

Introduction

In looking at the big picture of our profession, we must realize that affinity/revenue generating programs are not just about the bottom line. While the revenue we generate through our various initiatives may well help us fund our own events and programs, it should not be the primary consideration when developing new partnerships.

History (photo of Emblem)

Originally known as the Graduates' Society of McGill University, the McGill Alumni Association is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year. Parts of the 1876 constitution continue to be used and quoted, including the key phrase:

The object of the Society shall be to bind the graduates more closely to each other and to their Alma Mater.

(2 photos – McGill grads NYC)

McGill graduates living in New York in 1908 were actively pursuing this type of bond, primarily through functions such as formal dinners and speakers.

(photos of alumni events)

Today we bind our graduates more closely to their alma mater through educational programming, homecoming, receptions, sporting events, alumni magazines and newsletters, branch/chapter events and of course, affinity services. Just as we would never offer our graduates events or communications that are not relevant or

interesting, we must also make sure our affinity partnerships are of the highest quality possible.

(2 photos of lazy people/baby)

Before we sign a new affinity contract, we must be confident that the person answering the phone at that insurance company or bank or financial institution or magazine or store, will be helpful and responsive because for the time they are on the phone with our graduates, they are representing our university.

(2 photos of the university)

Whatever we offer must reflect well on our institution. The value of our university's reputation must always be the main factor in our considerations.

(photo girl in sweater)

Research shows that the feelings (the emotional connection) alumni have about their university are important to the institution because alumni with the most favourable feelings are the most likely to have positive perceptions of the university.

Positive perceptions eventually (hopefully) translate into donations, which is why everyone in this room should consider themselves fundraisers for their institution. Our role in affinity is key to the life cycle of the donor and everything we do in our area will reflect positively or negatively on our colleagues in annual fund, major gifts and planned giving.

Our job may be to raise as much non-philanthropic money as possible, but really,

our programs are crucial to lifelong alumni engagement. Take, for example, a term I recently heard a donor development workshop:

(slide – donor commitment)

Donor Commitment Continuum – describing the donor's emotional commitment to the organization.

The presenters at this conference talked about six areas on this continuum:

Ignorance
Awareness
Interest
Experience
Participation
Ownership

In the life of a donor, according to the presenters, this process is moved through repeatedly, with donors making larger gifts as they move along toward ownership.

If we put our programs on top of the continuum, you can see where we begin to fit into the lifecycle of the donor. We create **awareness** of the university with our mailings. Our graduates show an **interest** in our programs, perhaps the credit card is their first real contact with the university in years, they **experience** the university when they call for more information or receive a mailing, and they **participate** in the program, thus keeping them engaged with the university.

(photo – Schulich)

And in the end, you hope their ownership leads to major gifts such as Seymour Schulich's recent \$20 million dollar gift to the Faculty of Music.

There are people in this room who have dealt with me on affinity programs before and know that McGill can be a difficult partner to work with. Some very high standards have been put into place and we do have a rather rigorous approval network for new partners. For these people in particular, I want to show how this was not always the case.

I believe that one of the first affinity programs in Canada was started at McGill in 1938. The cause was noble – monies raised were to help build the Sir Arthur Currie Gymnasium. The product, a sign of the times surely, but not so noble.

(3 photos cigarette ads)

McGill branded cigarettes raised \$3,100 for the building by urging graduates to “do their part, by smoking them.”