

O2: Creation of an Alumni Database

Stakeholder Motivation: Conclusion



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Preface

In the previous parts of phase 3 the research into expectations and motivations of the stakeholders in the aspired international alumni network is presented. Outcomes of this research per stakeholder category is extensively described. The interesting next step is to compare the expectations over the stakeholder categories. To begin with we will explore the extent to which the stakeholders are interested in the international, and therewith implied intercultural, aspect of the aspired alumni network. Next, we will look into the organizational aspects of supporting an alumni network, meaning the effort that goes into keeping the network active so as the reach the networks goals. And finally, a structured overview of possible alumni network functionality and the rating of it by the stakeholders is given.

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Interest into the international aspect of the proposed alumni network

The participating HEIs have, on multiple occasions, stated that they value an international alumni network as a means to promote internationalisation and a European mindset in students and alumni. Therefore, it is much more interesting to see whether students and alumni agree with HEI's in that respect. As concluded before, more recently graduated alumni value the international component much more than older generations of alumni. The intercultural aspects of an international alumni network are considered more valuable by recent alumni but also by alumni that studied in a language other than their native language.

Amongst students the general opinion is that the international and intercultural components of an international AN are not a goal as such for students but can be of added value to the target group

The interviewed company representatives do not have a consistent opinion on this matter. Companies that see the network as a job vacancy notice board have reservations concerning the usefulness of posting vacancies for other nationalities, specifically nationally operating companies see it that way. In addition to that, quite some companies pointed out that the working languages in their company is still the national language: a not-to-be-ignored 'detail'. More internationally operating companies did see advantages of an international AN for extending their network and recruiting international candidates. Danish company representatives specifically, mainly focus on the national HEI's and their students and alumni and are consequently not very interested in the international aspect of the alumni network. This is probably due to a strong national orientation of the interviewed companies.

All-in-all it can be stated that the stakeholders see advantages in an international AN in comparison to a traditional AN. The intercultural aspects of an international AN is mostly valued by students and recent alumni whereas the larger scale of an international AN can be seen as an advantage since that enlarges the possibility of finding suitable jobs/internships respectively job candidates by alumni/students and companies.

Management and support of an international alumni network

Chances are very slim that an AN will be self-sustainable: effort needs to be put into it to keep it alive. Most regular alumni networks are supported and managed by the HEI or university that provides the alumni. But when alumni, students and/or companies are willing to actively support the AN, this would most certainly be beneficial to the sustainability of the network. It would also greatly help in the sense of ownership of the AN and the activities deployed by the AN.

As it turns out, alumni are not very eager to invest their (scarce) free time in supporting an AN or organising activities for an AN. Alumni that have indicated to be available to play a role in the network preferably want to coach students or act as an ambassador for their 'alma mater'. When depicting themselves as alumni current students show a somewhat higher willingness to be actively involved in comparison to the interviewed alumni. A pattern which might be fueled by optimism. The type of activities students envision themselves doing show the same preferences (coaching students and ambassador of their HEI).

Companies do not feel that it is their role to support and/or manage the AN.

Righteously so, some companies have pointed out the necessity of adequate support of the platform of the international AN. Since neither alumni, students nor companies feel the need to actively manage the AN, HEI's are the stakeholders that need to take responsibility for the (technical) support of the network. How the support needs to be organized and how the tasks will be divided over the participating HEI's needs to be decided upon.

Functions of an international alumni network

To create an overview of the features that will make an alumni network valuable to stakeholders a qualitative mapping tool is used which resembles a simplified heat map. First a comprehensive list of features is created. Next each feature is scored for each stakeholder group on desirability: 'not important (no)' (grey), 'nice-to-have' (yellow), 'must have' (red). Scoring is based on the perception of the interviewers. Table 1 shows the expectations of stakeholders concerning the functionality of an AN. The general opinion of the stakeholders per functionality is compared and is shown in each row. Clearly all stakeholders agree on the necessity of having functionality for searching for job opportunities or finding suitable candidates. Also on 'Networking', 'knowledge exchange' and 'company visits and guest lectures' there is agreement although not all stakeholders assign the same priority to these functionalities. AS regarding the social aspects of an AN the outcome shows that only alumni see this as a vital part of an AN, but since alumni are the core stakeholders it is imperative that this functionality is included in an AN. When it comes to company branding only companies have mentioned this aspect of an AN to be interesting for them. Since actively participating in activities of an AN also implicitly is a form of company branding it is not of added value to provide explicit options for this in the AN. Interestingly enough most stakeholders do not expect the AN to engage in organizing events. Most probably this implies that when events will be organised the attendance will be low.

Functionality	alumni	students	companies	HEI's	overall
Finding jobs and vacancies / Finding potential employees	must-have	must-have	must-have	must-have	must-have
Networking	must-have	must-have	nice-to-have	nice-to-have	must-have
Extending/exchanging knowledge	must-have	must-have	must-have	nice-to-have	must-have
Company visits, guest lectures, study projects	must-have	nice-to-have	must-have	must-have	must-have
Socialising	must-have	nice-to-have	no	no	must-have
Company branding	no	no	nice-to-have	no	no
Events	no	no	no	nice-to-have	no

Table 1: Functionality and importance according to stakeholders

The last column, 'overall', summarises the overall score that shows a very clear pattern in which the first five functions are scored as 'must-have' and the last two as 'not important'.

Consequently, there is only one scenario for an AN. It must have the following functionality:

- Search functionality for jobs and job candidates
- Networking functionality
- Knowledge exchange functionality
- Search functionality for company visits, guest lectures and study projects
- Functionality for social interaction with peers / (former) fellow students