

# Alumni Engagement

WORKBOOK



Jewish Camps Making Investments for Today, Tomorrow, and Forever



To the field:

Over the years, in various ways, camps have asked us for support with alumni engagement. JCamp 180 has offered some tools and resources including data analytic work, coaching on various software systems, as well as support with general stakeholder engagement. Most significantly, in 2023, our JCamp 180 conference was devoted to relational engagement and to identifying key stakeholders to bring into the fold of camp. Many camps identified their alumni as the group that needed further care, attention, and a long-term strategy for engagement.

We know that alumni engagement is unique and critical for the health of our Jewish camps. What we have learned over these years, from and with you, is that alumni engagement is complicated because it is so enormous. Some of your camps are over 100 years old, some are younger than 15 years, some are day camps, and some are just learning to navigate this work —from any of these vantages, camps see hundreds of campers and families every summer, and each camper is a single person, with their own unique needs. How can a camp at any stage of its development maximize relationships with all alumni?

This workbook is meant to support you to break down the work of alumni engagement into doable pieces. Key to the work is segmentation of your alumni audiences based on what segments might yield the results that you need right now. That segmentation will help you design specific activities for specific alumni audiences. Sometimes an alumni weekend — with grandparents and college students all together — works. But camps can maximize results when you can drill down on particular audiences, rather than trying to build many generic activities for different alumni of diverse ages and with disparate experiences and needs.

The segmentation approach also allows any camp, with any level of resources, to use this workbook toward growth. Our intent is that a board member, alumni committee chair, professional with alumni engagement as one of many activities, or a full-time alumni engagement professional can gain from this content.

This workbook is our best effort today to help your camp thrive with its alumni and we look forward to rolling out new resources and services to meet the ongoing needs in this area. We thank our friend and colleague, Dr. Beth Cousens, for drafting this workbook and corralling a lot of different ideas and tools floating around the field. We also thank our graduate intern from the summer of 2022, Adam Nickels, for his initial field scan, work that is reflected here.

We look forward to your feedback and to ongoing exploration of the potential of alumni to build your camp and our Jewish communities for today, tomorrow, and forever.

— The JCamp 180 team

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# Part 1: Background & Framing



## Introduction

Your best champions — your loudest raving fans—are your current users: your campers, staff, and parents.

But your second best are alumni. Every camp has countless alumni who spent a huge part of their lives at camp, who love camp, who became themselves at camp.

These are our warmest leads, for anything we need — for current and future camper enrollment, for recommendations, for philanthropy, for in-kind support for volunteering, and more.

But this is much more important than what alumni can give camp; alumni represent who we are in the world. The more we activate alumni as our graduates, the more we succeed in our largest mission: building leadership and a vibrant Jewish community.

But precisely because we have so many alumni, engaging alumni is a terrifically challenging job. The general consensus of writing about alumni engagement is that it's imperative — and overwhelming. Most of us, even those not at camps (leaders at universities, at schools, at other summer programs) feel like we're behind, even while most of us do something in this space. If we're doing something, we still feel like we're doing little compared to the larger work that is possible.

This workbook aims to break down alumni engagement and **help you achieve excellence with at least one segment of your alumni audience.** At some point your accomplishments might spread to additional alumni audience segments, particularly as your capacity expands, but for now, start somewhere. To say that differently: **Even with few resources, this workbook aims to help you do something deeply, and ideally grow that something over time.**

**Workbook goal:**  
*Help you and your camp achieve excellence with at least one segment of your alumni audience.*



### JCamp 180 Survey on Alumni Engagement

In preparation for this workbook, JCamp 180 surveyed affiliated camps to understand efforts at alumni engagement. According to the survey's 76 respondents:

- A majority of respondents are leveraging social media (90%), doing reunion events (65%), and/or bringing alumni to camp (55%)
- Over 40% have an alumni newsletter and/or special committee or task force on alumni
- Camp leaders seek alumni enrollment of their children in camp as well as alumni engagement with fundraising



## WORKBOOK GOALS

### This workbook should help you...

- Outline goals and priorities for alumni engagement
- Brainstorm the right opportunities for programs and engagement for different alumni audience segments
- Design an implementation plan, looking at who will be responsible for next steps and what their tasks could be
- Inoculate you against pouring resources into one-off alumni events that don't follow an agreed-upon strategy (and, therefore, need a better return on investment!)

And, ultimately, build sustainable capacity for engaging at least one alumni audience segment with depth and excellence for the short and long term. Then, over time, move on to more.

## WORKBOOK AUDIENCE

Some camps are able to dedicate resources to a professional position that holds significant responsibility for alumni engagement. Most, though, simply aren't. Alumni engagement is often at best a piece of a portfolio or shared by the team, all of whom have other full-time leadership roles.

This workbook is designed for any camp in any of these situations. We recommend that one person take responsibility for using the workbook: They should skim it, take notes, and make a plan for reading it through as a team. Who will do the exercises, and at what meetings? What are camp's key learnings from the book? Assign the book to someone and make a date for them to report back on next steps. (See Exercise 1: Using this Workbook on pages 4-5 for help in doing this.)

Ultimately, you may decide to work through the book from its beginning to its end. Or, you might use ideas from the book to strengthen your work, drawing

on what will best support camp given your current alumni work. In either case, one person should hold accountability for its use.

### TIP

Assign the book to someone and make a date for them to report back on next steps.

### What could this look like? You might be:

- An assistant director who does this with 10% of their time
- A development professional who has this responsibility somewhere on their list
- A registrar
- A member of camp's board or alumni committee tasked with building a new initiative
- A camp with a major milestone anniversary coming up
- A camp with great data but no plan (yet!)
- An alumni engagement staff member whose central job is devoted to alumni work
- A day or an overnight camp
- An independent or movement-based camp

That being said, the workbook itself can be a stakeholder engagement process. **Consider building a small committee of board members, alumni, and other stakeholders and work through the workbook together.** At a series of meetings, work through each section and the exercises and build a series of recommendations for camp. Your alumni engagement lead (that one person) can convene the committee.

**“Alumni are our strategy.”**

Matt Kramer, about *Teach for America*



## Exercise 1: Using This Workbook

The workbook itself can be a stakeholder engagement process. Consider building a small committee of board members, alumni, and other stakeholders and work through the workbook together. At a series of meetings, work through each section and the exercises and build a series of recommendations for camp.

**Who is taking primary responsibility for leading camp’s use of this workbook, with a committee or independently? This person, with the committee, can use this worksheet to take notes.**

1. What has camp already developed for its alumni efforts and what will be most useful to supercharge those efforts?

2. Which exercises will be most useful for camp? Who will you do the exercises with and when?

Name of Exercise	Who	Meeting/Date
<i>Example:</i> Alumni Segmentation	Development committee	June meeting (after Gala)

3. What key takeaways or conclusions do you want to bring to people on your team?

Key Points	Who	Meeting/Date
<p><b>Example:</b>                      We should spend two weeks/ year - like, a week in September and a week in March - focused on updating as many records as possible.</p>	Development committee	June meeting (after Gala)

4. Based on the work here, what recommendations would you make for your alumni engagement work?

Recommendations	Next Step	Task Owner	Timing
<p><b>Example:</b>                      create supervisors reunion - probably a bar night</p>	Schedule/ Book bar/ collect data	(name)	November: calendar in May, August Save the Date

.....

**We know that this work really needs a professional staff person dedicated to alumni work and that the vast majority of camps may not have those resources.** That's OK! The workbook will assume that your camp has only a fraction of the ideal resources and help you plan accordingly. In other words, as this gets overwhelming, find the pathway that is right for camp right now.

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### **Goals of the Work**

We want to help every camp change the question from “Do you do a good job with alumni?” to “With which alumni do you do the best job?”

With alumni engagement, camps seek to **make an experience that seems past, present**, to make camp relevant and palpable to its participants, even decades later.

With alumni engagement, camps expand their audiences — campers are their time-bound focus, but alumni are also deserving of camps' mission and educational program. When alumni are impacted by the same content that they embraced years or decades before, we directly deepen our impact, and we expand our capacity toward even deeper impact.

