

# 2023 Corporate Alumni Benchmarking Report



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# 2023 Corporate Alumni Benchmarking Report



## A Pivotal Year for Corporate Alumni Programs

When we released the 2022 Corporate Alumni Benchmarking Report, we were still in the Great Resignation/Great Reshuffle. As the year progressed, however, the larger story took a turn and became mostly about layoffs at large and small companies around the world. As this continued into 2023, we were curious about how layoff trends would impact corporate alumni programs. Fortunately, while a quarter of our respondents conducted layoffs, only 11% reported that 500 or more employees were impacted. Those departing employees were mostly given career transition support, specifically for help in professional development, and were then welcomed into their alumni programs.

While most alumni programs did not undergo a significant restructuring, this year's results illuminated an increasing sophistication in program structure. We began to see this take shape last year with an increase in alumni programs being utilized as a strategic asset in recruitment and onboarding. We also noticed a marked improvement in alumni team size, employee lifecycle enhancements, engagement, and the return on investment. These findings indicate that bringing the corporate alumni program deeper into the business strategy will produce even greater results.

For the first time, we dug deeper into alumni engagement to gain a better sense of activity level and creativity among programs. While not all programs

track initiatives consistently, we're excited to establish a baseline. We expect to see growth in tracking as well as improved analytics.

The data shows that as programs continue to evolve and improve onboarding and offboarding practices as well as day-to-day activities and engagement, business driver results will also grow.



## Key Findings

1. Successful alumni communities focus on collaboration. 97% of programs work with internal departments (diversity, equity, and inclusion [DEI]; resource groups; corporate social responsibility [CSR]; etc.) to bring creative programming and opportunities to alumni through newsletters, events, and an online platform.
2. Companies continue to invest in their corporate alumni teams. 84% of programs have one or more full-time staff running the program (up 8% from 2022), while 47% have two or more dedicated full-time staff.
3. More HR teams track and report boomerang hires. While the average boomerang rate stayed at 8% this year, 21% of companies reported that 10%–30% of new hires were boomerangs, and 82% of companies are now formally tracking rehires (up 22% from 2022).
4. Providing alumni information to exiting employees matters. 76% of organizations are providing information about the alumni program to employees prior to their departure (up 10% from 2022).
5. Career transition support increases significantly. 74% of organizations offered some form of career transition or outplacement support to either all exiting employees or employees affected by a layoff (up 17% from 2022).
6. The use of a dedicated community platform spreads. 70% of companies now have a third-party platform (such as PeoplePath) for better integration across initiatives and to achieve goals (up 11% from 2022).
7. Alumni programs aid in business development. While not all respondents track this information, some programs can attribute 3%–25% of their revenue to alumni-assisted sales.



## Increased Integration of Corporate Alumni Programs into Talent Management and the Employee Lifecycle

### Utilizing the Alumni Program in Recruitment and Onboarding

As alumni programs continue to grow and develop, it is becoming more important to ensure they are smoothly integrated into the employee lifecycle. For many organizations, this means making sure employees know about the benefits of the alumni program from their very first day at the company (or earlier).

Companies often promote the corporate alumni program and/or the alumni themselves in both the recruitment and onboarding phases. We found that 48% of companies share information about alumni during recruitment, and 55% of companies include information about alumni in onboarding materials for new employees.

[New research](#) from Dr. Rebecca Paluch at the Sauder School of Business at The University of British Columbia supports the benefit of promoting the alumni program during recruitment. The study found that advertising the support offered to exiting employees (such as an active alumni program) in recruitment materials increases the number of job seekers interested in learning more about the organization or potentially applying for a job.

### Boomerangs Are Holding Steady

While we saw an increase in the average number of boomerang hires from 5% to 8% between 2021 and 2022, in 2023, the average remained steady at 8%. However, this year we noticed an increase in the number of companies now reporting on boomerang hires.

While only 60% of companies tracked boomerang hires in 2022, 82% of companies now focus on this metric, demonstrating a stronger connection between alumni programs and talent management. Notably, 21% of companies see boomerang rates anywhere between 10% and 30%, which is a slight increase from last year.

