

## Engage your contacts by giving them the information they need

By Joel Trotman, **Senior Business Consultant**, [The Access Group](#)

It can be hard work for schools to successfully engage with their alumni and development CRM database contacts. Just by having a large amount of contact details in your CRM database, does not ensure strong engagement or meeting the targets of your next fundraising campaign.

In order to maintain strong relationships, your school's database should be treated as separate audiences that require different information depending on who they are and how they currently interact with your school.

First, the audiences - alumni, their parents, and sometimes even their grandparents, as well as current students and their guardians, not to mention key school stakeholders. Each of these audience groups can be further divided based on any number of criteria - donations given, events attended, emails opened...pew, that's a lot of information. Who has time to split out lists down to this level?

This is where engagement scoring comes in, not only is it an easy way to measure the success of your activities, but to gauge the "health" of your database, and where to focus your efforts.

Attributing a "score" based on activity can help to uncover the true strength of your relationship with an individual. Certain statistics, such as a one-off donation 5 years ago can skew the perceived strength of further giving or engagement, if you look at the data flatly. However, by scoring based on individual activities, and letting that score de-grade over time, you will get a more realistic outlook.

That's where the next step comes in – personalisation. By splitting out hot, warm and cold contacts within your database you can personalise the information that you send to them so that it is most relevant.

For actively engaged alumni - is there more ways to get them involved? Can they come and speak about their current workplace, or offer placements to current pupils? For those alumni that are less engaged – perhaps they would like a trip down memory lane to remind them of how much their time at the school benefited them, and how it continues to impact current students. Encourage them to share their stories, or set up an alumni-networking group. Make sure they still feel part of the school network and build up their involvement from there.

If you actively campaign to your current parents or guardians - do they have high engagement? Send them an update on where their most recent donations are being spent particularly if currently benefiting their children. For those parents and guardians that have lower engagement – perhaps they would prefer to know about *how* they can become more involved, not just through monetary contributions, but through other activities.

The trick is not to bombard your stakeholders with information that is not relevant, or you risk the dreaded unsubscribe from your mailing list. By focusing on what you know about your community, you can use this information to create relevant, engaging updates. In doing so, you are sure to have longer, more successful relationships with those who can really make an impact on your school. Of course, this comes with the added benefit of having tangible engagement evidence of the impact your alumni relations and development team is having with your school's contacts. It's win-win all round.