

ENGAGING YOUR ALUMNI ONLINE

5 MINI CASE STUDIES

5 online engagement examples from ToucanTech schools

These are real examples from live alumni websites!

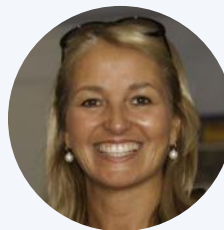
With thanks to some of our ToucanTech 'super-users' for sharing their examples



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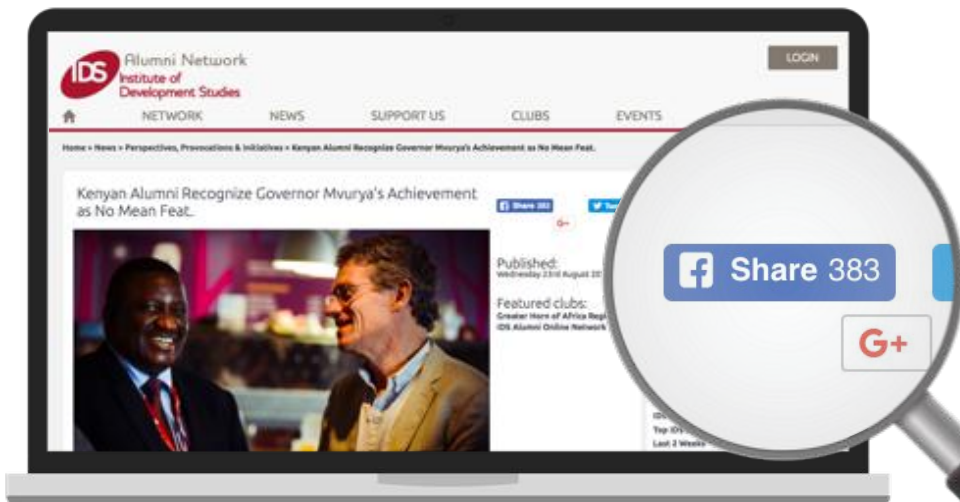


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Tip 1 – Spread topical and personal news stories



The rule “Content is King” applies to your alumni community as much as any website. You need to give people reasons to visit your site on a regular basis and catchy news stories tend to be a traffic honeypot.

In this example, a student at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in the UK decided to write about a topical event in Kenyan politics: an IDS alumnus, Salim Mgalla Mvurya was re-elected as Governor for Kwale County Government in Kenya.

The story was **shared on Facebook nearly 400 times** and **attracted 1,750 reads within a month** – which is a strong result for a niche community website.

The key to this story’s success was choosing a global topic that resonated personally with a lot of the IDS alumni community – this is news about one of their peers winning a significant election. With relevant hyperlinks embedded in the story and posts via Facebook networks to people who would have known, or heard of, Mvurya, a flurry of interested alumni clicked-through to the IDS website to read more....

If IDS had ‘locked down’ some of the content (i.e forced people to log-in to see part of the article) they probably would have encouraged more user sign-ups – although the downside of hiding content is that it can’t be crawled by Google.

How you can replicate this tactic:

- **Piggy-back on a topical event** - whether this be a political election, sporting event, extreme weather situation, popular TV series or in fact anything that’s hitting the headlines – if you can find a connection with your community, then jump on it! These stories need to be reactive – you don’t have long to turn around stories on trending topics, but if you get the timing right then you’ll be able to tweet/ share the article using trending hashtags and
- **Make your stories about people** – feature stories and interviews with interesting members of your community – humans are nosy and like to see what old classmates are up to!
- **Hyperlink and tag** – encourage spread by tagging people in your story, quoting lots of people and hyperlinking to other organisations, who in turn will be more likely to share your story. Before you publish any story think how you can mention/ tag/ link to as many other organisations as possible!
- **Ask others to share** - rather than just posting on the school’s official Facebook or other social channels, ask alum to share from their accounts – personal shares are more likely to be spread further

Tip 2 – Run old photo ‘guess who’ competitions

Everyone loves a bit of photo nostalgia, and most schools have old yearbooks and magazines that you can rifle through for people pics.

In this example, Concord College in Shropshire, UK, ran a series of popular articles showing a class photo montage with a request for alums to log-in and name the people in the photos by leaving comments underneath the story.

As an international school, alumni had spread all over the world, but the photo stories attracted a lot of buzz – this particular one generated **27 comments** from **15 different people** – see a snapshot to the left!