But moreover, alumni embody a strategy. The more they connect to camp throughout their lives, the more that they represent what camp is — camp's values and leadership — in their community.

And, giving and receiving are in virtuous dialogue with each other: The more that alumni continue to receive, or their experiences are recalled for them, the more they will give.

In this context, alumni engagement is helping alumni to continue to feel the program deeply by participating themselves, reconnecting with their camp friends, being back in a place that is so special to them, sending their family members or friends, giving, and otherwise serving.

**“Whatever you do needs to be for the benefit of alumni and not the organization. If you're doing any programming, any asks, it has to be for the benefit of furthering their goals and enriching their understanding of what it was that you were trying to teach them in the first place.”**

— Angie Atkins, Director, Wexner Heritage Alumni and Summits, The Wexner Foundation<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in the Schusterman Foundation Alumni Playbook (2015).

**Activate alumni to represent camp in the world.** Help alumni continue to feel the program deeply by participating themselves, sending their family members or friends, giving, and otherwise serving.



**Camp Spotlight** **CAMP HAVAYA**

**CAMP HAVAYA** BE YOU, BOLDLY

**Founded in 2002**

**What They Did:** Havaya has regional volunteer ambassadors who help facilitate and build community in their regions – they keep track of alumni in their area, including where they live and their contact information. Havaya hosts an alumni retreat every other year, and the regional ambassadors run local programming in between retreat years to keep the momentum going. In the long-term, camp would like to offer a stipend to each regional ambassador for their work.

**Key Takeaway:** Consider a community organizing model to help build and engage your alumni network.

### How will we measure our alumni engagement efforts?

Camp might consider a set of straightforward metrics like:

- Number of usable contact records
- Percentage of those records (humans) who are engaged as
  - Donors
  - Parents of campers
  - Volunteers for camp (over the past twelve months)
  - Continued participants
  - Event participant

Track these metrics within one specific alumni audience (eg, former staff or alumni from the 80s), and after growth happens, take up another category. For example: URJ 6 Points Sports Academy was able to email every alum who ever participated in a baseball program that they were honoring a baseball coach as an inductee into their Hall of Fame.

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### What Do We Mean by Alumni?

A lot of people move through camp. Doctors work at camp for a week or two. Children come to camp for one more more summers. Families might come for a visiting day or a family Shabbat but then never return. Camp might offer early childhood and other programming off-site, with a secondary goal of camp recruitment; families might attend and never participate in camp. Some might work or volunteer at camp but never have participated as a camper themselves.

**Is everyone an alumnus? Yes.** By “alumni,” we mean: **Anyone who has participated in a program that you have created.** This includes summer programs as well as year-round weekend programs and local recruitment events.

But. This is why we have built this alumni strategy on alumni segmentation. All of these alumni are not equal. Understanding how people have engaged with camp is critical to an effective alumni engagement strategy.

We can't even say, though, that longer is better. You may want to engage fifty years of doctors at camp. Perhaps arts and crafts specialists can be helpful to a particular goal. **Successful alumni engagement is rooted in data, purpose, and strategy.**

**Example: How can we hold at once and all together such a big alumni community?** At Camp Tawonga, anyone who has entered camp owns camp. At every program, a weekend or a summer, they declare, “Once a Tawongan, always a Tawongan.” When they share this with campers and participants, camp leaders give participants the permission to consider themselves alumni, which starts their camp journey.

### Not sure how to figure out these metrics in your donor database?

TIP

**Your first step:** Contact your database vendor for training or support. They should be able to help you think about how to use the system's functionality most effectively.

In the meantime, **here are some general tips:**

- Consider the potential groups you might want to report on or communicate with uniquely. Your donor database has tags or flags or categories (or similar) to mark records as needed. This works best for long-term designations that don't expire: parent, staff/former staff, camper/former camper/ alumni
- You can filter in your donor database for donors/ non-donors based on giving history - no need to create a flag or tag for “donor.”
- Other groups are short-term and need regular maintenance. For example, board/committee members have specific terms. If you decide it's important to track these designations, be sure you have a documented process for someone to update the donor database when board members start and end their terms.

## Part 2: Roadmap to Alumni Engagement



The bulk of this workbook outlines six strategies that comprise alumni engagement. They are shared here in a particular order. But we know that different strategies might be right for different camps at different times. They are part of a larger whole.

## Taking First Steps

Some of you are building alumni work for the first time, some of you have robust programs, and others of you have a full database ripe for opportunity.

In any of these cases, we suggest that first steps to an expanded alumni engagement plan involve segmenting your audience and focusing on outreach to particular groups.

Generic alumni outreach isn't without value. But focused engagement will help your camp gain more. And it is more accessible and easier to accomplish given the size of most camps' audiences.

**Use Exercise 2: Audience Segmentation + Prioritization** to help camp identify possible audiences. Complete the worksheet with a group, ideally an alumni subcommittee of the board. But it could instead be a small group of staff or an ad-hoc lay/professional team. Brainstorm and then prioritize. What are the possible audiences you could reach out to? Who is the best audience to start with, given what you already have and what they offer? And, what does camp need right now that each audience might support? And what does camp have to offer to each audience?

As you move through the workbook, maintain one or two of these key audiences in mind for most conversations and exercises. Focus on **journeys for some, not one-time programs for all**. Camp will seek meaningful engagement with that focused audience.

Over time, ideally, camp will build capacity to serve more of these segmented audiences.

**Camp Spotlight** **CAMP ALONIM**

**Founded in 1953**

**What They Did:** Alumni are important at Camp Alonim! The Alonim Advisory Board has an Alumni Engagement and Stewardship committee that plans two events per year on average. In 2023, the committee planned and executed a weekend-long series of activities in celebration of Alonim's 70th anniversary that included a community Shabbat, a Saturday night dinner for adults and a day of family activities on Sunday. Annually, CITs are welcomed back to camp on their 10-year anniversaries for Shabbat with campers and a reunion with fellow CITs. In addition to Shabbat dinner, guests participate in Alonim's beloved Song Session and dancing.

**Key Takeaway:** Invite alumni back to experience the thing they loved most about camp. Create an aspirational arc for your campers where they see themselves coming back for a special reunion as alumni.



## Exercise 2: Audience Segmentation and Prioritization

I. What are the audiences we picked to focus on?

**By Program:** *Examples: Main camp, teen program, US or Israel based travel trip*

**By Staff Cohort:** *Examples: Junior counselor program, village or trip supervisor, kitchen, arts and crafts*

**By Age/ Year:** *Are there important time-based benchmarks for camp? For example, a site or new program that opened? More generally, what are the ages of your alumni?*

**Other:** *What are other categories of alumni that might be important for your camp?*

## Part 2: Roadmap to Alumni Engagement

2. Start to prioritize. Go through your lists above and:
  - Circle any groups, up to three examples in each list, who are the most loyal to camp and/or who had the most positive experience
  - Star \* the three in each list that are the largest cohorts
  - Note the overlap. These could be the cohorts on which you focus
  - What about the others that are loyal or sizable? Are those also worth focus?
  
3. Now, reorder the audiences, looking at loyalty, positive experience, and size in the table below. Decide: Who do you want to focus on? List the audiences below.

Priority Audiences	Comments about Loyalty	Comments about Experience	Comments about Size and Scope

4. Next. What can the camp offer each audience? What does each audience have that can benefit camp? What is the overlap between their camp connections and your needs?
  - Could Israel travel trip alumni receive a note every few years encouraging them to talk up your Israel travel trip (and enroll their children in the experience)? Do Israel travel trip alumni need a connection from you in order to be reminded of their connection to Israel?
  - Could waterfront staff alumni be encouraged to contribute to building a new waterfront? And, do waterfront staff alumni want to use their skills in some way in their lives today?
  - Could teen leadership program alumni be encouraged to share a blurb about the program with everyone they know? Do teen leadership program alumni want to be reminded of their leadership lessons—and bring them into their life today?
  - Could camp provide networking opportunities to young alumni just embarking on their careers?

