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Grenzebach Glier and Associates

Philanthropic News & Analysis

Integrated Communications Are Key To Successful Fundraising Programs

Effective communications, from the personal conversation to formal printed materials, have always been a vital part of fundraising. As the pressure to identify new donors and increase philanthropic support continues to intensify across the non-profit sector, the communications function has become an even more significant component of the fundraising equation.

For many non-profit organizations, an integrated communications plan that includes clear, consistent messaging across every available channel is critical to raising levels of both engagement and giving. In this issue, interviewees focus on what matters in communications today, the growing importance of brand messaging, and the need for both print and electronic formats. In addition, they offer their perspectives on adapting social media, using research to guide messaging, and leveraging stewardship and special events as strategic communications opportunities.

The "B" Word and Aligning Institutional Messaging

In response to heightened competition across all non-profit sectors and an increasingly professional management approach by many boards, more and more organizations are developing strategic plans and conducting branding exercises to help define their future and create consistent messages that are grounded in institutional vision and strategic objectives. From college and university alumni to hospital patients to museum members and visitors, all constituents are interested in the core values of

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Communications Teams Restructure to Meet Changing Demands

Integrated communications bring together a variety of staff members to shape an institution's key messages, including those who handle publications, news and information, Web communications, visual and broadcast communications, social media, and more. The organization of today's communications team can take many forms, including practice areas, beat systems, or the advertising agency model of creative teams, but all structures share a common goal: to ensure that strategic communications drive key messages and promote greater engagement.

Charged with bringing together communication staffs from around the university into one central operation at **Vanderbilt University**, Charles Melichar, associate vice chancellor for development and alumni relations and communications, focused on integration, not just merging staffs. "We had to be very thoughtful about the blending of university and medical school communications: we needed

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the institution, and advancement professionals often participate in defining those values and how they will be articulated.

Broadly speaking, non-profit organizations only recently have started to understand and accept the notion of managing the institutional brand. Even today, many educational institutions question the need for brand management, while their constituents increasingly expect a consistent message as they connect with different parts of the institution.

An 18-month **Harvard University** research project, *The Role of Brand in the Nonprofit Sector* (2012), found that a growing number of non-profit organizations are exploring the wider, strategic roles that brands can play. "At every step in an organization's strategy and at each juncture in its theory of change, a strong brand is increasingly seen as critical in helping to build operational capacity, galvanize support, and maintain focus on the social mission," attest project leaders Nathalie Kylander and Christopher Stone.

City of Hope, a National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center and biomedical research and education institution in Los Angeles, completed a robust branding process some five years ago, according to Mary Koppel, senior vice president for external relations and strategic communications. "I inherited a legacy of a strong brand and an institutional culture that embraces and protects the brand," says Koppel, noting that the brand has served as the foundation for the institution's current strategic planning process.

When Charles Melichar, associate vice chancellor for development and alumni relations and communications, joined Vanderbilt University less than two years ago, the university was undergoing a major institutional shift in how it operates and presents itself to its many constituents. Known as *One Vanderbilt*, the initiative is designed to leverage the many parts of the institution. "Vanderbilt committed to aligning its programs and resources with the university's mission," explains Melichar, noting the initiative came on the heels of Vanderbilt's successful $1.94 billion *Shape the Future* campaign.

A series of conversations with deans and top administrators is guiding the creation of Vanderbilt's strategic communications plan. "We heard firsthand what the deans and others hoped to accomplish. Now we are looking at how to apply communications to move the needle," adds Melichar.

Tracy Sweet, director of academy communications for **Phillips Academy**, an independent boarding school in Andover, Massachusetts, recalls that when she joined the

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school five years ago, "The academy was in the midst of completing an image study to gauge perceptions of alumni, students, and parents about its strengths, weaknesses, and key messages. "We learned that some of the mottoes we had been using no longer resonated with our constituents," explains Sweet, who says the study's findings were invaluable in developing an integrated communications plan and "focusing our message across the institution." The study preceded the public announcement of *The Campaign for Andover, Building on the Surest Foundation*, which has raised $275 million toward its $300 million goal.

