

CASE STUDY

Outsourcing e-Newsletter Takes the Pressure off IT

University of Windsor turns to experts for launch of alumni vehicle



Challenge

Alumni Affairs staff at the University of Windsor knew it was time to expand on traditional print publications in order to stay in touch with more than 80,000 alumni, 5,000 of whom live outside the country. They were aware that a lot of alumni mail goes to grads' parents, or old addresses, and often reaches alumni too late or not at all. And they had 20,000 email addresses for their alumni which they felt could be put to use.

The prospect of starting up an electronic publication, however, was daunting for the association's small staff. They knew it wasn't as simple as sending their usual print mailings to the list. They didn't want to alienate anyone. And they didn't have enough staff hours to handle database management, particularly with the constantly changing lists experienced in alumni relations.

"We've seen increased interest in our programs because of the newsletter, and that's after only three issues."

—Susan Lester,
Director, Office of Alumni Affairs
University of Windsor

"Many of our new alumni had asked to be contacted by email, but we were very wary of making mistakes,"

says UWindsor alumni officer Brenda Rudiger. "It had to be done right. Great as our IT department is, they were unable to meet our project timelines."

Solution

Rudiger says conversations with colleagues at other universities led her to Inbox Marketer, an email marketing and publishing firm which combines technical expertise with publishing experience to build relationships.

By outsourcing production and deployment of an e-newsletter—at least in the early stages—the university could take the pressure off its own IT department and ensure the vital relationship with alumni started off on the right foot. Alumni Affairs staff wouldn't have to worry about keeping up with rapidly changing email best practices or software upgrades either.

With Inbox Marketer's help, UWindsor launched Alumni eNEWS in April 2005, with a planned schedule of six issues a year. It contains information on events, stories about alumni and campus initiatives, as well as student and research news. The focus is on building networks and linking grads.

Inbox Marketer produced the html design for the newsletter and hosts the database, constantly updating the list. Inbox keeps track of unsubscribes and new subscriptions as well as open rates and click-through data. Inbox also provides quality assurance and sample testing of each message, and ensures mailings conform to privacy legislation. "There's no way we could do that in-house at this point," Rudiger says.

Rudiger says her goal with the newsletter is to reduce the number of alumni who simply drift away from any connection with their alma mater. "There is a perception out there that alumni relations is all about fundraising. The newsletter is not about that. It's about keeping connected and encouraging alumni to be more engaged with our services, such as affinity partners, recruiting and mentoring programs. It's about what their Alumni Association is doing and what their fellow alumni are doing."

Results

With a mailing list of about 18,000, open rates for Alumni eNEWS are averaging 44%, with a 20% click-through rate, well above industry averages. Although the first issue logged a bounce rate of 23%, with list management that rate fell to 2% and 3% in the following mailings. Opt-outs are minimal. Although UWindsor continues to rely on Inbox for deployment and reports, they plan eventually to take on more of that work themselves.

Susan Lester, director of the office of alumni affairs, says the response from alumni has been overwhelmingly positive, generating comments such as "It's good to hear from you" and "It's about time." She says the increased frequency of the newsletter over their existing magazine has strengthened relationships, too. "We've seen increased interest in our programs because of the newsletter, and that's after only three issues."

Message Summary Table

Client Name: University of Windsor
 Campaign: September 8, 2005_Alumni eNews
 Subject Line: News from your Alumni Association

Deployed: Thursday September 08, 2005 10:35 AM ET
 Format: Multi-Part HTML
 Report Generated: Monday October 31, 2005 3:12 PM ET

Item Description	#	%
Total Messages Sent	17,696	
Messages Bounced	542	3.06%
Total Messages Delivered	17,154	96.94%
Message Opens	7,117	41.48%
Unique Click-Thrus	1,722	10.04%
Opt-outs	0	0%

Item Description	#	%
To unsubscribe click here	56	0.32%
Update contact info/news	149	0.84%
VIEW Magazine online	106	0.60%
2005 Alumni Sports Hall of Fame Induction & Award Ceremony	147	0.83%
Alumni Benefits & Services	72	0.41%
Alumni Success Stories	150	0.85%
Campus Daily/News	34	0.19%
Campus Events	21	0.12%
Click here to view our privacy policy	1	0.01%
Don't miss the Human Kinetics Homecoming event! Sept. 23-24	157	0.89%
Email to a friend	23	0.13%
F.A.Q.S.	117	0.66%
Highlights of the Faculty of Education's 35th Anniversary reunion event	208	1.18%
http://alumni.uwindsor.ca/	31	0.18%
http://www.melochromes.com/uwindsor	110	0.62%
http://www.uwindsor.ca/	19	0.11%
I can't be hard keeping up with a fish...	77	0.44%
Lancer Sport Information	49	0.28%
MBA Class of 05 gives top marks to business professors	301	1.70%
Madals & memorias mark Pan Am Juniors	99	0.56%
More Events & Reunions	194	1.10%
New award for staff who "Go the Extra Mile"	85	0.48%
Online Community (OLC)	97	0.55%
Powered by Inbox Marketer	3	0.02%
Science Alumni, click here to see alumni, student & faculty success stories	188	1.06%
Show your UWindsor Pride	154	0.87%
Subscribe to this newsletter	15	0.08%
Support the University	6	0.03%
Total HTML Email CTR (based on opt news)	2,668	15.55%

Alumni eNEWS
September 2005

Alumni eNEWS is sent to University of Windsor Alumni six times/year. We welcome your comments at alumni@uwindsor.ca. If you do not wish to receive e-NEWS, visit the unsubscribe link at the bottom of the page.

In this issue...

- Alumni Events**
London Chapter Golf Tournament, Sept. 15
Human Kinetics Class of '90 Reunion Dinner, Sept. 23
Human Kinetics Homecoming, Sept. 24
Alumni Sports Hall of Fame Induction & Award Ceremony, Sept. 24
Alumni Night @ the CFL, Argos vs. Ti-Cats, Oct. 27
Alumni Association Awards Ceremony & A.M.M. Nov. 23
- 2005 Alumni Sports Hall of Fame Induction & Award Ceremony**
On September 24, the Alumni Sports Hall of Fame inducts four new members: coach Morgan Clark '82, '75, and athletes O'Brian Gibbons '86, Bill Suggins '92, '86, '87 and Kelly (Cinnamon) Scoullers '84, '85. Achievement Awards will be presented to four individuals and two teams in recognition of their success in sport. Click here for details...
- Alumni and friends to receive Clark Awards**
Kereneil Alexander '92, Ed Barnard, Rev. Jean Sonnenfeld '72 and Dr. Michael Zee '85 and Phyllis Zee will be recognized for their significant contributions to the university at the Clark Awards Dinner on October 6. For more information contact alumni@uwindsor.ca

UWindsor Alumni eNEWS Report — Created by Inbox Marketer