that raises fees to enable students to study at Concord whose families might not otherwise be able to afford the fees.

We caught up with Joshua Coffey, Digital Marketing Officer, to find out how ToucanTech has helped to boost engagement within their alumni community.

"I particularly love the enthusiasm of the ToucanTech team and constant need for development, to create a better product/service for everyone. Whenever the team (or me personally) have queries or product requests, ToucanTech are so prompt in responding by phone or email - and share our enthusiasm of development!"

Joshua Coffey,
Digital Marketing Officer
Concord College

Concord College Community Stats

Launched alumni network with ToucanTech: **2014**

2400+ online members

70% of all alumni with an email address have signed up to the online community

900+ posts and comments in the community portal

84 class of 2020 alumni signed up to the online community after promotion in school

Over **700** monthly news story reads

Joshua Coffey
Digital Marketing Officer
at Concord College

How did you keep in touch with your alumni during lockdown?

We made sure to keep our community site updated regularly, posting 19 new articles during lockdown, which resulted in over 7000 reads from March to August 2020. We also used email to send out important developments, using a short and snappy subject lines to grab attention such as 'An important message from the Principal'. We emailed our alumni to find out about the great work they were doing to help out their communities, and through this we were able to support and share the 'MoreViralThanTheVirus' campaign set up by a former student, which aimed to stop the spread of misinformation about COVID-19, in partnership with the World Health Organisation.

How have you improved the user experience on your community site for your alumni?

Lockdown gave us a great opportunity to give our community site a complete digital audit, and I've found that dedicating time each week to test new features and see other schools' best practice examples helps to better the alumni network and strategy at Concord College.

We've added new features to engage alumni such as the Digital Magazine Archive to access old Concord College magazines, as well as a termly newsletter to round up all our latest events and stories.

We have also created a better user experience by simplifying the layout of our site; using drop-down menus to avoid cluttering our main menu, and creating a straightforward fundraising page and payments system to make it even easier for alumni to support their college.

Do you have any tips for other schools that are developing their alumni relationships - how can they make their admin and interactions efficient?

One of the main ways that we ensure a high level of engagement is by only sending content that is relevant and of interest to our alumni. This means we're targeting alumni based on numerous criteria, and we show them that we understand what they want to hear about when we contact them, e.g. saying 'We thought you might like this article about a medical breakthrough from another one of our alumni because you are listed as a Concord doctor". We can also share applicable content through the clubs we have set up, such as the entrepreneur network or one of our university buddy clubs.

This level of targeting gets even easier when you have advanced email filters in place, so that you can easily find the right segments. We make sure to save our commonly used email filters on our ToucanTech system so we can quickly put together communications.

We also gather alumni updates efficiently, by using the ToucanTech inbuilt forms, so that all the data goes directly into our database, and we can use this content to produce our catch up series with alumni; finding out about first steps in careers in our Rising Stars or prominent leaders in their fields in our Notable Alumni.

Which activities have you found work best for encouraging your alumni to visit their community site?

We've been focusing on a range of social media tactics to encourage alumni to log into their community portal. The highest engagement has so far come from our weekly '#ThrowbackThursday' which focuses on alumni facts and figures, as well as a few fun challenges. We also launched a dedicated hashtag, #ConcordAlumni, and we encourage alumni to use this on their own social posts, so that we can interact with them and help to promote interesting news stories or upcoming events.

Other activities that have helped to drive a high level of engagement are our fundraising events: we're always thinking about ways to get creative and get people involved. We have hosted a few auctions, including the Concord 70th Birthday Reunion, where alumni offered prizes and could bid to win some high value experiences such as holidays. Concord also supplied archive memorabilia such as old pin badges, scarves, ties, and a signed box of Shrewsbury Monopoly by Principal, Mr Neil Hawkins (as Concord features!).

What's next for your community?

Our projects for the foreseeable future will be based on further fundraising (and the alumni network shop), an increased business directory, virtual events and expanding the network to invite Summer School alumni too, as the Summer School has been running for over 40 years.

We're also looking to increase the careers support we can offer current students, by giving them access to advice from industry experts in the alumni community, as well as tips on CV writing, personal statements and applications. We will also give tutorials about the Alumni Network and the importance of using it for life after Concord (including a video from Principal, Mr Neil Hawkins) - as well as a tutorial about the importance of maintaining professional social platforms, such as LinkedIn.

Another initiative we're taking is to help current students gain work experience. Each year, Concord College sources work placements for its sixth form students - so this year I've asked our careers advisor and university coordinator to make videos that can be used on the Alumni Network. Alumni can then offer 'virtual' or 'digital' work placements for current students, which is win-win for everyone! It further adds to the connection between Main Term and Alumni.

Joshua Coffey will be hosting a webinar on **Friday 2nd October** to discuss **Effective Alumni Engagement,** focusing on how you can integrate your social media channels into your site and overall strategy. He will explain examples of best practice from Concord College, as well as highlighting the importance of engaging your alumni online as they leave your school.
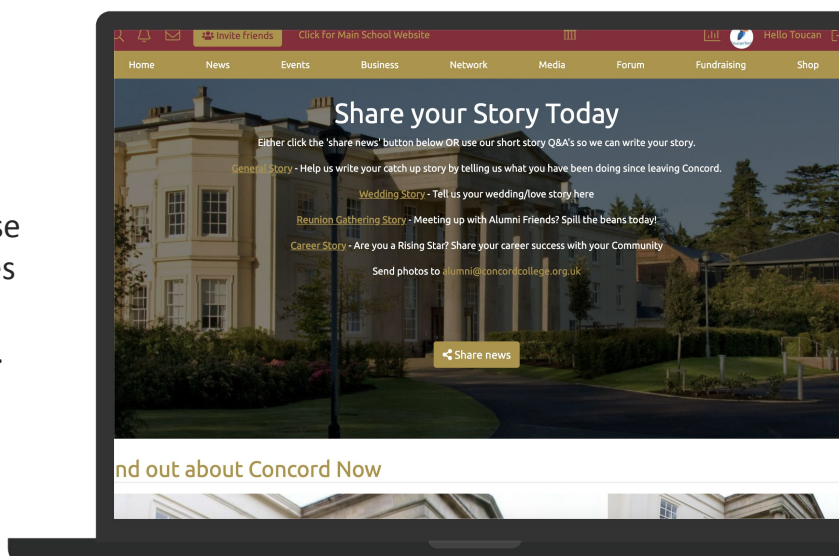**Click here to sign up!**

About
*toucan***tech**

ToucanTech is a community database software used by schools, companies and charities for alumni, careers, fundraising and marketing activities. Combining a flexible website and a powerful back-end database, it's an easy-to-use, all-in-one system.

Database
Import, filter, search and update records, create custom fields, forms and run complex reports

CRM
Track activity, measure engagement, capture consents, create postal labels, sync emails

Community
Connect your members (e.g. alumni, parents, supporters) on a private network, synched with social media

Email
Create and send beautiful email newsletters, tracking open stats, remove bounced emails, manage unsubscribes

Fundraising
Process and log donations, set up funds, log tax relief, run reports, track donors

News
Publish news stories and other content, tag people and share on social media

Gallery & Resources
Post photos, artwork, year books, magazines and tag, categories and share

Events
Plan your dinners, reunions and concerts, send reminders, book tickets, process payments

Mentoring
Feature mentors, post jobs, publish careers guides and news, allow students/ alumni to search for mentors and track interactions

Clubs/ Groups
Set up sub-groups within your network, with their own news and events