



Building the Business Case for an Alumni Platform

Part 1: How to Demonstrate Strategic Opportunity

An actionable guide to spark leadership excitement, secure investment, and build an alumni program that sets your organization apart





Alumni are more than “former employees.” They’re **future hires, business champions, and powerful brand advocates.**

Building a formal program isn’t always easy. Competing priorities and budget pressures make it hard to win executive buy-in.

This guide is designed to give alumni leaders **the insights and confidence** they need to influence stakeholders and secure the resources to succeed in making their case.

PeoplePath traces its roots to **1995** with the first formal program of its kind, the Microsoft Alumni Network. Since then, we’ve helped organizations of all sizes build business cases that win leadership support.

We know what works, what resonates, and how to spark the interest that secures buy-in for your alumni program.

Share your vision, secure support, and lead the charge to launch your alumni program!



Part 1: How to Demonstrate Strategic Opportunity

Goals of this section:

- ✔ Showcase how former employee relationships are mutually beneficial
- ✔ Redefine alumni as strategic assets
- ✔ Highlight the growing strategic importance of alumni networks

The following pages will provide the steps to achieve these goals.

Alumni Are Your Hidden Advantage



Provide leadership with an **executive summary** using the text on the right as inspiration. Show how your organization is overlooking what early adopters already know: **alumni aren't just former employees, they're a strategic advantage.**

Highlight key figures, and make the case that **treating alumni as a long-term investment is essential for growth, influence, and competitive advantage.**

Why an Alumni Program?

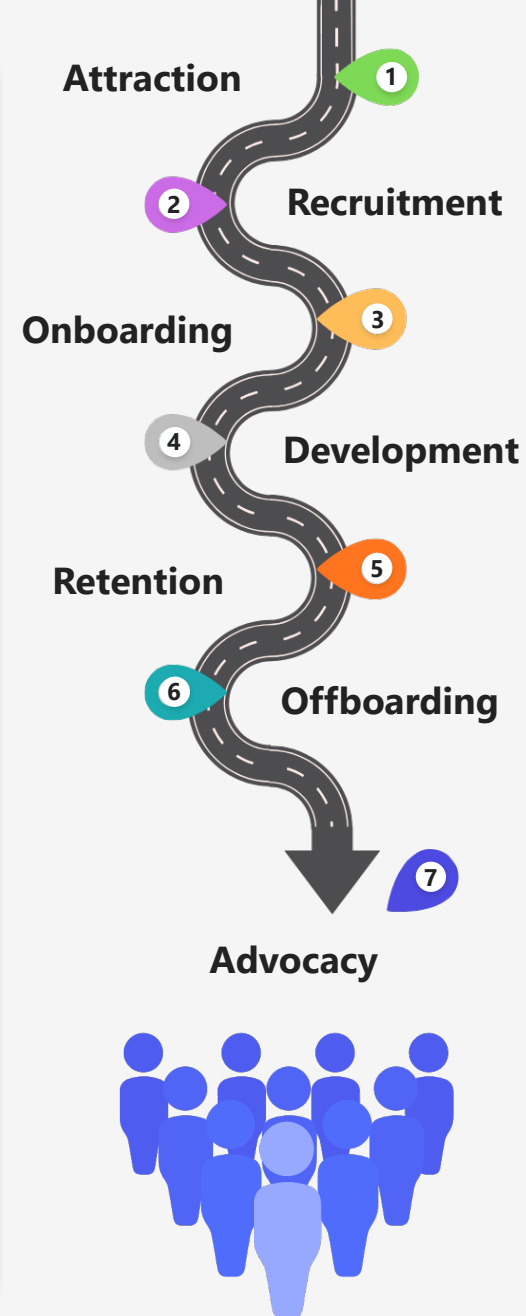
In today's volatile economy, managing relationships through layoffs and change is critical.

Often organizations ignore the final stage of the employee lifecycle: Advocacy. This lets years of investment walk out the door. Advocacy turns goodbyes into goodwill, with alumni becoming valuable ambassadors and boomerangs. According to the **Peak-End Rule, people remember the high point and the ending**, so offboarding shapes employer brand. **A poorly handled exit can erase goodwill instantly.**

Strong alumni relationships start with understanding what drives them and creating experiences that matter. Organizations that nurture these connections gain **stronger employer brands, deeper talent pipelines, broader market influence, and measurable impact.** Leading companies like **EY, Microsoft, SAP, and Starbucks** are already proving the value of alumni programs. They drive measurable impact in three key areas:

- **High-Impact Rehires & Referrals:** Since 2018, boomerangs can make up to **30% of new hires**.¹ bringing fresh expertise.
- **Growth & Revenue:** Alumni land influential roles, remain loyal customers, drive revenue and can contribute between **5-20% of total revenue**.²
- **Brand Ambassadors:** Alumni strengthen employer branding, with those running alumni programs seeing **Glassdoor scores rise by 16%**.³

A formal program aligned with alumni needs and organizational goals sends a clear message: **wherever their careers lead, they remain valued and supported.**



¹Nela Richardson for ADP Research, „Boomerang hiring makes a comeback“, (2025)