Audience	Specific Ask of This Audience	Other/Additional Asks We Should Make <i>(Example: Everyone should recruit campers, everyone should recruit staff. What does this audience offer?)</i>	What We Can Offer Them

5. Finally, list the audience or audiences that you want to focus on and notes you want to keep about each of them. Put in priority order. List the audience(s) you are thinking about as you use this workbook first.

Audiences	Notes

## Key Strategy: Managing Data

Let's talk data. Whatever segment of your alumni audience you choose, good data can support camp's work.

We know data management can get pushed down the priority list—but it's one of the reasons camps have struggled with ongoing alumni engagement. Remember that good data management takes time. Remember that you are focusing only on the 1 or 2 sub-segments of your data here—you do NOT have to update your entire database. Work through these exercises only with your chosen audience(s) in mind—that will limit the time needed to update your data drastically.  
**YOU CAN DO THIS!**



### Ideally, you want:

- One source of truth for alumni contact information and engagement
- As much **relevant** information about each alumnus as possible

And ideally, this source of truth is a flexible database (not a spreadsheet), which is the best way to store data and update someone's record over years.

A robust database record includes how to reach someone, how they were connected to camp, and how they are currently connected to camp. To update a record:

- You might need to find someone's contact information.
- Or, you might need to determine how they were connected to camp.

If it's not too much, we could even add to this record so that an alumnus has:

- (Approximate) Year of birth
- Prior camp participation: programs, years, staff roles
- Contact information/where they live
- Relationship to other family members:  
Do they have kids?
- Professional background/Role

Ideally, what else would you know about alumni?



Camp  
SpotlightURJ 6 POINTS  
SPORTS ACADEMY

Founded in 2010

**What They Did:** At the most recent Hall of Fame induction, URJ 6 Points Sports Academy invited baseball-focused campers from all 15 years of camp because they were honoring a long-time baseball coach. The key? Having the foresight to tag their camper/alumni data to allow them to segment their data and connect with specific groups of alumni in a way that is relevant to them.

**Key Takeaway:** Think about which alumni might be interested in specific communications, event invitations, or fundraising campaigns in the future; tag/segment your data now to allow you to engage with those groups in a relevant way.

**Your database will always hold more data than you use.** You will have records with no contact information—but that you might update one day. You will have records of former donors that offer history and context for future gifts. Merge records but don't delete! Camp's history is in these records.

Some chunk of the year should be devoted to updating part of the database. You'll always be feeding it year-round, but once or twice a year, assign someone the responsibility of cleaning and seeking more data. Effective alumni engagement will need sharp contact information and information about previous participation. What does this look like? Start by exploring what you have: **Exercise 3: Alumni Data Exploration**, and then move to **Exercise 4: Updating Alumni Data**.

Then, create new capacity by ensuring that you are able to capture data going forward: **Exercise 5: Alumni Data Management**.





## Exercise 3: Alumni Data Exploration

In a great alumni database, we're looking for:

- One source of truth for alumni contact information and engagement
- As much information about each alumnus as possible

NOTE: We're going to call your database that holds alumni records your CRM system, or your "customer relationship management" system. This might be different from the system that manages and holds enrollment data. But it likely holds other records in addition to alumni records — like names of campers' parents, or donors, or community members (or people who are all of these things!). This database should hold everyone with a connection to camp — anyone who, if cultivated effectively, could give their time, talents, or treasure to camp.

Where to start?

### Step 1: Assessment

Build a basic understanding of camp's current knowledge about its alumni. Camp may have so many records that it's hard to count exactly, but the chart below asks camp to generalize about this current knowledge.

**TIP**

*Ideally one database would manage enrollment, donor/gift management, and alumni engagement. If your camp has disparate databases, be sure you have a regular process of merging data to keep it up to date. For example, you might move data from your camper management system to your donor/alumni database after each summer.*

	Choose One	Comments
How many total records are in your CRM system?	<input type="checkbox"/> Tens of thousands <input type="checkbox"/> Thousands <input type="checkbox"/> Hundreds	
What percentage are tagged "alumni"?	<input type="checkbox"/> Almost all <input type="checkbox"/> About three-quarters <input type="checkbox"/> About half <input type="checkbox"/> Less than half <input type="checkbox"/> Almost none	
Can you estimate what percent of <i>alumni</i> records have usable and current address information, either an email or snail mail address?	<input type="checkbox"/> Almost all <input type="checkbox"/> About three-quarters <input type="checkbox"/> About half <input type="checkbox"/> Less than half <input type="checkbox"/> Some <input type="checkbox"/> Very few	

	Choose One	Comments
What percent of the records tagged as alumni have the year/s person was at camp?	<input type="checkbox"/> Almost all <input type="checkbox"/> About three-quarters <input type="checkbox"/> About half <input type="checkbox"/> Less than half <input type="checkbox"/> Some <input type="checkbox"/> Very few	
What percent of the records tagged as alumni have the program/s in which the person participated?	<input type="checkbox"/> Almost all <input type="checkbox"/> About three-quarters <input type="checkbox"/> About half <input type="checkbox"/> Less than half <input type="checkbox"/> Almost none	
What percent of the records tagged as alumni have any family relationships?	<input type="checkbox"/> Almost all <input type="checkbox"/> About three-quarters <input type="checkbox"/> About half <input type="checkbox"/> Less than half <input type="checkbox"/> Some <input type="checkbox"/> Very few	
What percent of these people tagged as alumni in the database have at least one point of alumni engagement with camp? (that is, of post-camper engagement)	<input type="checkbox"/> Almost all <input type="checkbox"/> About three-quarters <input type="checkbox"/> About half <input type="checkbox"/> Less than half <input type="checkbox"/> Some <input type="checkbox"/> Very few	If you answered Less than half, Some, or Very few: In your best estimate, is this because they haven't connected with camp since participating as a camper (or staff) or because camp didn't record their engagement?

## Part 2: Roadmap to Alumni Engagement

### Managing Data

	Choose One	Comments
Can you tell which alumni have children? (Are there a lot of records with older people connected to younger people—to campers? Are there tags for children?)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Can you tell which alumni have children attending camp?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	



### Step 1a: Assessment

Share overall reflections of your data. Are they in good shape? OK shape? Terrible shape? Consider who takes responsibility for data maintenance and, more broadly:

What is the one aspect of your data management that is preventing you from moving forward?

Or said differently, what's one new addition that would help advance your data?

### Step 2: Planning

What would it take to make this system and database more robust?

- I. Build a list of tags you should use to track alumni.
  - a. For sure, this includes years (i.e. add year tags to long-ago campers).
  - b. Add a tag for staff. Do you also want a tag for different roles, like specialist (and types of specialist), supervisor, and so on?
  - c. Consider tags for different key programs that camp runs.

Tags:

Track information in your CRM database that you might use in the future for customized event invitations, fundraising appeals, etc. If you will NEVER use that data, don't spend time tracking it. **TIP**

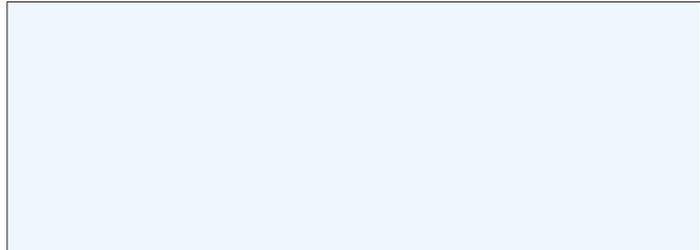
## Part 2: Roadmap to Alumni Engagement

2. Build a list of reports you will want to run. This is directly in response to any goals you will have in contacting and working with people. *Every report you pull should have a goal, a way you will use it.*

Your list might include:

- a. By program
- b. By camper or staff
- c. By geographic location
- d. By demographic characteristic
- e. By year/s of camper participation  
or participation as staff
- f. By tags

Reports:



The key? Make sure the data you're maintaining in your database is useful to your team.

3. Going forward, start to clean your data and be more systematic in identifying what you have and don't have. For example:
  - a. Don't just code generic alumni, but code alumni with year or program identification.
  - b. Do your best to code alumni records with years of birth, or approximate years of birth.
  - c. Do your best to update alumni records with usable contact information. Don't delete records with bad contact information (if something is incomplete or a piece comes back/ bounces back). Instead, mark them "do not mail—bad address," so that you don't waste funds mailing them. Be sure to update this designation when you successfully track down their contact information!
  - d. Merge duplicates, starting with those for whom you have contact information.

