



# Are You Ready to take Alumni Relations Seriously?

January 3, 2019

By Josh Gold

With the holiday season coming to an end, I'd like to take a moment revisit a topic that I believe is – or should be – fundamental for many nonprofits: alumni relations.

[Last time](#) we covered this subject, I suggested several videos you could use, alone or in combination, to keep your alumni engaged and invested in your mission. This time, I'm going to take a step back to go over why this work is so important and why I recommend you slow down and give it some earnest consideration.

I know it's probably not at the top of your list. In my experience, most organizations vastly under-utilize this tremendous resource; not only that, but even when they come to recognize its value, [they don't have the time or energy to invest in making it a priority](#).

As we get down to the business of the new year, I want to encourage you to put in that extra effort now, before you get caught up in your day-to-day routines once again. This is a chance to set your organization on a more stable, effective, and successful path. It's at least worth a second look.

With that introduction, let's get to it.

In the nonprofit world, alumni relations are the long game.

If you put in the work to cultivate a strong, ongoing relationship with a broad base of your former students, participants, or members, you will end up with a diverse, continually growing, and personally motivated source of support. Sounds pretty good, no?

As a model, it's surely much more sustainable and reliable than constantly having to navigate the politics and personal quirks of a few big donors with inevitably outsized influence.

I'm sure you could do with less of that headache.

Of course, you're likely already involved in projects that require cash flow right here and right now. That's what makes it hard to prioritize the long game. It can't solve your problems immediately; but it can put you in a much healthier financial position for the long term.

At the moment, chances are that you already do alumni outreach occasionally – by sending out fundraising appeals. And there's nothing wrong with that, per se. After all, alumni are, as we have said in other posts, an excellent resource. They have firsthand knowledge of the good you do. You don't need to convince them that you're a worthy cause. That's what makes them some of your strongest and most natural supporters.

The problem is that while fundraising emails tap into that strength, they don't do anything to maintain it. Is it a real relationship anymore? Or are you just skating by on existing goodwill? There's no give-and-take at this stage, no furthering and deepening of the alumni's connection with your work.

You need to remember that as time passes, alumni will gradually feel more distant from their experiences with you. You will naturally become less relevant to them. If you want to retain alumni support over time, you need to keep that relationship current. You need to keep building mutual respect and purpose in the present.

Show them that they matter and that they can make a difference.

Make them feel personally valued; make your cause into theirs.

Foster these connections, and you can erect a base of support that is both deep and strong.

Are you up for this challenge in the new year?

If you're sold on the approach we discussed here, feel free to reach out to talk practical steps.

*Josh Gold, owner of [Serio Films](#), has helped nonprofits raise millions of dollars through video-based marketing. You can follow Josh and his team over at [seriofilms.com](#) and [facebook.com/seriofilms](#). To get more discussions like these right to your inbox, [sign up](#) for their newsletter.*

*Source: <https://ejewishphilanthropy.com/are-you-ready-to-take-alumni-relations-seriously>*