

How to Transform Alumni into Brand Evangelists



When it comes to your Executive MBA program, what audience segment is likely to be your best brand evangelists? Your alumni. They have already gone through your application/admissions process, experienced your curriculum firsthand and hopefully are on to bigger and better things in their careers.

Marketing guru Guy Kawasaki is credited with coining the concept “brand evangelism.” He not only talks the talk, he walks the walk. Kawasaki was one of the Apple employees originally responsible for marketing its Macintosh computer line back in '84. He currently is brand evangelist for Canva.

Kawasaki maintains that the key to brand evangelism is a great product. He has come up with the acronym DICEE to illustrate [what constitutes a great product](#):

- **A great product is Deep.** That is, it does not run out of features after a few weeks of use. In the EMBA world, this could mean offering your alumni executive education courses to keep on top of industry trends or holding networking/reunion events to maintain connections beyond graduation.
- **A great product is Indulgent.** With the price tag of most EMBA programs, this is a given. Keep in mind that you don't want to be the cheapest option available. However, you must provide value (think ROI) to your cohorts.
- **A great product is Complete.** The total user experience should be exceptional. If you have the greatest EMBA program around but a lousy admissions process, for example, you miss the mark.
- **A great product has an Elegant user interface.** Think about it. Are your faculty members accessible? Is the post-enrollment process (course selection, housing, transportation, etc.) a seamless one?
- **A great product is Emotive.** It is so awesome that consumers (i.e., students & alumni) can't wait to tell others about it.

Let's assume your EMBA program *is* a great product. How do you encourage your alumni to become brand evangelists? You can pray that they'll see the light, or you can take active steps to foster their relationship with your brand:

- **Segment your marketing strategy** to target the alumni audience.
- Connect with and friend alumni on **social networking** sites.
- Invite them to share their enthusiasm in **info sessions and class previews**.
- Create a closed **alumni/student group on LinkedIn** and encourage alumni to act as mentors.

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- Better yet, **set up your own private networking site** (ask us how) where alumni can seek answers to work challenges, post job openings, announce & bid on RFPs and more.
- **Interview your alumni** to create case studies that can be used to market your program.
- **Curate/create content** alumni would be proud to share, comment on or like.

We can't stress enough the importance of social media. In terms of alumni giving, donations have dropped at schools nationwide in recent years. However, Philadelphia's Drexel University is bucking that trend, thanks to a social media engagement campaign. David Unruh, senior vice president of Institutional Advancement at Drexel, says in the [Philadelphia Business Journal](#) that seeking large donations wasn't the main goal of the campaign. "[The campaign events] are not intended to generate large dollar amounts... they're really designed to engage the broader Drexel community."

We'll take it a step further. Don't just milk your alumni for donations. **Milk them for prospects.**

It's all about social proof or social influence. Include alumni testimonials on your website and in your marketing materials. Alumni videos can be repurposed; include them on your website, your social networking sites and in online ads. Third-party "endorsements" — such as testimonials, rankings and news placements — are extremely effective in forming a positive impression of your program among prospective students.

To recap, create a great product. Maintain your connection with alumni. When you do, they'll become believers, brand evangelists who will help you convert your prospects into students. Amen.

Want to explore how to engage and connect with your alumni in a secure, private online environment? Learn about [Ziel](#), Annodyne's proprietary audience engagement portal.