**Whew! Take a breath! And get ready for the next steps.**



## Exercise 4: Updating Alumni Data

Assign someone the responsibility of proactively updating data once or twice a year. There are many ways to do this; our full recommendation is as follows.

### Overall

Below, you have the opportunity to decide when you'll update data, who will update, how long you'll take, what data you'll update, and what your goals are. Record your high-level plan here.

	Timing	How Long <i>(The week, a few days, etc):</i>	Audience Segment of Focus	Overall Plan/ Goals <i>Emphasis on either 1) more records or 2) more detailed records</i>	Goal <i>Update or Add this # of records (choose one)</i>
Round 1					<input type="checkbox"/> 10 <input type="checkbox"/> 50 <input type="checkbox"/> 200 <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
Round 2					<input type="checkbox"/> 10 <input type="checkbox"/> 50 <input type="checkbox"/> 200 <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

### Data System

1. First, consider: Who on staff uses alumni information the most? What do they use it for? Describe below; consult them as you go.

## Part 2: Roadmap to Alumni Engagement

- Examine the tags you currently use in your database, such as alumni camper, alumni staff, years of participation, programs in which they participated, and more.
  - List them on the left.
  - Are they the only tags you use regularly? Do you wish you had other tags? List below. If you can, work with your team and database vendor to update the CRM system and update your tracking practices.

Current Tags	Tags We Want

- When will you update the system?  
Ideally, choose two times a year, like February and September (or November and May). List below.

### Data Itself

When it's time to update, use this checklist.

- On what area/s will you focus right now? You might choose an area of focus by considering (approximate) birth year, years of camp participation, or programs in which people participated. If you already prioritized an audience segment, you might focus on that audience(s) here, too, at least for a few update cycles.  
*Of course, you can only use a tag you have! Note as above if you need to build a new tag/set of tags.*

Who will you focus on?

- Run a report of records in the segment/s you've identified. Check out how complete the report is.

a. About how many records have contact information?

Most  More than half  Less than half  almost none

b. About how many records have no contact information?

Most  More than half  Less than half  almost none

c. How complete do you think these records are?

Do you think you have all of this population? Most  Half  Some  Very little

6. Consider all of the information you want for any given alum (approximate birth year, profession, kids/other relationships, programs in which they participated, etc.). How much of this do you have?
  - a. What is more important to camp right now: more alumni records or more detailed information for records you already have?
  - b. Discuss; share notes here, and use this to set your agenda for your work for this round.

7. Now, start to update and add new records! Use any of these tools.

Area of Work	Specific Tasks	When: Timing	Done!
<b>Social Media</b> Poke around on social media for missing information and for shared contacts. Use shared contacts to complete information.	<i>(Example: Identify 20-40 people and look up their records, DM them for contact information)</i>		
<b>Engage Others</b> Engage a collection of known alumni from these segments to do the same, and particularly to message as many people as possible, collecting information.	<i>(Example: Identify 5 people in this audience segment to whom camp can reach out to help—list people and who will reach out)</i>		
<b>Survey</b> Send a short survey—a google form with a few questions—to known alumni in these segments, asking them to share the survey with their contacts who are peers from camp.	<i>(Example: Identify 50 people in this audience segment to whom camp can reach out to help; design survey, etc)</i>		
<b>Use Technology:</b> NCOA (National Change of Address), alumnifinder, etc.			

For more tips and ideas for how to find missing alumni and update outdated contact information, check out Chapters 2 and 3 of the *JCamp 180 Data2Donors* book. You can find it by searching “Data2Donors Book” at [JCamp180.org](http://JCamp180.org).

TIP

Updating database records is painstaking. But, it’s straightforward. It’s about using contacts to find other contacts’ information and consistently tracking new information you receive in your database..



## Exercise 5: Alumni Data Management

There is a lot that will go into improving your data—that is, into collecting more data. Right now, we want to make sure that camp has a strong process for data management. When you have a piece of alumni information, where does it go?

That being said, this worksheet does a few things:

- It describes leading practices in data management, particularly as related to alumni data
- It offers you an opportunity to consider the opportunities for data collection and how camp’s infrastructure might support this work

Are there other common touchpoints that may lead to updated alumni data? Add them as new rows in the table below.

For many of these practices, document the process very clearly so that anyone who uses the database now and in the future knows how to accurately update the database when each situation occurs. You can find “Sample Documented Data Standards” to get started on the JCamp 180 website.

**TIP**  
If you have someone who can devote a lot of time to this process, you can find detailed ideas for finding and cleaning up alumni data in Chapters 1-3 of the “Data2Donors Course Book” on the JCamp 180 website.

Leading Practice	Who Is Responsible?	Who Could Be Responsible? <i>This could be a professional or a volunteer.</i>
Ensure that the camper enrollment form asks if parents/guardians are camp alumni <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• And what year the parents/guardians went to/worked at camp</li> <li>• And what programs they participated in/worked at</li> </ul> Move data from the camper enrollment form to the alumni database/ CRM system <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update camper parents’ records in the CRM with this new data</li> </ul>		
If someone calls to share information, update or create a CRM record		
If someone completes the website form, indicating that they want camp’s stakeholder newsletter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the website form asks alumni about program participation and years at camp</li> <li>• Update or create a CRM record when someone fills out the form</li> </ul>		

Leading Practice	Who Is Responsible?	Who Could Be Responsible? <i>This could be a professional or a volunteer.</i>
Make sure event registration (even or especially for fundraising events!) asks about alumni status; update/create records in the CRM		
Ask periodically on social media for alumni information updates; create community engagement tools on social media to entice follow-through: what's in it for them?		
Learn how to create/pull reports on relevant data segments; determine when to run these reports and what to do with what you learn		



In an ideal world, camp's enrollment system would feed directly into camp's CRM system. But (as you probably know) there are no systems that manage enrollment, donor engagement, and alumni engagement well.

If camp's enrollment system and CRM system are different, make sure to schedule (make yourself a calendar invite!) a transfer of all summer (and year-round!) program enrollment data into camp's CRM system. In its enrollment data, camp has fresh alumni data available every summer. Make sure camp takes advantage of it by storing it in the right place.



## **Key Strategy:** Focus on the Transition

In truth, an alumni journey begins long before campers and counselors are alumni. Campers are captive in their last years of camp, and many campers in their last years — and certainly camp staff — have been part of the community for repeated summers. Camp has ample opportunity and reason to begin a conversation with camp people about their future camp connections. They'll envision the connection they might have and from that vision, they'll be more likely later to say yes.

If camp has focused on alumni audiences that have long since graduated, that's OK. This work with current campers is another opportunity that camp can develop when it has capacity. The conversation with current campers can be layered, multifaceted—that is, camp can start with just one mention and can expand these opportunities over time.

These layers are critical—because campers who prepare to be alumni are campers who carry camp's strategy through the world. They are camp's best success. It isn't just that camp asks them to imagine working there in their twenties, or serving on the young alumni board, or sending their children. It's that in a best case scenario, camp activates all campers to be agents of the camp's mission throughout their lives.

Check out **Exercise 6: Camp's Identity (Alumni in the World)**.



**“It felt like no time had passed”**

*— an attendee at his 25-year reunion at Camp Ramah in Wisconsin*



## Exercise 6: Camp's Identity (Alumni in the World)

Unlike the previous exercises, this piece will be best worked on and through by a group of people. That group could be:

- Camp's professional program team
- A committee of the board
- The board itself
- Or even a group of alumni—or counselors—who are your best exemplars of camp

That group should work through #1-3 below in a facilitated meeting.

The information will likely then be used by your program team as they work through #4 below.

1. There are lots of camps, many with similar missions. Why does yours exist?

- Can you differentiate how an experience at your camp is different from an experience at a neighbor camp?  
**What makes your camp truly unique?**

2. When is camp at its best?

- Can you describe any specific camper behaviors that show your camp at its best? This is probably stories of campers or even counselors. Consider: what did they do or how did they act because of camp?