Prior to launching its current $400 million capital campaign, **Bucknell University** had no comprehensive communications office. Pete Mackey, vice president for communications and community relations, joined the university in 2006 and quickly began assessing resources and assembling a creative team. "One of our biggest challenges was aligning the campaign message and a new university communications strategy," says Mackey. "As the country's largest private liberal arts college, we know our overarching messages: intellectual rigor in personal learning with faculty across 110 majors and minors, a breadth of co-curricular activities, and a strong sense of community." Bucknell narrowed key messaging even further in preparation for the public announcement of its campaign in fall 2012. "Action as a community is particularly important to our alumni. The campaign theme will condense that concept into a few words, and the university Web site, social media, and digital tools will allow alumni and donors to express the spirit of community," says Mackey.

The Need for Print and Electronic Communications

The vehicles available to connect with your constituents now are more flexible, creative, direct, and timely than ever before. Yet, according to *Philanthropy Journal*,

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Best Practices for Communications

• Build an overall communications platform that grows from a comprehensive strategic plan, one that reflects input from functional areas across the institution. The communications platform should include a positioning statement and specific messaging points that support the mission and vision of the institution. Institutional and fundraising messages must be aligned across all communications formats and channels.

• Recognize that donors and potential donors respond best to creative and compelling stories about their counterparts that reflect institutional values. Laundry lists of institutional goals and priorities are less likely to inspire and motivate giving.

• Know the interests and communications preferences of your audience. Digital tools are making audience segmentation and message customization easier than ever before. The most effective messages are targeted to the interests of a select group of constituents, using a communications channel with a proven track record of success with that group.

• Use quantitative and qualitative research, including the collection of baseline data and the analysis of trends, to guide communications decisions and future communications efforts. Research should provide the opportunity for continuous feedback from constituents at all giving levels.

• Ensure that communications staff members establish strong relationships with all units across the advancement program. Invest in personnel, training, and administrative support.

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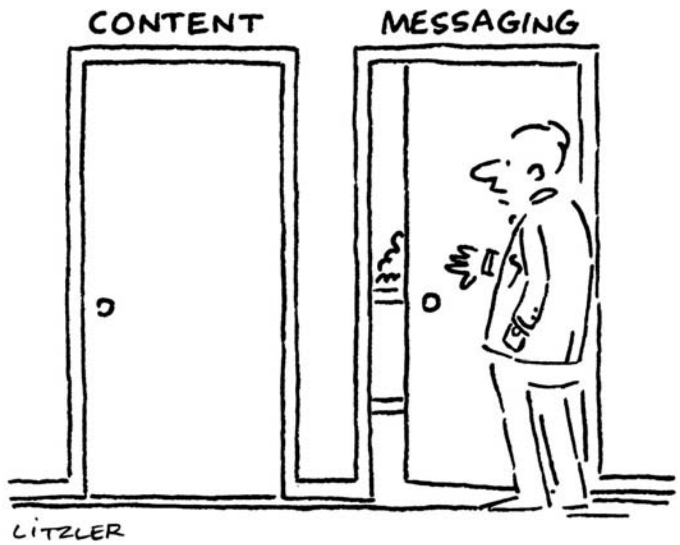
many organizations are struggling with quantifying the impact of communications along measures of awareness, support, and loyalty, and justifying the resources required to maintain a social media presence ("Revisiting Traditional Media," June 13, 2011). Nonprofits that have made a commitment to online content and social media are enthusiastic about their potential impact to their mission, according to John Klein, but digital tools should not be viewed as the sole or primary tools in your marketing arsenal.

For many advancement operations, communication in the digital age often means that projects are produced in two formats: print and online. The deciding factors frequently are the scope of the project, timing, and available resources.

"Our staff members can work in old-school and new-school communications," offers McGill's Cassoff. "Together, they have a deep understanding of all the media." That's a necessity when donors range in age from their early 20s to their 90s. He recalls that in 2008, McGill produced 30 printed newsletters a year. "We are down to about a dozen in print, and even those are supplemented with electronic versions," says Cassoff, who estimates cost savings on paper, printing, handling, and postage at close to $250,000 annually.



"HAVE YOU GOT MY TALKING POINTS READY?"