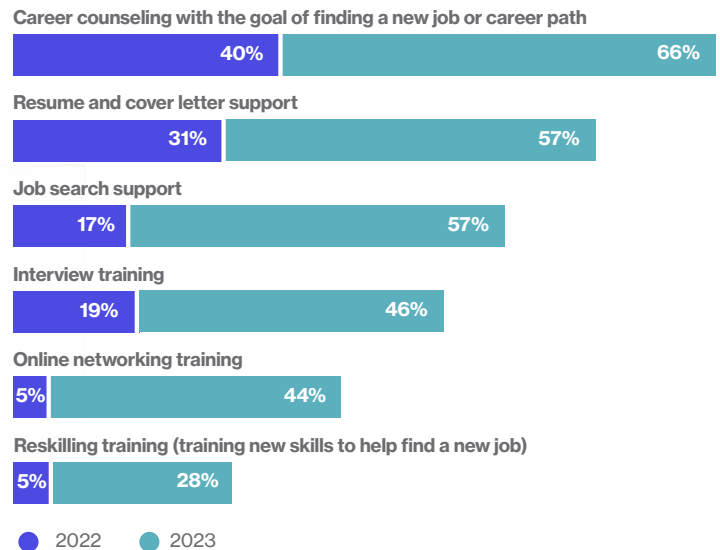


### Significantly More Career Transition Support

One of the best ways to welcome departing employees into the alumni community is by supporting their transition out of the organization. Last year, we predicted that the explosive movement in the labor market would motivate organizations to offer more support to departing employees, and our 2023 results validated this prediction. This year, 74% of organizations reported offering some form of career transition support to either all exiting employees or employees affected by a layoff, an increase of 17% year over year, and notably all categories of support grew.

25% of the responding companies this year reported conducting a layoff in the last 12 months, and 11% reported a layoff of at least 500 employees. When offering transition support, these organizations tended to offer resume and cover letter support to those impacted by the layoff.

### Types of Career Transition Support Offered





## Increased Integration of Corporate Alumni Programs into Talent Management and the Employee Lifecycle (cont.)

### Updating the Exit Process

Organizations increasingly recognize the importance of leaving a good impression on employees at the point of exit. This touchpoint in the employee career lifecycle makes a large impact on whether the person becomes an alum and engages in the alumni program. Most organizations have some form of formal exit interview or survey in place – only 3% reported not yet implementing this.

More organizations than ever before make sure exiting employees have information about the alumni program before they leave. While only 66% of organizations provided information about the alumni program prior to departure in 2022, 76% of organizations reported doing this in 2023.

Exit process offerings	Percentage
Provide materials about the alumni program before they leave the organization	76%
Send an email encouraging alumni to join the network after their last day	73%
Encourage a supervisor or other leader to meet with an exiting employee	58%
Provide a departing gift from the company to alumni	26%
Provide resources for employees to send off the exiting employee	21%

### Programs Are Considering Retirees

Employee retirements represent another form of career transition receiving more attention. 29% of our respondents reported doing special events specifically for their retirees. This included activities such as:

- o Hosting groups or networking events exclusively for retirees
- o Creating a special section of the alumni website for executive-level retirees
- o Providing coaching for the transition to retirement
- o Offering opportunities for retirees to work on spot assignments or special projects
- o Sending exclusive news and communications only to the retirees
- o Matching donations or gifts to approved charities
- o Extending access to company benefits such as continuing professional education (CPE) opportunities or company email addresses





## Alumni Program Characteristics and Overview

For this year's Corporate Alumni Benchmarking Report, we took a closer look at differences in alumni program resources (full-time equivalents [FTEs] and budget) across different organizations. Our data suggests that the age of the alumni program and the size of the organization's workforce influence the number of resources available to an alumni program.

