

President’s Blog Launch Guide

Instructions

Mid-level donors often seek enhanced access to senior leaders. A presidential blog can meet this need easily and with little time commitment from the president. Follow these steps to launch a blog that effectively stewards donors.

Step 1: Select a Blog Manager

Although the president will be the face of the blog, another staff member must take ownership of coordinating and editing posts, drafting posts when the president is busy, and managing comments on posts. Use the checklist below to identify an ideal blog manager.

Blog Manager Candidate Checklist

	Attributes of Blog Manager
	Access to president
	Point of contact with donors
	Experience with stewardship
	Strong writing skills

Potential Blog Managers

- Leadership society director
- Stewardship manager
- Director of the annual fund

Step 2: Set Minimum Gift Level for Access

Establish a minimum dollar amount that will grant donors access to the president’s blog. An ideal minimum gift level will alleviate a pain point in the giving pyramid where donors upgrade slowly or not at all. Use the questions below to identify a minimum gift that will deflect giving behaviors.

- What giving tiers are already established?

- At which giving levels are a large number of donors currently parked?

- Which giving levels are you trying to move donors toward?

- Which giving level currently lacks strong stewardship initiatives? Which level does not receive the attention it deserves due to problems of scale?

- Which giving level is characterized by low satisfaction scores in donor surveys?

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

President's Blog Launch Guide (cont.)

Step 3: Finalize Logistics

Set the groundwork for a sustainable initiative by working through key logistical matters ahead of time. Answer the following questions for various aspects of the blog process.



Password Log Ins

- How will passwords be delivered to donors (e.g., by email, in leadership society welcome packet, etc.)?
- Will donors have a single sign-on option that links with their Facebook or email account?



Editing Process

- Who will edit each post?
- What are the criteria this individual should use to edit each post?



Posting Calendar

- How frequently will blog posts be published?
- How will posts align with other donor communications or events?

Step 4: Determine Content

Blogs posts should draw in readers and give them a feeling of insider access. Determine topics using the following criteria.



Board-Level Topics

Identify topics that might be presented to a board member or trustee



Uniquely Presidential

Consider topics in which there is deep and unique value in hearing the president's point of view



High Alumni Interest

Track blog post views, review donor surveys, and consult with alumni relations to identify topics most interesting to alumni

Example Titles from Ithaca College's President's Blog

- "I Do Not Invest in Buildings—I Invest in People"
- "Seeing the Future in a Moment of Darkness"
- "Learning from Tragedy"

President's Blog Launch Guide (cont.)

Step 5: Market and Brand the Blog

Eligible donors must know they have access to the blog—and they must know that access is exclusive. Set the groundwork for a sustainable initiative by developing strong marketing and branding initiatives.

Potential Marketing Pushes

- Email blast to all eligible donors introducing the blog
- Email blasts to all eligible donors for each blog post
- Personalized emails from MGOs to high-touch donors
- Inclusion of upcoming blog post topics in newsletters or other standard communications

Branding Techniques from Ithaca College's President's Blog

The screenshot shows the Ithaca College website's President's Blog. The header includes the Ithaca College logo and navigation links: Apply Now, Site Index, Directories, and a search bar. A breadcrumb trail reads: Ithaca College » Alumni, Parents, and Friends » Giving to IC » President's Associates » Exclusively for President's Associates. The main content area is titled 'Blog' and features a post titled 'Among Leaders' by Tom Rochon. The post description states: 'A forum for the exchange of thoughts among a community of leaders, guided by Tom Rochon's insights into the moments that shape the Ithaca College experience.' The post is dated Monday, November 18, 2013, and is titled 'Student for a Day'. It was posted by Thomas Rochon at 1:50PM and has 3 comments. The post content begins with: 'One of my greatest pleasures is to meet with small groups of students to hear their thoughts about life at Ithaca College. It is probably a good practice for the CEO of any organization to listen carefully to its customers, and I suppose that is what I am doing. But the joy in the exercise comes from the fact that IC students are not just customers in the normal sense of the word. The campus is their home; their fellow students are their closest friends; the faculty are their mentors and the staff are their guides. The entire residential college experience is closely bound up in who they are and whom they hope to become.'

Annotations on the left side of the screenshot:

- Title focuses on exclusivity and access: Points to the breadcrumb trail 'Exclusively for President's Associates'.
- Blog links to other exclusive opportunities: Points to the sidebar menu items 'Upcoming Events', 'Webcast with President Rochon', and 'Survey Results'.

Annotations on the right side of the screenshot:

- Description highlights President's unique insights: Points to the post description 'A forum for the exchange of thoughts among a community of leaders...'.
- Post is directly from President's account: Points to the post title 'Student for a Day' and the author 'Posted by Thomas Rochon'.

Step 6: Add Value for Donors Through Comment Thread Discussions

Continue the discussion by allowing donors to comment on blog posts. Add an additional level of stewardship by addressing donor comments. The blog manager should shift through comments and divide them into three categories.

- 1 Comments that do not require a response
- 2 Comments to be addressed by the President
- 3 Comments from top donors that should be addressed by their MGO

Source: Image courtesy of Ithaca College, EAB interviews and analysis.