3. Brand "pillars" are generally known to include Purpose, Personality, Position, and Promotion. Can you build out what each of these look like for camp?

- **Purpose:** Why your camp exists: A short phrase about what camp stands for.

- **Personality:** Voice and feel that make camp unique, likely adjectives.

## Part 2: Roadmap to Alumni Engagement

- **Position:** Where camp sits vis-à-vis other camps.

- **Promotion:** Long term goals, possibly descriptions of what the world looks like because you exist.

4. All of this should inform your campers' and counselors' last experiences at camp.

- Can you turn camp's identity, its unique value, into some **culminating programs that they experience before they leave?**

- How can this identity inform your **first communications with them as they move from camper or staff to alumni?**

- How can you implant this identity into your campers as a kind of beacon or **touchstone** for them—or a blessing that they carry with them?

These are powerful conversations about camp's very essence. The exercise recommends four conversations. The fourth outlines ways to remind campers who they can and will be because of camp. This opportunity roots alumni activities in camp's special sauce and in its very purpose. This work moves alumni work from being about what alumni give to camp to being about what alumni once gained and always gain from camp.

Use the exercise to take these steps:

- Two years and then a year before they're eligible to be counselors, create an opportunity while campers are still in their program
- When campers are eligible for their first counselor year, connect with them; send messages while they are in their counselor years (even if they aren't working)
- Then begin to organize them immediately, when they're just beyond camp: The day after camp ends is the time when a young staffer feels most connected to camp!

#### **DON'T** focus on:



*What Alumni  
give to camp*

#### **DO** focus on:



*What alumni  
gained from  
camp; what they  
can continue to  
gain from camp*



## Key Strategy: It's All About the Relationships

Remember Malcom Gladwell's *The Tipping Point* (2000)? He wrote about Connectors, people who naturally know everyone and have no qualms about reaching out to them with a connection. Whether camp is updating alumni records or building alumni events, everything starts with a Connector.

Consider the people you know who know everyone in your community. These are the people who seem to be at the center of different social networks. They might be involved in the Federation or in other Jewish agencies, at the center of different school parent communities, connected to country clubs or to the JCC, and so on. If they went to camp, they are your people.

For every alumni audience segment camp is striving to reach:

- Start by finding Connectors. At first, forget about when they went to camp, but instead consider Connectors at different ages and stages. Look for twenty-somethings, new parents, parents of teens, and empty nesters. You want a handful of people (5 to 10 people) who just seem to know everyone.
  - Feel free to use your own networks to figure this out. Sit with board members and brainstorm. Or, sit with a few Connectors and brainstorm about other Connectors whom they know.
- Reach out to these Connectors, let them know what your goals are re: camp and ask them if they'd be willing to help.
- Sit with each Connector and go through alumni. What you want from them is dependent on what you have. See **Exercise 7: Connectors** for specific things to review together.
- If camp is focused on updating records, camp might find at least one alum from a series of important programs, from a series of years (example: an Israel trip alumnus from the years 1990-1998). Reach out to these alumni: Do they remember all of the participants from their program?
- If camp is focused on building relationships and on alumni program, reach out to these alumni for coffee, lunch, or a video call. Learn more about their experiences and about what camp was like then. Understand their current relationship with camp and how they might be engaged going forward.

**TIP**  
“Going through existing peer networks is the most effective way to get people to do things. For maximum engagement, we work through existing networks and we invest in a few engaged leaders.”  
Schusterman Foundation Alumni Playbook<sup>2</sup>

**A “Connector” is that person who seems to know everyone.**

.....  
**Camp is building on these Connectors' love of people, gregariousness, and love of camp.**  
.....

For the work above and the work below, check out **Exercise 7: Connectors**.

<sup>2</sup> Published 2015



## Exercise 7: Connectors

### Identify and Reach Out to Connectors

Audience segment:  *(Name the audience segment you're focusing on right now.)*

Brainstorm the Connectors you know.

- Who knows a lot of camp people, period? Name them here.

- Check in with these people. Who do they know (in the audience segment you're focusing on) who is a Connector, who knows everyone and is good at maintaining relationships? Name them here.

- Each of these Connectors needs personal outreach—a meeting/ phone call or an in-person date. Together, you'll review:
  - Their phone, Facebook, and LinkedIn contacts. Who in their directories went to or worked at camp? Can you use their knowledge to complete records in the camp's CRM system?
  - Other Connectors they know
- Feel free to print a list of alumni and bring it with you to a conversation. Complete as much information as possible in different alumni records, especially contact information. Be sure to enter the updates in your database!
- Are they willing to engage more—more frequently, more deeply—with camp to help build your community and lists? For example, could they help as an ambassador, sharing camp news and opportunities with their networks?
- Would a formal Connector committee be an effective way to engage your Connectors?  (Y/N)

**If no**, how will we engage Connectors regularly?

- Who will take responsibility for ongoing outreach?
- How will they contribute to different opportunities? Who will ask them to do what?  
(Can you map this out formally?)

- What will a series of engagements with camp look like?

## Part 2: Roadmap to Alumni Engagement

- Who is taking responsibility for this outreach?

Potential Connector	Person Taking Responsibility

### Take some next steps:

1. Formalize the engagement of these Connectors by creating (or growing) an alumni committee. Ask them to help camp brainstorm about alumni engagement, and engage them as hosts of events and connectors to others at key moments for camp.
2. Whether or not they are a committee that meets to shape alumni engagement, ask Connectors to be camp ambassadors, who bring news of camp's growth and needs to their peers.
3. Keep Connectors engaged. Send them notes with news of camp's growth. Call ad-hoc meetings to get their feedback. Ask them to take on responsibility when alumni events arise. **Cultivate and steward these volunteers like donors.**

Connectors, particularly those recruited strategically from diverse camp networks, are leverage for greater alumni engagement. Build those relationships, and their networks will lead camp to more.

## Key Strategy: Engaging Alumni in Camp Experiences

In the past sections, camp identified:

- Camp's chosen alumni audience segment on which to focus
- A few key Connectors in that audience segment who can be engaged to contact others
- A plan to update camp's CRM data for this particular audience segment

Onward! Use that contact information to engage the prioritized audience.

At the 2023 JCamp 180 conference, we learned the “heartbeat” framework for engagement, which means:

- Focusing on a person's journey through camp and its community, rather than on programs
- Weaving together **small beats** of ongoing connection and relationship building with large **programmatically beats** into a comprehensive journey
- Ensuring that we connect with people, that those small heartbeats are plentiful and meaningful.



### Larger experiences and planned gatherings

These can also be “relationalized” and deepen engagement and belonging



### Relational work happens in between programmatic offerings

Lasts longer—more ongoing and connects larger experiences to one another

## Part 2: Roadmap to Alumni Engagement

Engagement is a mindset and a skillset that animates community and builds a deep sense of authentic connection and belonging. It isn't a calendar of programs; it is a people strategy.

A lifelong camp journey involves big and small heartbeats. As people are engaged more, we succeed more, and people give more, creating a virtuous cycle of engagement.

We build a virtuous cycle of engagement through a set of core tools. They can look different: the length or focus of the interaction can shift, but the strategies at the heart of engagement don't change.

These core tools include:

- Bring people to camp
- Bring camp to our people, throughout the year
- Involve people in planning for themselves
- Connect people to each other
- Use swag strategically
- Use light touches (birthday cards, phone calls, texts, lunches) at key moments

Source: 2023 Conference Participants

Using these tools, we build a series of heartbeats, or a climbing tower of engagement, from initial connection, or one summer at camp, to immersion in the organization.

**Camp Spotlight** **CAMP AVODA**

**Founded in 1927**

**What They Did:** The alumni committee at Camp Avoda helps to arrange internships for staff who are on the fence about coming back to camp that summer – they match them with an alum who can offer them a pre-camp internship. The staff members are then able to have the internship experience for 8-12 weeks before coming back to camp for the summer.

**Key Takeaway:** Think creatively about how your alumni can be engaged to help problem solve and add value to your community.





**What does an alumnus' journey look like?**

What do we engage alumni in?