²Data from the 2025 Corporate Benchmarking Report

³Data from the Cornell Joint Research Report: The Business Case for Corporate Alumni Programs

Key Role Risk

- Only **one-third** of critical roles have succession plans.¹
- **74%** of employers struggle to find skilled candidates.²

Mobility Matters

- The average tenure is **3.9 years**⁶ with many holding **10+ jobs**⁷ in their career lifetime.
- **64%** of job hoppers see frequent moves as career boosters.⁸
- **20%** leave due to lack of career development.⁹

Employer Brand Matters

- **83%** of employees and job seekers research company reviews and ratings to decide on where to apply for a job.¹⁰
- A minimum 0.5-point increase in Glassdoor rating leads to **20% more job clicks** and 16% more apply starts on average.¹¹

Hiring Headwinds

- **56%** offer acceptance rate.³
- **18%** leave during probation.⁴
- Replacing an employee costs **50–200%** of their annual salary.⁵

Speed Over Strategy

- Prioritizing quick wins vs. long-term vision: **the Productivity Paradox.**
- Employee impact: **more layoffs**, fewer growth opportunities, weaker connections.
- Higher turnover and **loss of institutional knowledge.**

Lack Of Employee Trust

- **Over half of workers** feel disengaged as layoffs, reduced DEI, RTO mandates, and smaller raises erode trust and fuel burnout.¹²
- Falling engagement **cost \$438 billion in lost productivity in 2024.**¹³

Improve Strategy for a Changing Landscape



Begin with providing leadership a clear snapshot of today's talent challenges and why they matter.

Identify the topics that are most critical or difficult for your organization or team and give them your primary focus.

Highlight shifts in the talent landscape and use data-driven insights to build urgency for your solution.

^{1,3,4} McKinsey, HR Monitor Report, (2025)

²Manpower Group, 2025 Global Talent Shortage Report, (2025)

³Regina Dyerly for SHRM Business, "The Myth of Replaceability: Preparing for the Loss of Key Employees", (2025)

⁶The US Bureau of Labor Statistics, (2024)

⁷Harvard Business Review, "Turn Departing Employees into Loyal Alumni", (2021)

⁸Forbes, "Boomerang Employees Might Be the Best Hires: 4 Reasons Why", (2025)

⁹Work Institute, 2023 Retention Report, (2023)

^{10,11} Glassdoor, "The essential employer branding statistics you need to know", (2025)

¹²Forbes, "The Great Squeeze: Q4 Leadership Challenge and Four Solutions, (2024)

¹³Gallup, State of the Global Workplace Report, (2024)

The Strategic Value of Alumni Networks



Present a clear overview of the organizational benefits and **top drivers of corporate alumni programs.**

Show leadership what **measurable results** leading organizations are achieving, such as improved **talent acquisition, business development, and brand advocacy**, so they can see why investing in a formal alumni network is a strategic, research-backed decision.

Early adopters of corporate alumni programs were top professional services firms like Accenture and McKinsey. Their goal was simple: keep relationships strong so former employees could bring new clients and opportunities back.

Today, **the value of alumni programs has spread far beyond consulting, with tech, healthcare, and retail** using them to drive growth, innovation, and lasting connections.

*"Our former colleagues have become **the best clients**. It's good for business."*

- Simon Freakley, CEO, AlixPartners

*"Former employees are like **walking Yelp review** for customers and candidates."*

- Karen Crone, CHRO, Paycor Inc.

40%

higher win rate when a BCG alum was involved in a client pitch¹

10k

EY alumni in C-suite positions who influence consulting decisions²

The Top 3 Business Drivers for Alumni Programs

Talent Acquisition

- **7–8%** of all new hires are rehires on average, with some organizations reaching **10% - 30%** with investment

Business Development

- **18%** of companies attribute **over \$50 million** in sales to alumni support

Brand Advocacy

- Companies with alumni programs have **16% higher Glassdoor ratings**



¹Oliver Staley for Quartz, "Who says talent development has to stop when an employee moves on?" (2022)
²Emma Jacobs for Financial Times, "Consultancy alumni networks focus on mutual benefits", (2023)

Events are Most Valued

98% of alumni programs host in-person or virtual events, and alumni consistently rank these as the **top benefit**.

Career Mobility Matters

80% of programs offer internal job postings; **59%** share jobs at other companies; **54% allow alumni to post jobs**.

High Engagement Channels

54% of programs see newsletter **open rates above 40%** - alumni pay attention to what matters.

72%

would consider returning if given the opportunity¹

What Motivates Alumni to Stay Connected?



Explain to leadership **why alumni remain engaged** and what they're looking to gain from an alumni program.

Alumni Needs & Motivations



Social Networking



Professional Development



Ties to Company Mission



Product & Services News



Discounts & Perks

Aligned Benefits

Our Cornell study shows that alumni that are most aligned with the **company mission are often the most engaged**. Offer a broad menu of benefits to meet diverse needs but focus on those most valuable to alumni. Common benefits include:

- **Exclusive Content:** Newsletters, alumni stories, company updates.
- **Events & Networking:** In-person and virtual events, social groups.
- **Platforms & Tools:** Alumni website, directory, apps.
- **Career & Development:** Job postings, career resources, education.
- **Discounts and exclusive offers**

Alumni networks often form organically as former employees stay connected to the company's **culture, share opportunities, and support each other** through career changes or layoffs. **Organizations that don't engage alumni miss the chance** to shape these networks and benefit from their influence.

