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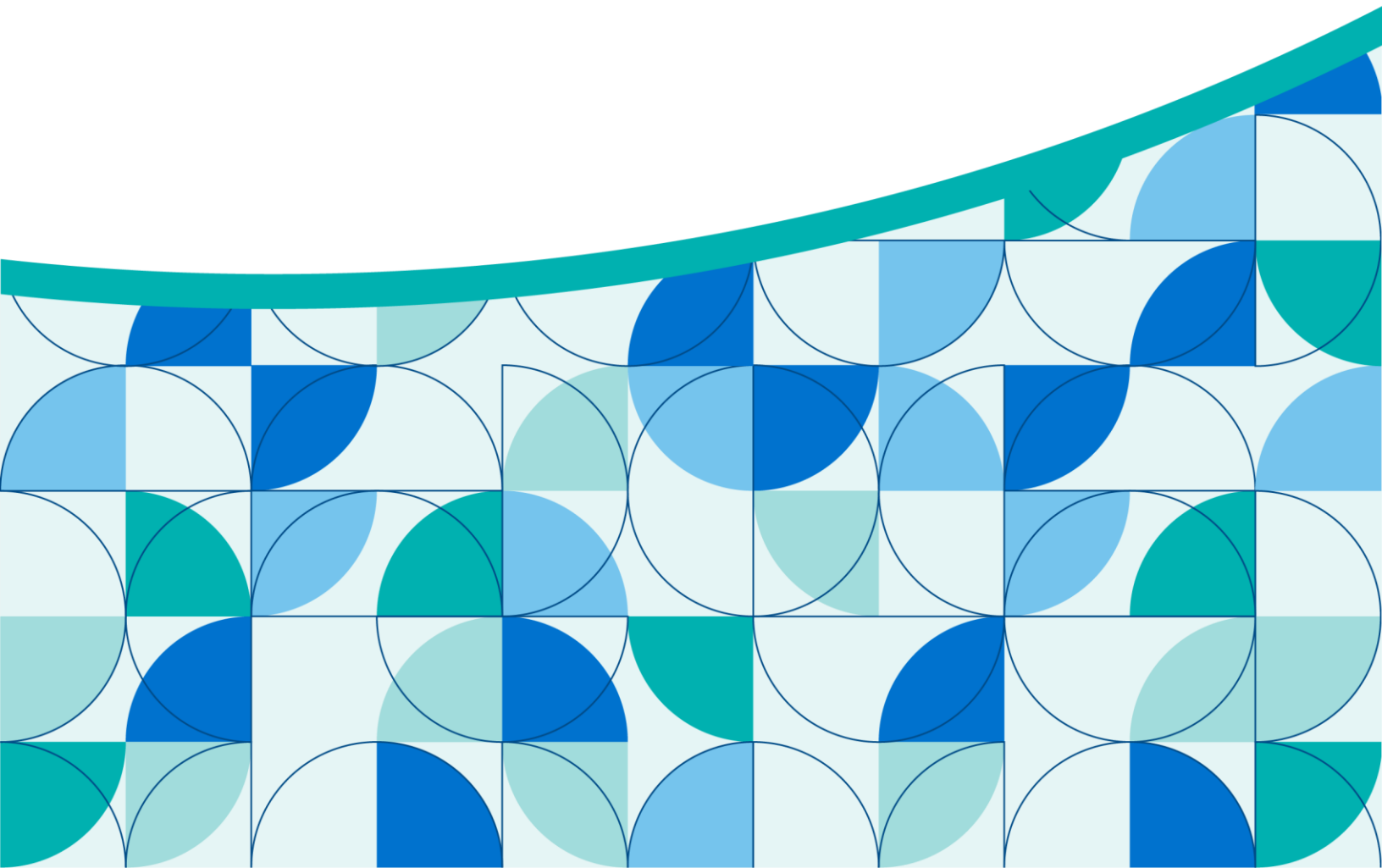
5 Reasons Advancement Leaders Must Prioritize Data

Insight Brief for Advancement Leaders

5 Reasons Advancement Leaders Must Prioritize Data

In recent years, shifts in donor behavior, the emergence of new technologies, economic fluctuations, and changing perceptions of higher education have presented both challenges and opportunities for institutions. Advancement leaders must prioritize data to address these changes and build a more successful fundraising program in this new era of advancement. **This insight brief explores five reasons to prioritize data and key considerations for advancement leaders.**

1 (Re)connect with lost or unlisted alumni.

Your alumni are invaluable assets for fundraising and program support. However, institutions often encounter challenges in maintaining accurate and comprehensive alumni databases. Over time, contact information may become outdated, or alumni may disengage from your institution.

Advanced data matching algorithms help identify incomplete, outdated, or unknown alumni records by cross-referencing known data points with external consumer databases, similar audience profiles, and users on social media platforms. By using the information you know about alumni, you can track and locate lost or unlisted alumni on digital channels.

Challenge

43% of alumni are not connected to their alma mater at all…

Opportunity

but *85%* of them can be reached via a digital strategy.

Using data from your known alumni can help you find digital media users who share similar traits (location, education, demographic, etc.).

