



# The practicality of running an alumni office



# 14 000 graduates across the world

## University of Stellenbosch Business School

DBA and MBA; MPhil degrees in Development Finance, Futures Studies and Management Coaching; Postgraduate Diplomas in Dispute Settlement and Leadership



**USB Executive Development (Pty) Ltd**  
Comprehensive executive education courses

# The USB Alumni Relations Office

***The USB aims to establish lifelong involvement with its alumni!***

**Our objectives:**

- ***To ensure that our alumni advocate the USB by being positive ambassadors***
- ***To get meaningful support from our alumni for:***
  - *Events, projects, academic activities*
  - *Bursary Programme and other fundraising efforts*
  - *USB Social Engagement initiatives*
- ***To get quality advice for our Advisory Board and committees***
- ***To gain access to:***
  - *Business, public sector and government*
  - *Global community*
  - *Industry*

***The USB Alumni Relations Office has the task of facilitating the effective cooperation between all its stakeholders:***

- ***USB and USB-ED, USB Advisory Board, USB Alumni Association, business clients, sponsors and social engagement initiatives***

# What has been working consistently?

## Continuous Learning Events

- Leader's Angle: Monthly presentation on business trends and new thinking by visiting professors, business leaders and academic authors
- We Read for You: Bi-monthly academic forum discussing current business books
- Master Classes: Ad hoc one day courses on a particular topic
- Annual Refresher Seminar: 2-day business top up lectures and workshop

## Publications

- USB e-News – fortnightly
- Printed *USB Agenda* magazine - biannually
- Online *Leaders' Lab* research journal – biannually
- USB website and dedicated alumni portal

## Networking events

- Social as well as formal gatherings with prominent speakers

## Non-Profit Organisation Programme

- Alumni founded the programme and manage it with support from USB and USB-ED
- 2012's part-time MBA students raised money for 1 NPO manager to enrol. The MBA students also assisted with skills development. MBA students now have better idea of how alumni are involved.

## Rewards and recognition

- USB Alumnus of the Year Award and USB Social Impact Leader Award presented at Gala Event



**But why were the alumni so passive?**



# We needed to reinvigorate our Alumni Association - how?

- **Establish the connection**

- Dedicated manager for alumni relations
- Increased communication through eNewsletter, Twitter, LinkedIn groups, *USB Agenda*
- Alumni web portal to update details, to provide information on events and committee members, to give access to publications, research and DVDs, to get involved and to give access to exclusive resources like job opportunities, refresher videos, alumni business services

- **Create committees that are committed and fresh**

- Arrange AGM for each region
- New committee and chairperson for each region

- **Establish specific committee portfolios**

- Each region chooses portfolios based on its specific requirements, e.g.:

Communication & Networking	Business Development
Continuous Learning	Social Engagement
Bursary Fund	Student Advancement
Recognition & Celebration	

- **Build the USB brand**

- Each region gets its own email header
- Each gets its own banner for regional meetings or visits to business forums

# Alumni regions

## WELL-ESTABLISHED REGIONS



**Strongest membership – 6000**



**Very diverse membership - 350**

## FLEDGLING REGIONS



**Widely spread members - 500**

## NEW REGIONS



**East Africa – 60**

**NEW:  
Europe – 75**

**NEW:  
UK – 50**

**To be established:  
SA Central – 470**



**Most active members - 2900**



**Largest membership outside SA - 1700**



**New committee full of ideas - 600**

## BEING ESTABLISHED



**West Africa – 120**



# How else did we reinvigorate our Alumni Association?

- **By taking a more personal approach!**
  - Send regional emails instead of mass emails
  - Phone alumni and personally invite them to events in their region
  - Engage on various social media platforms
  - MBA selection interview process:
    - 300 alumni from all over the world – including New York, Geneva, Nairobi, Jakarta and Springbok – responded to request for assistance
    - Alumni phoned, emailed and visited the Alumni Office to say:
      - “How else can I help?”
      - “I really enjoyed the interview and would like to stay in contact with the candidate.”

**Now reintroducing the Mentoring Programme for students and getting mentoring support for the USB Small Business Academy**



# Current Alumni Association structure

- Link between USB/USB-ED and Alumni Association
- Full member of Advisory Board; conveys strategic decisions to Association
- Acts on behalf of Association at high-level ceremonies & functions

**Alumni  
Association  
President**

- Link between Alumni Association and USB/USB-ED
- Conveys strategy of Association to Committees and alumni

**National  
Chair**

**Alumni  
Office**

- Liaises between USB/USB-ED and Alumni Association

**Regions**

- SA, Namibia, E&W Africa, Europe and UK
- Committees: Chairperson with 3-15 members

# New USB Alumni Association Vision & Mission



## *Vision*

*To be the most desirable alumni association in Africa*

## *Mission*

*It is the moral obligation of the USB Alumni Association to grow South Africa and Africa by:*

- *Building the brand and ethos through corporate citizenship, academic excellence and thought leadership*
- *Building capacity and momentum by reinvesting skills in social engagement projects*
- *Growing member involvement by building a relationship with each alumnus and strengthening communication*

# Challenges?

## Funds and fund-raising

- So much we want to achieve, but no “spending culture” in SA
- Fundraisers not well supported or attended

## Solution?

- Draw alumni in another way. Speak to them personally and ask how they plan to make a difference.
- Build pride in the USB and alumni achievers by providing more platforms for recognition and rewards
- Start with the students. Include final-year students in regional alumni networking events.

## Database

- Historical data outdated needs to be integrated into new systems and updated.
- Duplication due to multiple study programmes at both USB and USB-ED
- Updates difficult because alumni change jobs or companies block mass emails
- Email fatigue – alumni do not read their mailers anymore and many alumni unsubscribe

## Solution?

- Appoint 1 dedicated staffer to update database and investigate missing information
- Spread the word that the web portal allows alumni to update their own details
- Request information to alumni on Twitter, LinkedIn, FB, etc.

# What is planned for the future?

## Stronger communication and networking efforts

- Each region has come up with an idea to re-engage their constituents. E.g. Western Cape holds social media workshops to help alumni use LinkedIn and Twitter for discussions, news, events.
- Attract more people to web portal and encourage them to contact their local committees to help build regional databases.

## Reunions

- Formal reunions annually
- 2014: USB's 50th Anniversary

## Social engagement

- Following the Association's vision and mission, each region will invest time and energy in running the USB NPO Programme and raising funds to send local NPO managers on the course thus reinvesting business skills in local communities.
- Alumni will act as mentors on the USB Small Business Academy to bring knowledge, skills and business exposure to small business owners from previously disadvantaged areas.



# Q&A

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