In this context, alumni should get from camp what they've always gotten: belonging, community, connection, and joy, through large and small heartbeats.

The types of things we offer don't need to change across stakeholders...but the details for a specific segment may change. The unique opportunity for alumni is to design specifically for particular audiences: for years (and, therefore, ages and stages) and for graduates of specific programs.

So, we build:

- Moments that play into their specific experience at camp (eg Teen Leadership Program)
- Moments that play into their years at camp (eg 1990s Songleader Reunion)
- Opportunities that play into their camp experiences (eg Give philanthropically to support the restoration of this building, or on "2000s Alumni Giving Day")

**More Examples:**



**Camp Spotlight**

**J CAMP**  
(JCC of Greater KC)



**What They Did:** Every year, J Camp sends Hanukkah cards to recent staff members and invites them to a winter event. The event brings together the day camp alumni to spend time together, play games, enjoy refreshments, and reminisce as they look through years of camp t-shirts and pictures, and chat about their camp experiences. Being in person is a good touchpoint and allows them to have conversations about the upcoming summer with the staff they want to invite back.

**Key Takeaway:** Combine staff recruitment with alumni engagement efforts.

Designed specifically for particular audiences					
Bring people to camp	Bring camp to our people, throughout the year	Involve people in planning for themselves	Connect people to each other	Use swag strategically	Use light touches (birthday cards, phone calls, texts, lunches) at key moments
Examples					
<i>Songleader reunion</i>	<i>Recent teen program alumni nights' out</i>	<i>Alumni Council that oversees alumni outreach by decade</i>	<i>Programming for alumni becoming parents</i>	<i>Staff hats; reissue vintage designs</i>	<i>Text to Connectors from the Director on the opening day of camp.</i>

## Part 2: Roadmap to Alumni Engagement

And remember: Each “big” heartbeat needs smaller heartbeats around it. Camp’s smaller interactions with each audience throughout the year build toward that audience saying yes when they receive an invitation. Calls, texts, notes, birthday cards—all of these quick connections are meaningful when they sew together a larger journey.

These small and big “heartbeats,” points of connection are quick or extensive, cursory or deep, and lead to deeper intertwining with camp. The more that an alum receives, the more they will give, and that will continue year after year.

The next step is to brainstorm small and large heartbeats that comprise an alumnus’ adult journey with camp. Check out [Exercise 8: Alumni Engagement Journeys](#).



### Exercise 8: Alumni Engagement Journeys

Audience segment:

1. Start with goals. For this particular audience segment, what are camp’s goals? What can they contribute to camp? Check off what applies and add to the list.

- They are parents—they can send their children.
- They can work at camp as counselors.
- They can recruit peer counselors and specialists.
- They can work at camp as specialists and professionals: doctors, nurses, therapists, artists-in-residence, educators. (Other: )
- They can give small financial gifts to camp, beginning their years of contribution to camp.
- They can be major donors.
- They can be Legacy donors.
- They can be board members or leaders/volunteers in other ways.
- They can bring camp’s philosophy into the world, particularly as they lead other organizations.
- They can volunteer at a clean up day/weekend.
- They can host Israeli staff.
- They can attend a family camp.
- They can host a Shabbat around the World event during the winter.
- Other:

Choose 2-3 specific goals to focus on right now.

As you go through the rest of this worksheet, use the following chart to take notes.

	Heartbeat (Program or Touchpoint)	Next Step/s with dates	Who's Taking Lead	Who Else Is Involved
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				

2. Brainstorm big heartbeats. Given the goals that camp named, what are the big events and opportunities that a journey might be shaped around? Track in the table above.
- Alumni might be heavily recruited for an event that you're holding. There might be an alumni committee (unique to this audience segment) on which dozens of these alumni sit.
  - Alumni might be welcome at camp for a particular event. They might be involved in planning the event.
  - Alumni might be invited to a study session, or a parlor meeting, or another kind of intimate camp event not on site.

Consider, given your goals:

- What feelings do you want alumni to feel?

## Part 2: Roadmap to Alumni Engagement

- What actions should alumni take toward your goals?

- What points of engagement do you need them to take that will lead them to the big step?

- How does this event or opportunity move alumni toward your goals? **What has to happen prior to the event and what follow-up needs to happen?**

Choose a few heartbeats to focus on that will get you to your specific goals with this audience.

Next, think through (and document in the table above):

What are the next steps?

Who is responsible for these next steps?

When will you meet next?

**3.** Now, similarly, brainstorm small heartbeats (and track in the table above):

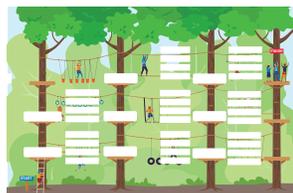
- Does camp send birthday cards? Anniversary cards? Camp anniversary cards? Does camp have this data?
  - Can and should a special campaign be held to collect this data?
  - Who (lay or professional) could be responsible for sending these cards?

- Does camp’s year-round team reach out to Connectors among this audience, to say hi or for an occasional lunch?
- Can camp’s team convene these alumni for occasional special briefings?

- Can alumni receive special swag, at the beginning or end of summer? How can alumni from this section be featured in camp’s materials? How can camp tell more stories of alumni—and, particularly, of what they have done in the world with their camp experience?

- What events already exist into which alumni can be integrated?
  - When camp honors parents, can camp honor alumni parents in a particular way?
  - What about alumni board members?
  - At Federation’s annual meeting, does it make sense to give alumni a special ribbon? Or at camp’s national convention? (More generally, how can camp honor alumni in the general community?)

**3.** Check out the graphic of the climbing tower on the following page. If helpful, use it to scratch out a journey for these alumni. Help them get to the goal, rung to rung.



**Camp Spotlight**

**CAMP HAVAYA**

**CAMP HAVAYA** BE YOU, BOLDLY

Around Jewish holidays, Camp Havaya invites major donors and key camp stakeholders to explore the holiday with the camp director. These Zoom-based conversations, over Jewish texts, help camp bring its philosophy to its audience even beyond summer.

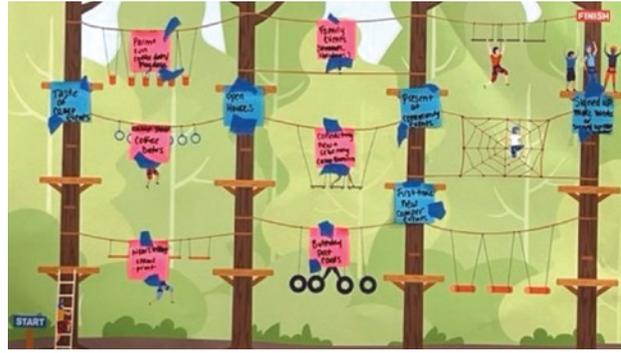


START

FINISH

[Blank white box]

## Part 2: Roadmap to Alumni Engagement



Camp Deeny Riback built a journey exactly unique to their camp, integrating parent moments into existing program.

### Camp Deeny Riback Jcc Metrowest, Flanders NJ

#### Action Plan

Item	Touchpoints	Owner
Stewardship of families and donors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• birthday/milestone cards</li> <li>• new camper letter from vet. camper</li> <li>• fair note cards</li> <li>• phone call invites to fairs &amp; events</li> <li>• holiday card/gift</li> <li>• pics to families for re-registration</li> <li>• welcome/mid-summer calls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> day coffee</li> <li>• air tags</li> <li>• parenting backpacks</li> <li>• flower planting</li> <li>• communicate/transparency</li> </ul>
Camp Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fall Festival</li> <li>• Reunion - silent disco @ JCC</li> <li>• Log B'Over festival ↳ flower planting</li> <li>• Vacation Camp</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dana</li> <li>• Sarah</li> <li>• Robin</li> <li>• Jay</li> <li>• Shari</li> <li>• Sara</li> </ul>
Leadership Institute for Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empowerment for staff</li> <li>• Donor funded</li> <li>• Staff alumni speakers</li> <li>• stipend for completion</li> <li>• Connecting w/ board members</li> <li>• Utilize parent career Excel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robin</li> <li>• Dana</li> </ul>
Endowments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reengagement... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ texting pics to donors - thank you for helping us... to boiler for to Shabazz</li> <li>◦ Leadership Institute</li> <li>◦ Utilize parent career Excel</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dana</li> </ul>

**Goals:**

- ① gain parent trust and connections
- ② fuller camp
- ③ staff trust and buy-in

**\* We want to fill the piggy banks \***

## Key Strategy: Elevating Alumni as Camp Leaders

The more that camp features alumni as leaders in the camp community, the more that:

- Other alumni will be compelled to do the same
- These alumni will build an adult camp identity, integrated with their memories of camp as a child or young adult
- Camp will have capacity to get work done

And more.