Institutions are realizing time and cost savings by utilizing print-on-demand systems, which offer greater flexibility in both the printing process and format. At Bucknell, an on-campus production facility, whose staff members are part of the communications division, prints 98 percent of university publications. "It allows us more immediacy in making a printing decision," says Mackey, who printed just 250 copies of a high-quality cultivation publication in an effort to secure a naming gift for one of the largest academic buildings under construction on its campus in decades. "A small group of donors has the capacity for this eight-figure gift, so we wanted a beautiful, sophisticated document as a leave-behind," he explains.

Phillips Academy includes both print and electronic options in its annual communications plan. Sweet cites the success of a recent State of the Academy e-mail message to all alumni from the head of school. "We had an open rate of 38 to 40 percent," she says. "We know readers excerpted sections and forwarded the message to others, which created a viral pass-along rate."

Across all formats, a main communications goal for City of Hope, which will end its $1 billion *Power of Hope* campaign in its centennial anniversary year of 2013, is to "demystify medical research." Koppel explains the constant push and pull between scientists and faculty members "who

> “Action as a community is particularly important to our alumni. The campaign theme will condense that concept into a few words, and the university Web site, social media, and digital tools will allow alumni and donors to express the spirit of community.”
>
> Pete Mackey, Bucknell University

express concern that you may be dumbing down their science” and communications staff members “who are trying to make complex research more accessible and understandable to smart, busy people.” One of the institution’s most popular ways to reach external audiences is *City News*, published quarterly and mailed to donors who have made a gift of $50 or more to City of Hope. Internally, *Hope News,* which was previously printed 37 times a year, will soon become a monthly publication supplemented by greater online content.

At **The Bryn Mawr School**, a pre-K-12 independent school for girls, balancing tradition and innovation is a communications challenge. “We tailor our communications to the interests of each donor and try to provide whatever tools fundraisers need to be successful with each conversation,” says Stacy Williams, director of communications. She notes that concern over the growing reliance on e-mail led the communications development team to mail a stewardship letter from the headmistress to annual fund donors to mark the midpoint of its annual fund campaign. “We thought the mailed letter might cut through the clutter,” says Williams, who is now working with an external consultant to conduct an audit of and “make strategic changes” to Bryn Mawr’s Web site.

The Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts, uses a variety of print and electronic communications tools to stay in touch with members and friends. The Clark recently launched a print newsletter, *Inside The Clark*, for members and donors to complement the institution’s *Clark NOW* initiative, which encompasses more than 60 exhibitions, installations, and educational programs worldwide. “*Inside The Clark* is structured as an ‘insider’s’ perspective on museum events and progress,” says Vicki Saltzman, director of communications. The Clark also publishes a calendar of events six times a year and an annual glossy

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Case Statements Serve Many Purposes

Whether a two-page, typed document or a 20-page glossy, printed booklet, the format of today’s case statement reflects the communications needs of the institution. Regardless of its shape and form, the case statement can be used by fundraisers in a variety of ways, including building internal consensus, cultivating major prospects, and educating internal audiences. “Perhaps the greatest value of the case statement is the process of creating it. It forces all involved to work together to get to the essence of huge projects, focus on core priorities, and sharpen language,” says Melichar.

Endacott agrees that you can have many conversations about campaign priorities, but the results must be committed to paper for institutional administrators and other major stakeholders to move forward. “With each version of the case statement, we became more strategic.”

While Mackey attests to the value of the case statement, he cites a major challenge. “The case statement is written for donors, not the internal audience. We must educate our internal stakeholders and create an understanding of what the case statement means and how it defines the institution.” Mackey’s team, collaborating with the development and alumni relations division, will broaden the availability of Bucknell’s case statement for internal and external audiences by including it in digital formats on the campaign Web site.