How you can replicate this tactic:

- **Find old photos** - create a photo montage to use as the main image at the top of the story.
- **Add a catchy headline/ summary sentence** – generate some intrigue or a sense of competition – e.g. “Are you in this photo?” or “Free book for the person who accurately names the most people in this picture”
- **Lock down the text** – you probably want to force people to log-in to read the names/ contribute to the discussion
- **Promote via email/ social media** – spread the story and encourage participation via targeted emails/ posts (e.g. to the relevant year group/ sports club etc featured in the photos)

Comments

POST A COMMENT

Monday 23rd February 2015, 12.43 (UTC)



Kevin Mokotedi
5. Seabe Masire from Botswana
9. Obed Athlpheng from Botswana
11. Idris from Nigeria
16. Alice from Malaysia
18. Rukiat from Nigeria
42. Obonetse Mothelesi Botswana
47. Moses Mateisi Botswana
48. Lesego Komanyane Botswana

Monday 23rd February 2015, 12.46 (UTC)



Kevin Mokotedi
17. Susan from Kenya
52. Kevin Mokotedi from Botswana
14. Wendy Wong from Malaysia
61. Abdullah from Oman

Monday 23rd February 2015, 13.24 (UTC)



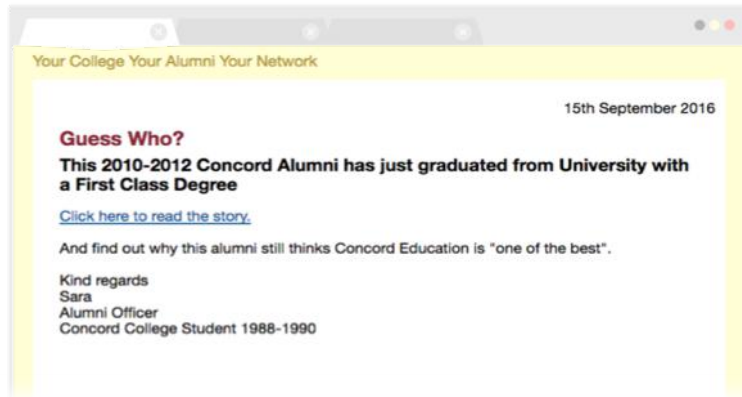
Sara Eastwood
Thanks Kevin - wow you are good at remembering names! none of the people you have listed are currently members - if you have their email then use the 'invite friends' down the left hand side and get them to join so I can tag them to this story! ALSO remember to put a profile picture up otherwise I might just add your registration photo on there for you ;-)!

Monday 23rd February 2015, 14.43 (UTC)



Gordon Wong
51. Roland Koh

Tip 3 – Send regular, targeted, click-bait emails

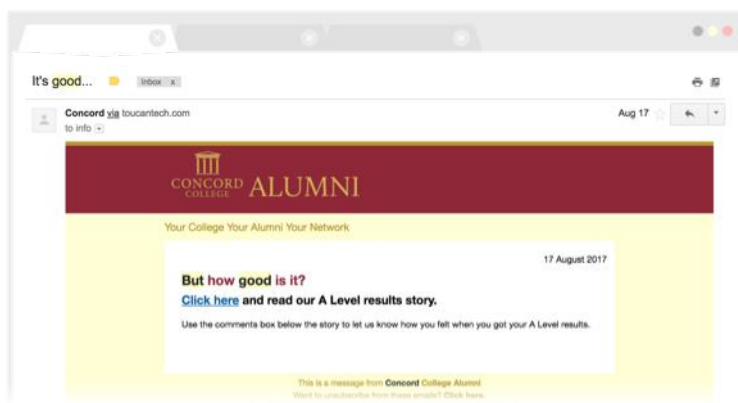


With emails to your alumni, less is more! If you want people engaged on your online community rather than gathering all useful info from emails (or worse, email subject lines)– then you need to lure people to open and click-through. Once someone is logged-in to your community they are giving you data – what are they reading, who are they connecting with, how are they updating their profile etc.

In another example from the proactive team at Concord College, these are two high-intrigue emails that generated strong engagement. The 'Good' A level results story (below) was sent to 1,528 members of Concord's online community, attracting a **50% open rate** and **17% click-through rate**, which is phenomenal by email marketing standards.

How you can replicate this tactic:

- **Create a schedule of interesting email updates** – first step is to come up with genuinely interesting stuff to share with you community? What do they want to know? Who do they want to hear about? What opportunities can you offer them?
- **Write enticing subject lines** – second step is to nail your subject line – be intriguing. Don't be boring. Think what would make you open an email!
- **Don't overload your emails with too much content** – keep the body of your email brief and focus on how you drive people to click-through your community website to find out more
- **Target your audience** – you're better to send emails to smaller groups but make them relevant, than a catch-all to thousands.
- **Re-send your email** – filter off a list of people who didn't open your first message and re-send your email with a fresh new title that might spark their attention second time round



Tip 4 – Post content only accessible on your site



What premium content can you post that you know people will want to log-in to view? Free sports tickets, alumni job opportunities, celeb interviews, a behind-the-scenes head-teacher tour?