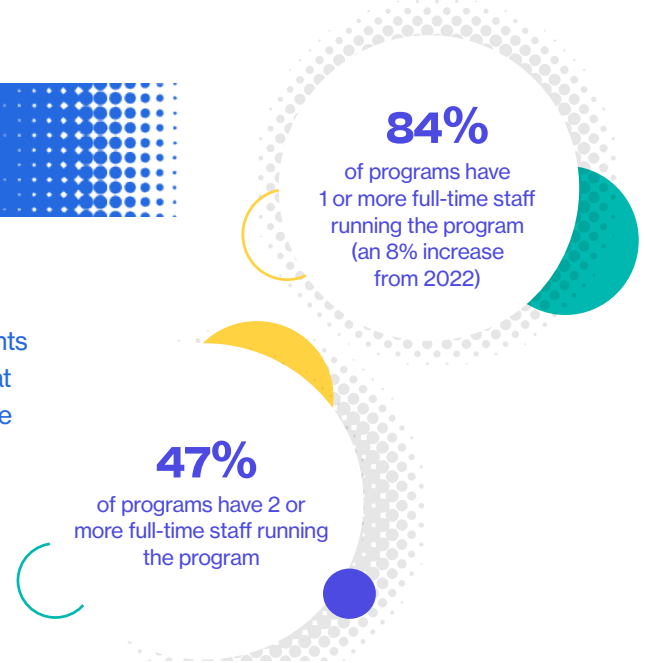
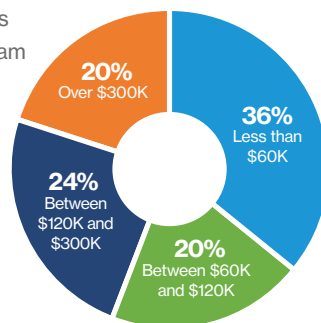
FTE breakdown	2022	2023
No one is currently assigned	9%	5%
0.5 FTE or fewer	14%	11%
1 FTE	33%	37%
2 FTEs	19%	23%
3 FTEs	6%	11%
4 FTEs	6%	6%
5 or more FTEs	12%	6%

The change in alumni team staffing overall illustrates the most notable difference. Each year, we see a decrease in the number of programs that do not have a single person assigned to be responsible for the program. This year continues that trend: We saw an increase in teams that have 1, 2, and 3 full-time team members dedicated.

### Alumni Program Budget

Regarding total budget allocated to the alumni program, more established programs seem to get larger budgets. Of the alumni programs with budgets over \$200,000, 71% have been in existence for more than 5 years. Of the alumni programs with budgets under \$60,000, 63% have been in existence for less than 5 years.

We also found that the organization's overall size impacts the alumni program budget. For alumni programs that have a budget of less than \$200,000, 68% had an employee base of fewer than 10,000.



### Program Offerings

In this year's data, we found that 70% of respondents offer an organizationally sponsored central technology platform such as PeoplePath (an 11% increase from 2022).

In addition to the alumni platform, these were the most offered alumni benefits, with the biggest increases coming in the form of in-person events and the online directory.

Benefit	Percentage
Access to company news and information	92%
In-person events	85%
Alumni newsletters	84%
Alumni stories	82%
Virtual events/webinars	79%
Online directory of alumni	67%

Average company size (employee base)  
= **40,543**

Average registered alumni  
= **13,703**



## Alumni Engagement Statistics in Programs

Up until now, the annual Corporate Alumni Benchmarking Report has given an overview describing programs' resources, features, structures, business drivers, and more. For the first time, this year we asked program managers about the kind of engagement they see from alumni and employees in these programs to get a sense of utilization. While not all respondents were able to provide information on engagement activity, we found a baseline of activity to expect when it comes to platform logins, events, newsletters, and internal collaboration. We assume this trend will continue as the corporate alumni industry continues to grow and mature. In the future, we hope to track engagement progress and showcase how increased day-to-day community activity can lead to enhanced results in business goals.