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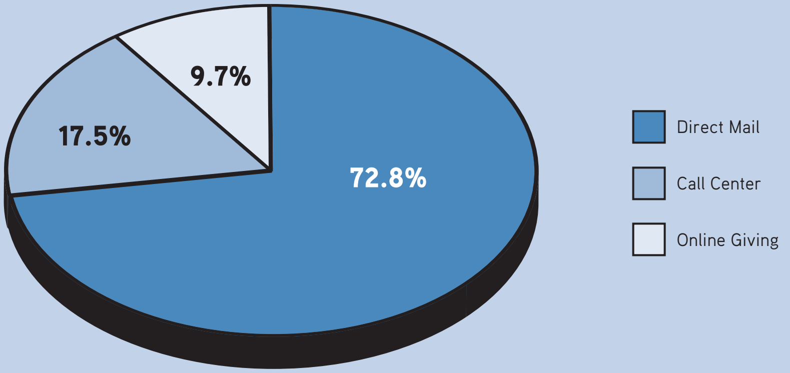
magazine, *Journal of the Clark*, and recently began producing its annual report in an online-only format.

Tablets are the next wave for enhancing communications and reinforcing key messages with donors. Development officers are using iPads to screen videos, display slide shows, and make PowerPoint presentations. The Clark uses the iPad extensively to highlight its campus expansion project, with photos of progress to date and schematics of future plans. "Those interested in the arts typically are visual people, and iPad slideshows allow them to connect in a visual way," says Merritt Colaizzi, director of major gifts. In addition, museum visitors regularly use iPads to access supplemental information on works in the Clark's permanent collection and participate in curating an exhibition through iCurate, a custom-designed application.

Of course, there always is the danger of communication overload. Van Sickle recently realized how much information Columbia graduates receive from the university. "We completed an exercise—Walk the Wall—in which we displayed on an office wall all of the different communications that were mailed to alumni." The exercise raised two key questions his staff members will be addressing: "Are we reaching the point of saturation, and do we need to pull back and get smarter about how we do this?"

Which of the following channels accounted for the largest portion of your organization's annual giving revenue last fiscal year?



Source: Dan Allenby, consulting vice president for annual giving, Grenzebach Glier and Associates, and assistant vice president for annual giving, Boston University, March 2012

Note: Results are based on a survey of annual giving programs at 262 non-profit institutions, primarily in the United States, with an average annual giving response rate of 16 percent.

Social Media Can Increase Engagement

Donors, alumni, and friends are spending more and more time on social networks, and institutions are employing new strategies to engage them there. For many institutions, their social media presence is alumni- or membership-driven with a focus on community building rather than on specific long-term goals and objectives.

McGill University recently implemented a Facebook campaign to promote a donor-funded research prize in kinesiology that included e-mails to alumni who attended health-related university events and viewed a video on physical fitness on McGill's YouTube page. "We may not be sure what each user's interest is, but we can start teasing out information and serving content to match. Then we can generate more data to enrich our database," says Cassoff.

A Nor'easter storm that covered the Phillips Academy campus with four to five inches of snow last October destroyed several old oak trees. "We posted information on Facebook about the storm, and alumni responded in droves. A class from the 1950s responded with donations

Every Gift Tells a Story

Behind every gift and every donor is a story that can capture the mission of an institution and motivate others to give. In recent years, development communications have moved away from a recitation of priorities and needs to a presentation of highly personal stories about the impact of gifts and the meaning of philanthropy to donors. “It’s unlikely that even the most data-driven donor will give you more than a passing glance without an emotional attachment to the work you do,” writes Don Mikush in *Philanthropy Journal* (“Telling Your Story: A Case for Support,” June 24, 2011).

The University of Nebraska Foundation’s electronic campaign newsletter has been one of its most effective tools for telling the stories of university donors and friends. “We don’t just recount giving priorities and their importance. We lead the reader to that end by telling personal stories, such as a mother who lost her son to cancer but is grateful she had more time with him thanks to donor-funded cancer research,” says Endacott.

Portraits of Philanthropy, a high-end publication mailed to a limited list of University of Nebraska donors and friends, takes a different approach to storytelling, highlighting stories of donors at every level and their philosophy on giving. Endacott explains, “This isn’t about the gifts, it’s about why these donors have chosen to give and how they know it was a good decision. People truly feel honored to appear in the book.”

An analysis of McGill’s electronic newsletter shows stories that are too focused on development don’t attract as large a readership as alumni success stories. “People are inclined to read about other people. We have a very successful graduate who grew up on a farm and now works on Wall Street. True to her roots, she made a huge gift to our agriculture program for a food security project. That’s a good story,” attests Cassoff.