In this example, Colston's School decided to post their annual Summer Ball photos on their new online community, with a prompt for people to register/ login to view the pics.

Who doesn't love to take a snoop at themselves and their mates at the end-of-year grand finale party? Sure Instagram will be awash with blurry filtered photos, but it's not the same as the official set, snapped by a professional photographer.

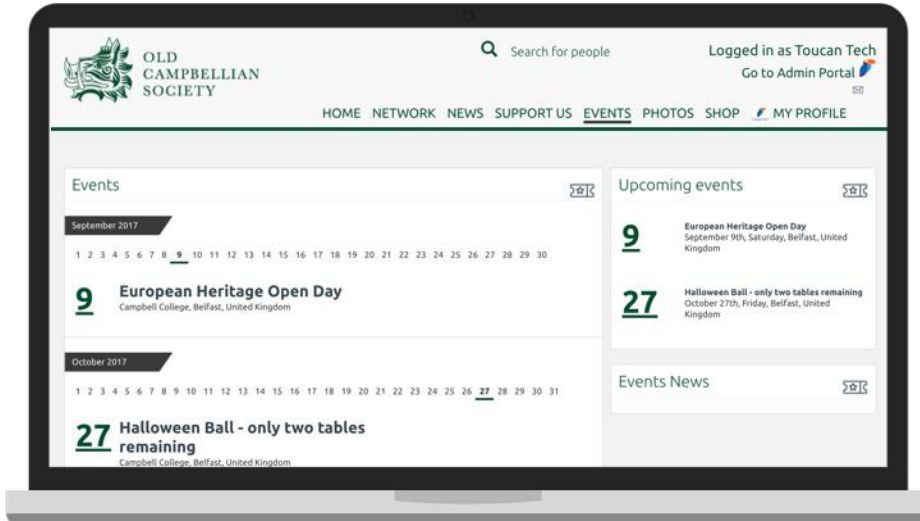
How you can replicate this tactic:

- **Think about your 'must-see' content** – if necessary commission some photos or fresh news – maybe a creative student can help?
- **Post to your community and lock down** – the key factor here is providing a taster of the content and hiding the rest behind log-in, forcing people to join/ log-in to your online network to browse around
- **Promote the content** – tell people to come take a look! Short snappy emails, social posts and word of mouth should help to pull people in – and then encourage/ incentivize these people to tell their friends

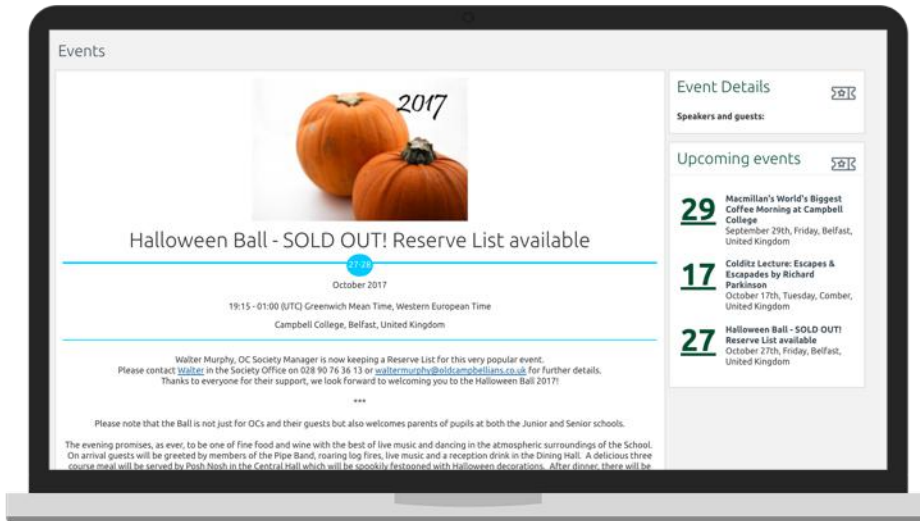


Tip 5 – Create FOMO with limited events etc.

4 Sept - only two tables remaining at Halloween ball!



18 Sept – two weeks later – sold out, add your name to a reserve list!



In this example, top Belfast school, Campbell College, promoted their Halloween Ball via the Events section of their alumni website, making it obvious that only limited places were available. They added to the words “only two tables remaining” to the main title of the event, meaning anyone scanning the events list would feel a sense of urgency about booking tickets for this popular ball.

Just a couple of weeks later all tables were sold, but the school has kept the event listing to let people know about a reserve list – a good tactic to build up interest for future events.