



Case Study

University of Notre Dame

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The Problem

The University of Notre Dame has a strong legacy and many proud alumni, but lacked a centralized resource for alumni communication and event organization.

With such a rich network of alums to tap into, Notre Dame came to PeopleGrove hoping to leverage an engagement platform to fill the communication and organization needs of their alumni, while simultaneously enabling student-alumni networking and mentorship.

While Notre Dame was eager to find a platform to drive alumni engagement, they also wanted to ensure that there was no risk to the brand. They knew that any mistake could damage one of America's most iconic university brands and wanted careful precision when launching a school-sponsored platform with the Fighting Irish name on it.

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Goals

The Notre Dame goal was three-fold:

1. Create a centralized location for alumni events and communication
2. Connect alumni to students for mentorship and career guidance
3. Adhere closely to the "look and feel" of the Notre Dame brand

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Strategy

In partnership with PeopleGrove, Notre Dame launched the Irish Compass platform and ran carefully segmented multi-channel marketing campaigns to drive platform use.

Step 1: Segment Your Audience

The Notre Dame team identified three subgroups of alumni:

- Young Alumni: Those who have been out of college for fewer than 10 years.
- Senior Alumni: Alumni who are 55+ years old.
- Working Alumni: Anyone who would fall in between Young or Senior Alumni.

Each segment received a separate, 3-step email campaign introducing the platform. The campaigns varied in messaging, focusing on “finding your next job” for Young Alumni, “serving as a professional mentor” for Working Alumni, and “being a part of the Notre Dame family” for Senior Alumni.

Step 2: Multichannel Marketing

To spread the word about the platform launch, the alumni association leveraged a variety of marketing channels including:

- Social media ads with targeted messaging that matched email campaigns.
- Video detailing the various functions of the platform, airing at two football games.
- Print ads in the form of signs and tent cards in student centers and dining halls.

Step 3: Focus on a “Critical Mass”

Notre Dame’s vision for launch was that alumni would be active on the Irish Compass platform *prior* to student onboarding. In order to accomplish this, the Notre Dame team filled the platform with alumni-focused resources to drive engagement, including:

- Curated Job Postings.
- Videos and career resources in the Library section.
- 30 segmented industry groups within the platform.

The logic behind this “alumni first” tactic was to ensure that alumni were prepared to engage with students when students joined the platform - which worked. Students immediately saw value in utilizing the Irish Compass network, and a robust reciprocal alumni and student network was born.



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Impact

Since its launch in Fall 2017, the Irish Compass platform has attracted over 16,000 active users, 10,700 of whom are alumni. Over 8,000 messages have been exchanged on the platform.

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Key Learnings to Building a Robust Alumni Program

- Customize messaging for different audiences
- Utilize a variety of marketing channels
- Focus on alumni adoption and engagement first, then bring in students
- Closely adhere to school branding guidelines to create an authentic feel