For healthcare institutions, Koppel acknowledges there is never a shortage of compelling stories. “We are a 185-bed hospital, and on any given day there are 185 of the most compelling stories ever: stories about overcoming adversity, transforming hope into reality, or the ‘aha’ research discovery,” says Koppel, who believes that the ability to deliver a story visually, either with photographs, video, or other graphics, is critical to capturing today’s shortened attention spans.

to replant lost trees. That was not our intention, but it taught us the power of social media,” says Sweet. The story also received coverage in *The Boston Globe*.

In midst of the recession, a **Knox College** trustee agreed to donate $100,000 when 5,000 donors had made a gift to Knox on Facebook. “We created a small campaign, including a postcard mailing, e-mails, and a countdown on Facebook. The message and the timing resonated with people, and Knox reached its goal,” says Megan Scott, co-chief communications officer and editor of *Knox Magazine*.

Launched in October 2011, the City of Hope blog gained more traction than Koppel ever anticipated after two cancer researchers connected with golfer Bubba Watson at a Los Angeles golf tournament in February. Watson, whose father died of throat cancer in 2010, and golf apparel company Travis Matthew are now providing funding support to the researchers. 2012 Masters Golf Tournament Winner Watson has given his personal seal of approval, tweeting about City of Hope and linking to its blog on his Twitter account. “Before you know it, all kinds of golf aficionados are linking to our blog and forwarding links to City of Hope thanks to Bubba’s Twitter posts and his rising popularity,” explains Koppel.

A pair of **University of Wisconsin-Madison** alumni wanted to amplify the impact of their gift to a need-based scholarship fund. The graduates and their parents agreed to pledge one dollar for every new Facebook friend and Twitter follower

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gained by any of the four university-sanctioned accounts over a two-week period. *The Bucky Challenge*, recognized nationally as the first of its kind and featured in *The New York Times*, raised just short of $20,000 and engaged 20,000 new supporters for the university.

Top Programs Use Research to Guide Communication Efforts

From institutional image studies to a regular review of online and social media activity using Web analytics, non-profit institutions are turning to research to understand their constituents better. The resulting data are being used to guide communications strategy, improve messaging, and identify more precisely the types of communications that constituents prefer.

The Bryn Mawr School recently completed research with parents, faculty members, students, board members, and administrators on institutional messaging. "We have fresh data to inform our communications plan," says Williams. The results have been re-affirming. "Alumnae still believe in the education they experienced or what their daughter is experiencing. Fortunately, our brand promise is very clear, and we continue to deliver."

"Without research, you start any type of communication planning at a disadvantage," offers Sweet, who will soon oversee another major image study for Phillips Academy.

> "Social media is a neighborhood for engagement between alumni and friends and the school. We believe heavy-handed fundraising on Facebook, for example, would shut the community right down. The over-use of digital media and customization could leave people feeling their relationship is being managed by technology."
>
> Tracy Sweet, Phillips Academy

"We've learned there is nothing better than solid quantitative and qualitative research on which to base messaging decisions."

Research conducted for a consortium of cultural institutions in the Berkshires led the Clark to pursue a partnership with Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in Lenox, Massachusetts, an institution that provides dance programming. "We realized we shared a number of members, so we are now looking at ways to advertise and offer programming together to reach these shared audiences," says Saltzman.

Knox College regularly uses Web analytics to track readership of "which messages are opened, which messages motivate gifts, and which is our best approach," explains Scott.

University of Nebraska's Endacott also is a big believer in Web analytics. "We use Google Analytics daily and produce about six reports each year." Recent findings reveal:

"Viewers will read a story about cancer if it is hopeful, but tears don't generate clicks. We found a 2007 story on Alzheimer's disease was the top hit for Alzheimer's searches on the university site, which prompted an immediate update to content."

Segmenting Audiences and Messages

Greater access to demographic information and increasingly sophisticated technology are making it easier to segment and target specific groups. Audience segmentation can help institutions identify those donors and prospects most likely to align with an institution and provide philanthropic support. It also allows communicators to craft messages that best match the interests of different audience segments.

