

Case Study:

SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

“inCircle® is one of the best ways we’ve found to build our global alumni community. Providing housing searches, targeted, pre-qualified networking opportunities, and connections with old friends are just a few of the ways inCircle helps us provide value to our alumni, no matter when they graduated. We look forward to adding new inCircle features that will excite alumni of all ages and encourage lifelong connections with the Alumni Association and Santa Clara University.”

Kathy Kale
Executive Director
Santa Clara University Alumni Association

SCU Alumni Association Background

Established in 1881, the Santa Clara University Alumni Association is one of the oldest official alumni organizations west of the Mississippi. The Association’s mission is two-fold: to cultivate, maintain and enhance lifelong relationships between the University and its alumni for mutual benefit and to initiate and encourage activities and programs that generate goodwill and support for SCU’s Jesuit mission. Membership in the Association is free and automatic to its 70,000+ alumni from both undergraduate and graduate programs. The Association strives to offer events and programs that encourage participation and involvement at every stage of the alumni life cycle.

Communicating Throughout the Alumni Life Cycle

The Santa Clara Alumni Association views the alumni life cycle in five stages - applicant, student, recent, mature (professional/family), and senior (retired). The Association employs many communications mediums to keep in contact with individuals at the various stages. The Alumni Association’s information-rich web site is an ever-evolving resource, broadcast email communications proactively engage graduates, and Santa Clara Magazine remains an effective way to share information with the alumni community. However, the Association recognized that static, outbound communications from the University were not always effective at reaching and engaging alumni at the different life cycle stages.

Understanding the communications preferences of more recent graduates, the Association began exploring new and dynamic methods for engaging alumni. The Association primarily sought a solution that could respond in real time and offer alumni useful, compelling features and services.

A Grassroots Social Network

Social networking offered the SCU Alumni Association a grassroots way to build and maintain alumni connections. The Association found the peer-to-peer, viral network it was looking for in Affinity Circles' inCircle solution. Alumni receive invitations to join inCircle from their friends or former classmates, which increases the likelihood they will sign on. Additionally, the Association liked that the inCircle community is exclusive to Santa Clara University alumni and carries the SCU brand. All users are authenticated when they sign-on and the school receives all resulting data updates.

The SCU Graduate School of Business and School of Law partnered with the Association in launching inCircle to all Santa Clara alumni. After successfully beta testing with the alumni office, alumni board, chapter leaders, and reunion committees, the network was officially launched in April 2005.

Lifelong Connections, Lifelong Benefits

Since its launch, individuals from all stages of the alumni life cycle have used the inCircle network to connect with former classmates. The most popular features are looking up other alumni, messaging, inviting friends to join the inCircle community, posting and finding jobs, and starting or joining interest groups. Class of 1986, Silicon Valley Investment Group, NYC alumni, Bronco boxing, and Pi Kappa Alpha are just a few examples of thriving inCircle groups.

inCircle has proven an effective way to engage recent graduates, who make up about 55 percent of the inCircle population and account for roughly 70 percent of the network's activity. These alumni actively use the jobs, housing, messaging, event posting, photo sharing, and groups features. Mature graduates account for 40 percent of users and primarily look up old friends or classmates, post journal updates, use professional groups, and post in forums. The remaining five percent of inCircle community members are senior alumni, who mostly use the network to connect with old friends.

- Over 7,500 registered alumni users equaling over 18 percent of total email addressable alumni
- Over 28 percent participation from all individuals who have graduated in the last five years
- Over 40,000 updates to alumni postal and email addresses
- Over 89,000 connections made between alumni
- 187 unique groups created by alumni

Marketing Yields Results

The success of Santa Clara Alumni Association's inCircle network is due in part to focused marketing and promotional efforts. The Association sent an introductory email message to alumni in February 2005 before the network launched, and then followed up with additional broadcast email messages encouraging alumni to join in April, May and June 2005. A full page ad promoting inCircle appeared in Santa Clara Magazine in May 2005 and two Alumni Association articles also mentioned the inCircle community. Also, the alumni web site prominently features a login link on the home page to attract new participants.

The Association will continue marketing inCircle through targeted email messages that feature life cycle appropriate use examples. Kiosks at reunions will enable alumni that are not already part of the inCircle community to sign up on site and on-campus marketing will build undergraduate awareness, increasing the likelihood that they will join when they are eligible.

With Affinity Circles' scalable online social networking platform, all inCircle networks receive technology updates simultaneously. New features and services available through these updates keep the network fresh and relevant, ensuring that Santa Clara alumni derive ongoing value from their inCircle community.

Affinity Circles can help your organization:

- ✓ Connect with your alumni community.
- ✓ Drive quality contact information back to your database.
- ✓ Increase the effectiveness of your marketing programs.
- ✓ Empower alumni to manage communications previously handled by your staff.
- ✓ Create revenue growth opportunities.
- ✓ Build your brand and demonstrate value to your most important constituency.

Contact us for a demo today!

www.affinitycircles.com

(650) 810-1500