### Alumni can be:

- Appointees to the board or full board members, ideally from different time periods and programs and different geographies
- Committee or task force members/chairs, including alumni committees, event committees, and more
- Authors of columns in camp's newsletter

**Should camp have a full alumni committee?** That's probably a camp by camp decision. The important thing is to choose a structure that will:

- Maximize output from alumni toward recruitment, alumni engagement, and event planning
- Minimize time spent on process for the sake of process
- Help alumni see that their work is valued and worthwhile

A committee may require too much work—or, it might be exactly the structure that will help alumni motivate each other.



**Camp  
Spotlight**

**CAMP  
RAMAH  
IN THE  
ROCKIES**



**Founded in 2010**

**What They Did:** Every year, Camp Ramah in the Rockies CITs vote for two among them to join the board for one-year terms as non-voting members. The two members receive the same information as board members (including financials) and they show up to everything (including meetings) because they consider it a big responsibility. They see the inner workings of the organization, and learning about board service is part of their leadership training as CITs. The hope is for some of them to come back to the board as future leaders.

**Key Takeaway:** Provide training and experiences for your campers to help them understand how they can be involved in the future as alumni.

## Part 2: Roadmap to Alumni Engagement

Regardless of whether or not there is a full committee, camp will gain by repeating “alumni” as much as possible, generally by integrating alumni into every communications opportunity. Add “alumni representative” to as many camp structures as possible. Share the stories of those alumni representatives. Use these as examples of what is possible; these titles and stories will inspire others.

Camp  
Spotlight

URJ 6  
POINTS  
SCI-TECH  
ACADEMY



**Founded in 2014**

**What They Did:** URJ 6 Points Sci-Tech Academy has a very active alumni committee, full of folks who are invested in helping camp, including alumni engagement. The professional staff has given the committee real responsibility in alumni engagement – both because they trust the committee to follow through and they don’t have the bandwidth to do it themselves. The camp scheduled their alumni day the same weekend that the committee was having their board meeting/retreat so that the committee members could experience the event they planned and help out where needed.

**Key Takeaway:** Tap into your volunteers, especially if you can’t prioritize this work among the professional staff. It is crucial to find devoted alumni volunteers you can trust.



## Should camp create an Alumni Association?

**Yes — but also maybe not.**

Let's say that alumni associations have a few key attributes:

- A membership fee
- Dispersed networks throughout the world
- Officers or chairs who manage these networks
- Programs unique to these networks

Of these elements, what's helpful for summer camps?

- The concept of officers or chairs. An official title isn't the key, but the awarding of responsibility is. When people have responsibility, when they have been appointed, they show up more deeply. They get more done.
- Similarly, the concept of dispersed networks can be useful. Dispersed networks are the way to engage multiple audience segments at once. Camp can have a geographically-based alumni network, a 1990s Alumni Club, a network for previous nature staff, and so on. Alumni could belong to the association, and affiliate with a particular network (or two!).
- If camp has capacity to support these chairs, these smaller networks could have rotating chairs who create outreach to each network, including notes with updates on fellow alumni and programs. If camp doesn't have capacity, camp could engage one person from each network occasionally in reaching out to their peers. Ad-hoc or occasional leadership is better than none at all.
- Is an alumni association fee necessary? No—it feels like a boundary that we don't need. At the same time, camp can be creative with that fee. What about a special piece of swag to every \$50 alumni donor, one that says "Forever a Part of CAMP NAME" (or something more clever)? Or a giving competition among alumni networks, where they engage their peers to connect with and give to camp (getting camp even more contact information!)?

An alumni association is a great idea. It creates deep engagement for many. But it can be a lot to manage. And, most important, camp can borrow from the concept of an alumni association without maintaining a formal association.

Start to think through some of these opportunities with **Exercise 9: Alumni as Camp Leaders**.



Camp  
Spotlight

**SURPRISE  
LAKE  
CAMP**



**Founded in 1902**

**What They Did:** Surprise Lake Camp has an alumni association that is led by an alumni board, which is separate from their general board. The alumni board hosts events throughout the year, including an alumni day at camp that happens over the summer – coordinated with a day that some campers are off site to accommodate the 300 people that attend. SLC is a long-running camp with many multi-generational families; alumni day isn't overly programmed – it feels like you're going to a family reunion.

**Key Takeaway:** SLC's separate alumni board/association works for them. What is the right structure for your camp?



## **Exercise 9: Alumni as Camp Leaders**

Camp has the opportunity to engage alumni in all kinds of roles and with diverse responsibilities.

Here, camp might think through some of the most significant decisions:

- Where can camp engage alumni in concrete, ongoing leadership roles?
- Should camp establish a standing alumni association?

### **1. Alumni Board Seats**

Given how your board is structured, what are the opportunities to appoint alumni to the board in special seats?

What could young alumni add? What are the pros and cons of adding young alumni?

What about alumni from different eras, different decades? How many different seats could you add in order to represent a full spectrum of alumni — and what are the pros and cons of adding these different seats?

What would the criteria be for these board seats? How would you solicit nominees?

Would the board members have unique responsibilities? What might they be?

### **2. Alumni Committee**

Given how your board and lay roles are structured, who does (or should) take on lay responsibility for engaging alumni?

Can the board and/or a professional support a standing committee? Does camp have the capacity to do so?

Would a committee add value to camp? What would the committee do in its first month, three months, six months, and year?

### 3. Alumni Association

How much capacity would an alumni association add to camp? What is camp's current alumni engagement structure? Do alumni take any responsibility for engaging their peers? Does camp have any formal ways to engage alumni?

How much capacity would it take to facilitate an alumni association? How much support would the alumni need? Does camp have a professional who can staff the association as a portion of their responsibilities? How could the association be connected to the board and other standing camp infrastructure?

What value could an alumni association add to camp's assets? Would it be a helpful fundraising tool, or helpful in bringing people to camp?

How could an alumni association be promoted by camp? Where would it be featured? How would the word get out?

Does camp have some alumni who might be the association's first chairs? How would camp build its infrastructure—and would that infrastructure then build its own momentum?

With these questions in mind, consider your next steps in engaging alumni as camp leaders:

1. What structures would most benefit your camp and alumni? Alumni Association, Alumni Committee, or Other?

2. Who will be ultimately responsible for creating or refocusing the ideal structure?

3. What are the next steps in developing opportunities for engaging alumni as camp leaders? Include due dates and specific goals.

## Key Strategy: Focus on Philanthropy

What if every camp alumnus gave camp \$18 every year for the duration of their lives?

And, what would you do if that was a goal? How would you approach campers, the camp-to-alum transition, and alumni? What would you shift, add, or expand if this were a goal?

And, how do you build your camp's culture of philanthropy while everyone is at camp and throughout their lives? Take some time to think that through with a team using [Exercise 10: Philanthropy](#).

Alumni giving is rooted in the same opportunities in which all giving is rooted. In other words:

- Alumni give when asked and when cultivated. They should be integrated into any camp fundraising campaigns.
- The more personal the campaign, the more likely alumni will give: They will give most significantly when the campaign means something to them.
- Those with the potential to give a major gift or a Legacy gift should also be integrated into those campaigns. They will be most likely to give if a peer contacts them—a fellow camper, or a camper from their general era.