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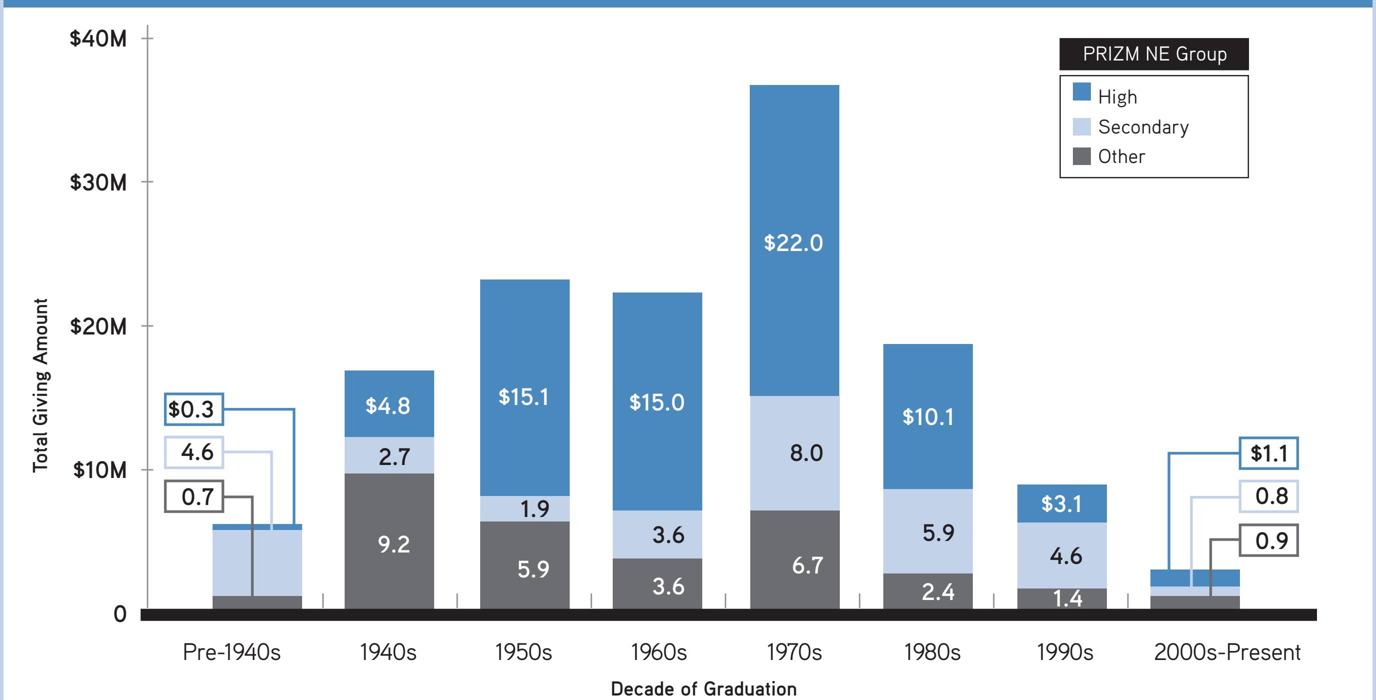
Using More Data to Improve Communications

More and more institutions and organizations are using data and constituent segmentation strategically to target and customize communications. In addition to basic demographic data, behavioral information, such as giving or engagement history, and attitudinal evidence gathered through primary research may be used to create more focused communications plans. GG+A has been working with clients to combine all these sources of data with PRIZM NE, a Nielsen Claritas consumer segmentation system. Of the 66 U.S. PRIZM NE consumer segments, GG+A has identified seven segments (High) that have the highest propensity to be philanthropic, as well as four additional segments (Secondary) that typically outperform the remaining 55 consumer segments.

The PRIZM NE System provides insight into the life stages of consumers, the type of communities in which they live, their buying habits, as well as media consumption and preferences. By overlaying demographic information with the PRIZM NE data, institutions gain a better understanding of which constituents are most likely to support them, enabling them to invest more time and resources in trying to reach these individuals effectively.