### Platform Logins

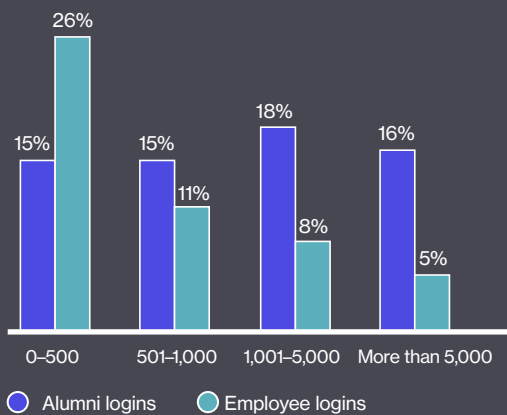
- When alumni log in to the platform, they are likely to update their profile information, sign up for events, review job postings, and interact with other members. At a minimum, they're interested in the site's content and keeping up with their former employer/employees.
- Of this year's respondents, 70% have a corporate alumni platform (such as PeoplePath) and see a consistent level of engagement from members accessing and utilizing the platform features throughout the year. However, even with a platform, 7% do not track alumni logins, 10% do not track employee logins, and 7% do not include employees in their programs.
- 37% of respondents do not track alumni logins, and 49% do not track employee logins, suggesting an opportunity for programs to gather this data for more analysis.

### Newsletter Statistics

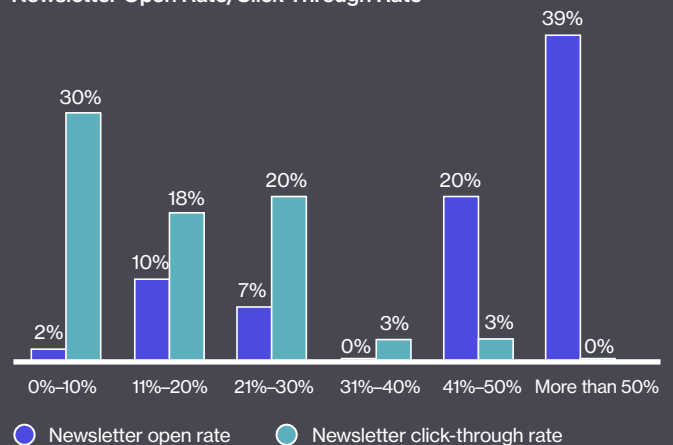
- In past benchmarking reports, we found that most alumni programs are communicating with their alumni on a monthly (36%) or quarterly (31%) basis. This typically includes announcements, event invitations, and newsletters.
- 77% of managers track how many alumni open the newsletter, and 74% measure how many subsequently click through the materials.
- We found that 59% of programs that send newsletters receive an open rate of more than 40%; almost half as many programs (27%) see a click-through rate of 11%–50%. This suggests that content emailed to alumni is highly viewed and read, leading to more logins on the platform or company website traffic.

## Platform Logins and Newsletter Statistics

Alumni Logins/Employee Logins



Newsletter Open Rate/Click-Through Rate





## Alumni Engagement Statistics in Programs (cont.)

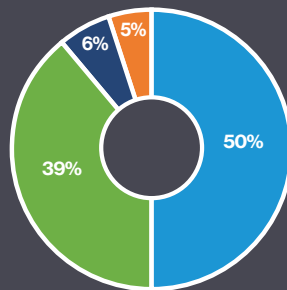
### Event Statistics

As mentioned earlier in this report, in-person and virtual events are two of the most offered features of a corporate alumni program. They're also typically rated as the highest value to alumni for networking and professional development. When used as part of a corporate alumni platform, events encourage alumni to log in and RSVP, as well as act as a reminder to keep their contact information up to date.



### Annual Event Statistics

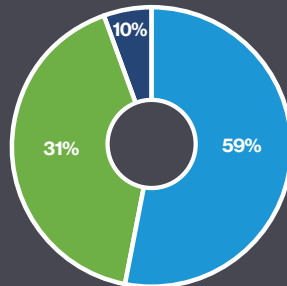
What's the *right* number of events per year? This largely depends on strategy, company size, budget, and number of staff. However, on average we found:



#### Number of Events

- Programs that hold less than 10 events a year
- Programs that hold 10–50 events per year
- Programs that don't track number of events
- Programs that hold more than 50 events per year

Tracking alumni attendance allows programs to see growth and interest in providing this service. It also enables programs to identify which of their members are the most engaged and what they're interested in. How many alumni attend these events?