At the same time:

- Alumni relationships will deepen all giving. Activated alumni, who feel truly inside of camp's news and opportunities, will solicit successfully on behalf of camp.
- Alumni can be targeted with special campaigns. Alumni chairs from the '80s can chair an '80s campaign, and so on.
- Alumni can be introduced to giving when they are campers and, certainly, immediately when they become alumni. Philanthropic activities can be integrated into current camp programming, with thank you cards and videos to donors, with fundraising for certain projects at camp, and so on.
- Special annual events targeted at a particular group of alumni (all 20 year graduates, an audience that shifts every year) can encourage Legacy gifts. Camp can have a routine, presenting alumni gifts to a particular audience at a particular time of their post-camp journey.

Camp Spotlight **CAMP SABRA**



**Camp Sabra**  
STAENBERG PENINSULA  
LAKE OF THE OZARKS

**Founded in 1938** as Camp Hawthorn (1970 was the first year of Camp Sabra at its current site)

**What They Did:** “Sabra Campers Give Back” was a campaign that invited all campers to participate in raising funds for Camp Sabra. The goals: help campers understand that they have agency to change their world; demonstrate that campers don't need organizational leaders or their parents to take action; and create a culture of annual giving to (and asking for!) camp. Each camper parent was sent a letter in the spring, asking if their children wanted to participate and also asking them not to give funds directly to their children. With their permission, letters were sent to campers directly, reviewing how to solicit and suggesting that they set an individual goal (\$18). Over three weeks, a different letter was sent to the campers with ideas for raising funds connected to one of the camp's values. The result? In addition to developing a culture of philanthropy among campers, 30 campers raised \$2800 and, with a donor match, raised almost \$6000.

**Key Takeaway:** Early campaigns can help campers begin to understand the importance of philanthropy at camp and develop a culture of giving to camp that will hopefully continue as alumni.



## Exercise 10: Philanthropy

This exercise aims to help camp consider philanthropy through the lens of alumni engagement and foster a culture of philanthropy.

Generally, alumni should be:

- Cultivated as all camp stakeholders are, through a regular camp newsletter, social media, and so on
- Solicited at key times via general mail/email using messaging that will resonate with alumni
- Identified for potential major giving, as relevant for each individual alumnus

That being said, there are several unique strategies to help alumni respond when they are called. With the right preparation and culture, camps can aim for every alumnus donating to camp, beginning as early as possible in their tenure as alumni. This worksheet aims to help camp think these strategies through.

Alumni should be:

- Exposed early to philanthropy, engaged as campers and counselors. They might make thank you calls, write postcards from camp, and help greet visitors to camp (during the summer and year-round).
- Invited one-on-one to be engaged in philanthropy, as solicitors, committee chairs, event planners, or volunteers working directly in outreach.
- Honored, with their stories (about the impact of camp on their lives and their giving) told online, as part of social media campaigns, and generally as part of communications.

Take some time now to think through the coming year.

Where can you add opportunities for campers and counselors to become engaged with donors?

Writing/creating thank yous:

With visitors to camp:

Making phone calls:

Other?

What events do you have in the coming year in which alumni can be engaged?

Philanthropic events:

General events:

## Part 2: Roadmap to Alumni Engagement

### Focus on Philanthropy

Who comes to mind? Who might be right for any of these events? What role can they play in the events?

What communications exist into which alumni stories can be integrated?

What are the next steps in improving engagement of alumni in philanthropy at camp?

Task/Goal	Person Responsible	Next Steps	Due Date

Your camp has the opportunity this summer to begin to plant seeds as part of building its culture of philanthropy: that graduating campers can be philanthropists with camp as the recipient, that just graduated campers and counselors can pay it forward and begin a life of service by giving to camp, and so on. The annual \$18 donor is not out of reach.

Camp  
Spotlight

## URJ CAMP KALSMAN

**Founded in 2007**

**What They Did:** In the past, URJ Camp Kalsman held separate Donor Shabbat and Alumni Shabbat events. In recent years, they began combining the two, offering two community Shabbatot throughout the summer. These events welcomed over 125 visitors, spanning a wide range of ages. No fundraising asks are made during the events. By providing an opportunity for attendees to reconnect with Kalsman friends—old and new—and experience the magic of Community Shabbat, participants deepen their bond with the camp and its community. As a result, many leave more engaged and committed to the camp's future.

**Key Takeaway:** An important piece of alumni engagement is to include alumni of all ages in community engagement events. The more space we make for alumni voices, the more we can provide meaningful experiences that deepen their connection to camp and ensure a strong future for years to come.

Camp  
Spotlight

## IN THE CITY CAMPS

**Founded in 2012**

**What They Did:** At In the City Camps (ITC), our staff don't just work a summer job—they become part of a lifelong community. Many of our former staff have pursued careers in education, leveraging the connections and leadership skills they developed at camp. Their networks are invaluable in recruiting the next generation of passionate, dedicated staff members. Our commitment to our staff extends beyond their time at camp. Those who demonstrate strong work ethic and leadership can rely on ITC as a professional reference, helping to launch their careers. But our relationship is more than transactional—it's about giving back. We instill in our staff the value of paying it forward, just as camp has given to them. Each year, we ask them to contribute a small, symbolic \$18 gift, reinforcing the idea that sustaining ITC is a shared responsibility. Over time, this act of giving becomes second nature—because being part of In the City Camps means investing in its future.

**Key Takeaway:** Your alumni are your greatest asset. Engage them, empower them, and inspire them to recruit future staff while fostering a culture of giving that ensures your camp's legacy for generations to come.

## Part 3: What do I do Now?



So, you read this through, and then you read it again. You have a lot of notes. What are your next steps?

Summarize all of your plans in the **Alumni Engagement Plan Poster** (that can be pulled out of this workbook). Consider the key strategies you reviewed throughout the workbook. Focus on concrete action steps and accountability. Who will do what, when? **Post the completed poster where team members can view it regularly.**

Ask yourself, when will you regroup? Keep a focused calendar of next meetings so that everyone has a due date and this can't fall to the bottom of the pile. The key thing is for someone to manage this "project" as a priority - keeping track of next steps and progress. And remember: start with a small sub-segment of alumni first to keep it manageable and not let it fall through the cracks.

As a professional or a layperson, consider camp's capacity. Who is responsible for alumni engagement? Create a structure for accountability:

- A lead professional, even if it is 5-10% of their time
- Their supervisor
- A lead layperson with board engagement
- A full alumni engagement committee that reports to the board (replete with alumni!)
- A clear and written connection between alumni engagement and the current strategic goals for camp (Do you have a strategic plan? Annual goals? A five year set of tactics to accomplish? Make it clear how alumni engagement fits into these goals.)

**Camp**  
Alumni Engagement Plan for Year

**Focus Audience:**  
Long-term goals for this audience:  
A year from now, what successes might you have in engaging this audience?  
Where has everyone that you engaged of your specified demographics?

**Data**  
Status of our alumni data for this audience:  
Estimated # of people who are in this audience in total  
Estimated # of people in this audience who are in the database  
Estimate how many of the records for this audience in the database have usable first names and last names, other email or social media address  
@ Smartphone @ Primary device host @ Next best data for updating data  
Who is responsible for this work?

**Connectors**  
List any Connectors - people who have overlap with camp - who are in this audience segment or otherwise a lot of groups in this segment. Also include what each Connector could offer:  
Connector: What can this Connector offer? Who will reach out to this Connector?

**Audience Engagement**  
Get specific. Alumni engagement averaged for next 6 months:  
What would you like this audience to contribute to camp in the short, medium or long term?  
What can camp offer this audience? How will camp engage them? (Other, specifically, will happen and specific time frame that may meet the needs of the audience in the year)

Next Step (Program or Task): Next Steps with dates: Who's Taking Lead: Who Else is Involved

© Camp

**Good luck engaging your alumni, one segment at a time!**

## Appendix

You can find a downloadable version of this workbook, the associated poster, and other related resources on our website at [jcamp180.org/alumni-engagement-workbook](http://jcamp180.org/alumni-engagement-workbook) or this QR Code.



JCamp 180 invests in the long-term organizational effectiveness and financial sustainability of nonprofit Jewish overnight and day camps to ensure our community's future and connection to Judaism. JCamp 180 envisions a world where Jews live more Jewishly because of their transformative camp experiences.