The chart below demonstrates the potential power of segmentation. At one private research university, High PRIZM NE alumni who graduated in the 1960s and 1970s have the greatest potential for future generosity; although they represent 12.3 percent of alumni overall, they contributed 27.6 percent of alumni giving from 2005 to 2010. Effective communications, using consumer, lifestyle, and media preferences to inform messages, targeted to all alumni in these cohorts, both donors and non-donors, are likely to yield higher results than a broad-brush approach to graduates across the decades in the Other Prizm NE clusters.

Alumni Giving (2005-2010) by PRIZM NE Group and Class Decade



Source: GG+A Philanthropic Analytics, 2012

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Sweet remembers the advice regarding segmentation offered by an Andover graduate during his early days at Facebook. "His feedback to us: I should not get an e-mail about sports when my interest is in the humanities. I expect my alma mater to know more about me than Amazon does." Heeding his advice, the school continues to refine its database. "As technology allows and as alumni have the ability to update their own information and preferences, we hope to customize our communications with them."

Based on research with GG+A, the Clark identified a significant group of prospective patrons who are not Clark Society members but have strong potential for annual giving. "We are coordinating a mailing that tests messaging to two distinct demographic groups," says Colaizzi, who is also targeting "upgrade" messages for relatively new Clark Society members with the capacity to increase annual giving. "If this modest approach works, we could expand it to a bigger subset of the member database."

> "Our profit-making counterparts have been using social media successfully for a few years. We are looking to use some marketing concepts and segmentation guided by best practices outside higher education."
>
> Fred Van Sickle, Columbia University

Knox College also became more aware of its need to segment communications following research conducted by GG+A. "We must plan our message and the communication vehicles we use more effectively," says Scott, citing a new admissions marketing study that could help shape the college's messaging.

Timely research, advanced segmentation and data analysis tools, and a broader menu of communications options will continue to help today's fundraisers create highly targeted messages to reach those prospects who are most interested in supporting their institutions. ❖

Alumni Magazines Track Readers

One of the most popular forms of communications with alumni, according to many interviewees, is the alumni magazine, and educational institutions continue to invest in both print and online versions.

"*Knox Magazine*, mailed twice a year, remains one of our most popular forms of communications," says Scott. "We have a very robust class notes section of 30 to 40 pages that everyone reads." As Scott embarks on a redesign of the magazine, she will be strengthening its online presence to allow continual updates.

With its fall 2012 issue, the quarterly *Bucknell Magazine*, also offered as on online flipbook, will expand from 64 pages to 72 pages. "All of our research has shown that the alumni magazine is the single most valuable communications medium for alumni, and readership levels are high," says Mackey.

McGill University's *McGill News* used to be printed and mailed four times a year to some 180,000 alumni. "It now comes out twice a year in print and once as an electronic version only. We have revamped the Web site to make it easier to post magazine content between mailed issues, and several hundred alumni have chosen to view the magazine online only," says Cassoff.

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to respect different facets of the institutional narrative and make the best use of the great, varied skill sets of the team members," he explains. The result is three distinct practice areas in development communications, alumni relations, and operations, and a traffic manager position to oversee projects across practice areas.

Knox College President Teresa Amott recently established a new college-wide office charged with delivering timely and compelling internal and external communications that leverage institutional assets, according to Megan Scott, who was recently appointed co-chief communications officer for the college.

Derek Cassoff, director of strategic communications for development and alumni relations, joined **McGill University** six months after the public launch of its $750 million campaign *Campaign McGill: History in the Making*. "We reorganized to create a beat system, where staff members could build expertise in specific programmatic areas," Cassoff recalls. As Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter were taking off, Cassoff re-aligned resources to place greater emphasis on technology-related initiatives. "We now have a content manager, an electronic communications writer, and a social community manager."