#### Attendance at Events

- Programs that have less than 1,000 alumni attend events each year
- Programs that don't track attendance at these events
- Programs that have more than 1,000 alumni attend events each year



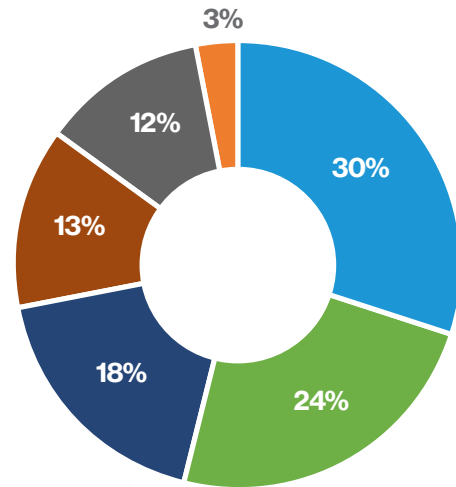
This year was a big year for alumni programs. As organizations recovered from the pandemic and looked forward, many alumni programs received approval to experiment and expand. When asked about the biggest success of the year, 45% of respondents mentioned restarting their in-person events or expanding the events they offered.



## Alumni Engagement Statistics in Programs (cont.)

### Collaboration with Internal Teams

Corporate alumni programs work cross-functionally and commonly interact with or operate within various departments such as marketing, business development, human resources, and operations. This year, we asked if programs engage with other internal teams and found that 97% collaborate on content, events, and other programming. If programs want to increase their engagement and offer unique experiences, connecting with these internal teams will lead to stronger engagement and interconnectedness.



### Internal Teams

- Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)
- Employee resource groups
- CSR/social impact
- Other
- Environmental, social, governance (ESG)
- Do not work with other internal teams

Other common internal teams for collaboration include recruiting, corporate health/health and wellness, professional development, and pro bono projects.



Beyond in-person events and internal collaboration, alumni program managers came up with unique ways to attract and engage alumni, such as:

- Creating a year-in-review report for the alumni program
- Launching a mobile app for alumni
- Offering more career-related development for alumni
- Running campaigns to reengage alumni and highlighting this activity on social media

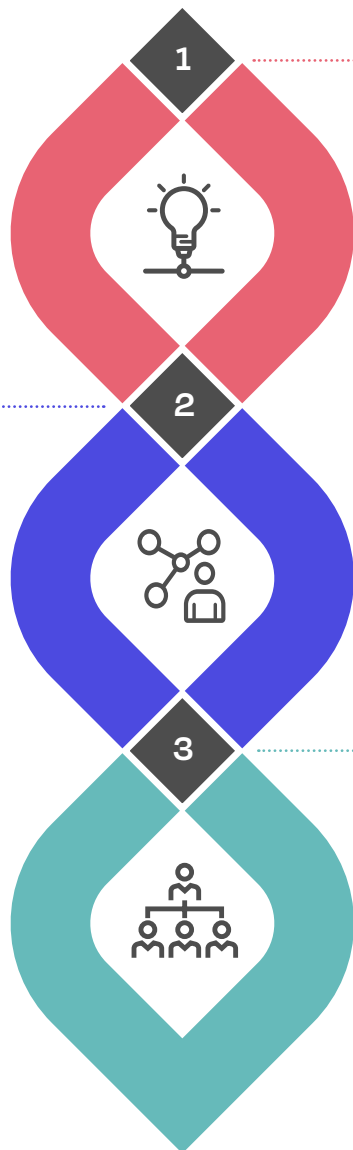




## Return on Investment

### Measuring Returns on Alumni Programs

Past benchmarking reports have clearly established the top three business goals as business development, talent acquisition, and brand ambassadors and that roughly half of all programs actively track some of these goals on a yearly basis. This year, we attempted to find out not only what they're tracking but also the results they achieved. We expect organizations to progress in this area in years to come, but the initial outcomes look promising.



