



Corporate Alumni Networks

Managing your reputation and protecting your future in recessionary times

Why reputation among former employees is so vital...

Imagine yourself, in three years' time. A former colleague calls - perhaps it's one of those you've had to 'let go' this year, or someone who saw an opportunity elsewhere and left. Their call is no surprise, because you've kept in touch with them ever since. They want your advice...

Perhaps they've seen you advertise a job and wonder if they should apply...

They've heard you're struggling with something that they are an expert in and think that they could help you...

The business they're running is looking for investment or to be acquired...

They have discovered a solution to a technical problem that has thwarted you for years...

They know someone they think would make an excellent member of your team...

They have heard you might want to dispose of a part of your firm and they are eager to buy...

They have an idea for a new product stream and would like to know who's best to discuss it with...

Maybe they've spotted a new market and want to help you develop it...

There are ways of managing your reputation and getting a return on the investment...

Despite the rhetoric, for most companies struggling to keep afloat in a tough recessionary market the likelihood of maintaining such bonds with former employees is small.

Whatever our reason for moving on, whether we are made redundant, fired, or even go of our own choice, there is usually a bitter after-taste. Few people sing the praises of a former employer - certainly not in the next few years. It is a natural part of the psychology of adapting to change - to project the blame onto the former employer and so make the future look better.

Employers too, used to take what some might describe as an arrogant approach: that someone who has left has been disloyal somehow and should never be entertained again. There are still many who act this way.

If you want to nurture your relationships, and build a body of ambassadors...

Now, suppose I said there is a way to manage your company's reputation despite these tough times, to maintain the morale of staff who leave your organisation (and encourage those that stay), to build a pool of potential future employees and of grass-roots ambassadors for the business, to provide a source of relevant innovative ideas and an extended network of referrers of business opportunities, and all this for very little outlay... would you be interested?



There is an inexpensive way of achieving all this... Known as a '*corporate alumni network*' - it calls for long-term commitment and a belief in the potential of former staff, but it costs very little to run, and can add enormous value in many ways.

As one Group HR Director said; "*It's a no-brainer really - just one senior player recruited through the network can pay for all its costs.*"

If you recognise the benefit of keeping in touch, of nurturing the relationship with former staff, of providing a communication channel through which they can keep in contact with you, build their network, learn about opportunities, involve you in their future ventures, and through which you can make a positive contribution to their immediate needs, then I think you'll find I have something important to offer.

A few enlightened employers have proactively managed these relationships in the past: *The Mars Group, Motorola, McKinsey, KPMG, and Ford* are all examples. This used to involve a lot of hands-on effort, was achieved by post or phone and was expensive. It often meant formal events to which members were invited and which required corporate sponsorship. Along the way, the firms had to learn that they couldn't control the networks, but they could influence them.

The power of the internet means that, left to their own devices, employees can organise their own networks. They are fragile, lack authority, don't have corporate support and input (both essentials), and have no 'agenda' to sustain a positive relationship with the company.

A modern solution, facilitating two way flows of information and a climate of care...

Today, more firms are waking up to the possibility of offering their former staff access to an online environment, where they can maintain contact, nurture individuals and relationships and build a positive reputation. The technology is simple (though some IT departments seem reluctant to admit it!) and is completely outside your own infrastructure so it poses no threat, brings no long-term responsibilities, and is accessible to FORMER staff who (obviously) have no access to your intranet.

What makes the network work though, is its day-to-day management. Facilitating a corporate alumni network (which is the term that these groups are known by) calls for skills in distant relationship building, an understanding of the psychology of communication and the emotional needs of former staff and an ability to offer online 'counsel' where appropriate, an ability to mentor those who are embarking on more senior roles, and to support those who might be launching their own businesses.

A lot of support costs very little...

I hope that you'll be persuaded that this is a simple approach that could reap considerable rewards for your business. It costs very little, though it needs a long-term commitment to make it worthwhile, but the return on the investment can be enormous.

Visit our website: www.corporate-alumni.info to read more, to download an independent report on the nature of alumni networks, to read comments from others like you, and to learn what leads to the success of good networks. Give me a call to arrange a meeting.