> "We reorganized to create a beat system, where staff members could build expertise in specific programmatic areas."
>
> Derek Cassoff, McGill University

Dorothy Endacott, assistant vice president and director of communications for the **University of Nebraska Foundation**, previously worked for an advertising agency and quickly put that model into play with the creation of a traffic manager position. She also realized the need for a consistent identity across the Web, in e-mail interactions, and on mobile devices. "We hired a dedicated interactive marketing professional who reviews our digital presence, analyzes our search engine rankings, and recommends how to grow traffic to our sites," she recounts. Endacott also enhanced her office's video capabilities by hiring two staffers with excellent writing and video production skills who have enlarged content for the Web site for *The Campaign for Nebraska: Unlimited Possibilities,* which has reached $1.21 billion, exceeding its $1.2 billion goal nearly two years ahead of schedule.

Over the course of its seven-year, $5 billion *Columbia Campaign*, which will end in 2013, Fred Van Sickle, executive vice president for university development and alumni relations at **Columbia University**, looked at communications trends and the capabilities the university lacked. "We had invested a tremendous amount in development and alumni relations, but we kept communications mean and lean," recalls Van Sickle. "We recognize that communications is the portal that allows us to combine marketing efforts and conduct outreach with a broader constituency."

Van Sickle describes how GG+A "helped us think in new and creative ways about staffing" and introduced the idea of an agency-type structure. Following a national search, an advertising professional was hired at Columbia to create the agency model, and three new positions were added: digital strategist, market researcher, and multimedia designer.

For those institutions with smaller staffs and more limited resources, "You must hire individuals who think across the media spectrum—people who are facile and nimble with print and electronic media," adds Sweet. ❖

Events Offer Strategic Communications Opportunities

Stewardship and fundraising events are now recognized as key parts of integrated communications plans. The best advancement programs approach these functions as additional opportunities to advance strategic institutional messages and solidify relationships.

Vanderbilt's Melichar is quick to point out, "Every single point of contact is an opportunity to advance a relationship." That's why he encourages his staff and others to think through a series of questions when planning an event: Who will be in the room? What do you want to introduce or reinforce? Who is the featured speaker? Is there a narrative? How can the Web and other materials supplement or complement the event? He also looks for ways to give event participants social media tools so that they can blog, tweet, or text with updates from the event.

From 25 golf tournaments and a host of annual walks and runs to major fundraisers sponsored by individual corporations and allied business groups, Koppel ensures messages at all events are targeted to reach attendees at their level of engagement with the institution. "Industry leaders are our advocates who fully understand our mission and know how to explain to others what we do. Participants at many community-based events may be learning about City of Hope for the first time so we work to develop key ideas that will help raise awareness and provide basic information about the institution."

Although it is easy to get into a reflexive mode about events, Van Sickle says you must always look at your goal. One of Columbia's most successful events is an annual reception to honor teachers at Columbia College. "Each year students speak about faculty members and their influence, and faculty members respond. It is always extraordinary because the stories are so compelling, and students are so poised and articulate. They bring the concept of education to life."

> "Every single point of contact is an opportunity to advance a relationship."
>
> Charles Melichar, Vanderbilt University

Last year, the University of Nebraska Foundation hit the mark with a speaker's series featuring faculty experts. "The events were carefully scripted and faculty members knew important points to make. The series was successful in moving several major gifts," explains Endacott.

At last year's William Bucknell Society Event, honoring donors who have given outright $1 million or more, the development office scheduled three days of activities in New York, including faculty members sharing their expertise during museum visits and architectural tours. "For the major donor dinner, I wrote a small play that took guests through the life of the university from its founding to the current presidency with stories of Bucknellians who had made or benefited from individual acts of generosity. After sharing our philanthropic history, we incorporated key messages to demonstrate how we need support today," recalls Mackey.

It is not just a successful event, but quick follow-up with constituents, that can go far in solidifying relationships.

Within 48 hours of a Bucknell event, participants receive a customized e-mail. Those who responded affirmatively and did not attend the event receive a different message. "Our development colleagues capitalize on the fact that events provide new opportunities to keep donors involved, acquire new donors, and re-activate former donors," says Mackey.

Cassoff agrees on the importance of good follow-up. "Last year, we held a major donor event in Toronto that featured a scholarship recipient—a basketball player born with a club foot who also had a learning disability and overcame physical and academic challenges to succeed. When he spoke, you could hear a pin drop in that room." Cassoff's team quickly followed up with e-mails, a blog posting, and video and photos on Flickr to capitalize on the good will generated by the event. ❖