### 1. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

17% of respondents are tracking alumni-assisted sales/revenue.

#### RESULTS:

Corporate alumni programs contribute anywhere from 3% to 25% of total sales/revenue.

### 2. TALENT ACQUISITION

In addition to boomerangs, 19% of respondents track alumni referrals, and 14% of respondents offer a formal program enabling alumni to make referrals.

#### RESULTS:

The number of referrals varied based on role and location and weren't reported by all respondents. However, when offering a formal referral program, awards can be as high as \$10,000 (as either cash or a donation to a charity).

### 3. BRAND AMBASSADORS

Net Promoter Score® (NPS):

- o 10% track NPS of alumni program
- o 8% track NPS of alumni recommending the company as a place to work
- o 7% track NPS of alumni recommending the company's product or service

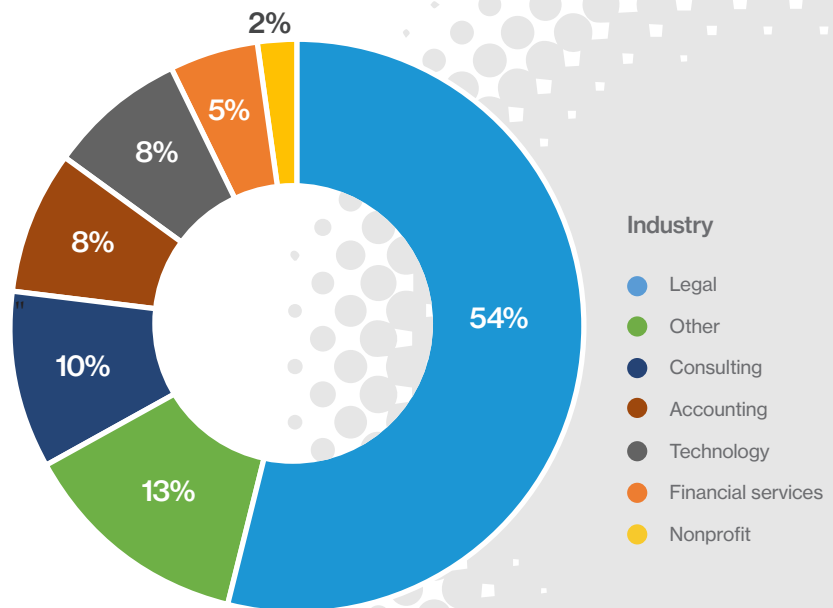
#### RESULTS:

While companies list brand ambassadors as a goal, it is not frequently tracked, and the results vary.



## Respondent Information

We collaborated with Dr. Rebecca Paluch at the Sauder School of Business at The University of British Columbia to create this annual benchmarking report. We are grateful to the corporate alumni managers who responded to our survey. Our ability to report progress on corporate alumni programs each year is dependent on their participation. This year, we received 71 responses from alumni managers and representatives of 62 unique organizations. Participants work in organizations that have been in operation for an average of 89 years and represent various industries.



## Conclusion

This year's alumni program benchmarking results again demonstrated the continued commitment of organizations to improve and strengthen the employee experience. Bringing corporate alumni programs deeper into talent management and the employee lifecycle, as well as adding resources such as increased team members, produced significant results in both talent acquisition and business development goals.

We are also beginning to understand the metrics to optimize engagement and return on investment regarding corporate alumni programs. Our initial findings this year showed very promising results that having a connected and active alumni community delivers on desired business drivers. However, much more can be done to improve programs' abilities to track what's most important to them, and we believe this will mature in the coming years with an increased strategic focus on these initiatives. Developing and utilizing data analytics in deeper and more meaningful ways will allow companies to maintain lifelong, meaningful relationships as people depart and explore career opportunities in new ways.