A strong alumni program starts by understanding what motivates alumni and **offering experiences or benefits that matter**. When they see **real value**, it builds authentic, lasting connections that **benefit both them and the company**.

¹Tracy Brower, Forbes, "Should You Go Back To Your Old Job? 6 Ways To Know", (2022)

The Growth of Alumni Programs and Strategic Investment



To wrap up this chapter, note that the **PeoplePath benchmarking reports**, the most academically thorough review of corporate alumni programs, show over 10 years of growth, increasing sophistication, and rising investment.

Use the academic research to demonstrate the increasing importance of alumni programs.

Click [here](#) to access all of our reports.

Built into the Employee Journey

- **43% promote alumni programs** to attract talent (up from 37% in 2024)

- **73% send invites at exit**, making the network a natural next step
- **76% offer career transition resources:** job search help, resume support, and reskilling



- **60%** introduce alumni programs **during onboarding** (up from 55% in 2024)

- **New programs (<3 years): 48%** of leavers join
- **Mature program (21+ years): 89%** of leavers join

Maturing Programs, Growing Impact

Starting budgets average \$40,000, enough to launch, engage alumni, and track early results, setting the stage for bigger impact.

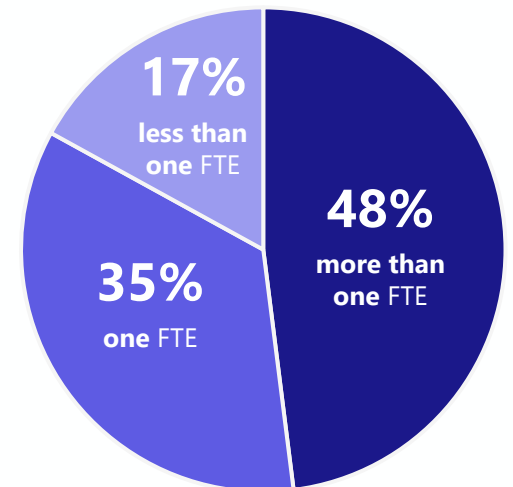
Programs are tracking metrics consistently, including alumni conversion rates, event attendance, referrals, NPS, and alumni-assisted sales.

With **68% now using dedicated platforms**, this focus on data and technology shows rising sophistication.

As programs mature, they grow in value and brand recognition, becoming an essential part of the employee experience.

Alumni Program Staffing

Resources dedicated to managing the program



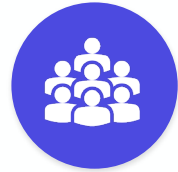
Examples of Corporate Alumni Programs in Various Industries



[EY](#)
[Accenture](#)
[Deloitte](#)



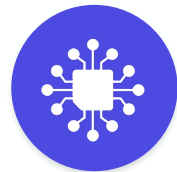
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Approaches vary, with some using LinkedIn alone and others opting for dedicated platforms or custom websites.

LinkedIn can be a low-cost, easy starting point, but groups that are run with minimal investment and no organizational control often **fail to properly engage alumni**.

15%

of companies run a formal alumni program.¹

67%

of company alumni groups exist without company support.²

How are Competitors Approaching Alumni Engagement?



Spot competitors investing in alumni programs to spark ideas, create FOMO, and show leadership they may be falling behind.

This is a small snapshot of alumni programs across the industry, ranging from long-standing networks like **Microsoft's 30-year-old program** to newer initiatives launched just a few years ago.

Leading companies are elevating the alumni experience in **creative, high-impact ways**:

- **Deloitte** offers **cash rewards for referrals**
- **Chevron** provides **contract assignments** for returning alumni.
- **LinkedIn** extends **premium subscriptions** and early access to **products**.
- **Starbucks** engages alumni with **welcome gift cards** and **coffee-tasting events**.
- **SAP** builds connection through **regional events** and **alumni badges** that spark social media sharing.

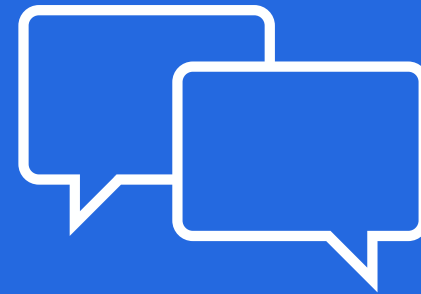
^{1,2}Harvard Business Review, „Turn Departing Employees into Loyal Alumni“, (2021)

Thank you for downloading **Part 1 of our guide: How to Build a Business Case for an Alumni Program.**

If you're in the process of shaping your business case, we hope this first section helped clarify the *why* and gave you useful framing, language, and ideas to support your internal conversations.

As you continue building your case, PeoplePath can support you with real-world examples, benchmarks, and expert guidance.

If you'd like support as you move forward, please don't hesitate to reach out, we'd love to help you strengthen your case!



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