2 Ensure you are focused on the right individuals.

Maximizing fundraising efforts amidst limited resources and increasing competition for donor attention depends on reaching the right audience. Insights from data help to identify potential donors more effectively by analyzing engagement patterns and behaviors from multiple data sources. This means you can prioritize outreach to individuals with the highest likelihood to contribute. Focusing on individuals with a data-proven history of supporting your institution—and discontinuing or adjusting engagement with your less responsive segments—optimizes fundraising efforts and maximizes your budget spend for a greater return on investment.

DATA SOURCES TO CONSIDER:

- Gift History
- Institutional Data
- Level of Engagement
- .edu Site Engagement
- Census Data
- Geographic Metrics
- Calendar / Timing
- Marketing Responses

3

Strengthen your donor experience with personalized communications.

Building strong connections with your donors is essential for successful fundraising. Understanding your donors' interests and motivations allows you to communicate with them in a way that feels personal and meaningful. By using data to learn more about your donors, you can tailor your messages to resonate with their preferences.

Analyzing donor behavior gives you valuable insights into how and when they prefer to give. This helps you predict their future actions and ensures that your messages are delivered at the right time. By prioritizing personalized communication, you can show your donors that you value their support, ultimately leading to increased satisfaction, loyalty, and sustained giving.

80% of donors prefer to receive at least one form of personalized content

For alumni donors:

- What did they study?
- Where did they live on campus?
- Did they receive financial aid?
- What organizations were they in?

For non-alumni donors:

- Have they attended campus events?
- What are their hobbies and interests?
- What's their occupation?
- Do they volunteer?

4

Better understand the health of your program and optimize accordingly.

Data provides valuable insights to assess the effectiveness of your fundraising efforts and make informed decisions for optimization and sustained growth. By gaining a clear understanding of your program's health, you can refine communication strategies to better resonate with donors, reallocate resources to high-impact initiatives, and implement targeted interventions to address underperforming areas.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- ▶ Acquisition and retention
- ▶ Donor upgrades and downgrades
- ▶ Gift size distribution
- ▶ Campaign performance

Re-direct Budget to Higher ROI areas

Reduce in areas with low ROI and move to high ROI programs

Streamline Processes and Team

Review work processes and reduce excess workflows and steps
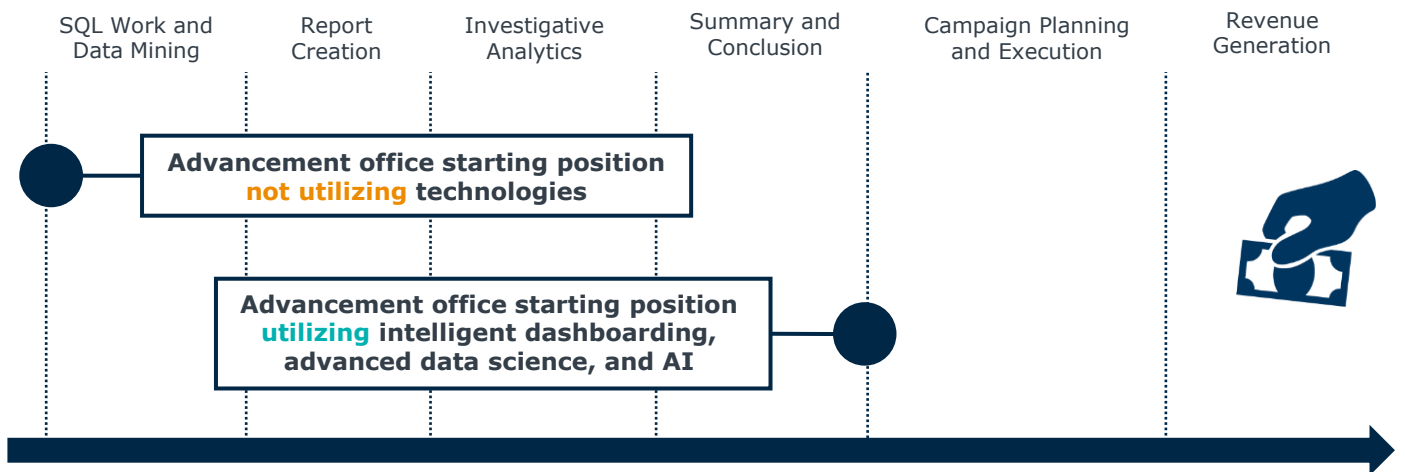
Work with Strategic Partners

Get support from your strategic partners to create a plan

5 Prepare for a future with Artificial intelligence (AI).

Preparing for the integration of AI into the advancement industry is crucial for your institution's success. This means ensuring your databases are clean, updated, and robust because AI's success hinges on the quality of the data it relies on. From granular donor details to broader year-over-year trends, all data sources are crucial for AI to function effectively.

Once you have collected substantial amounts of data, AI can transform your fundraising and donor engagement strategies. Tasks that typically require significant time, such as pulling segmented donor lists and creating marketing content, can be automated with AI. Additionally, AI can enhance your understanding of data itself by quickly analyzing what you input and providing actionable insights. This puts your team at a closer starting position than if you were not using it, enabling you to stay ahead of the curve and move more efficiently.

SQL Work and Data Mining	Report Creation	Investigative Analytics	Summary and Conclusion	Campaign Planning and Execution	Revenue Generation

Advancement office starting position not utilizing technologies

Advancement office starting position utilizing intelligent dashboarding, advanced data science, and AI

Advancement Marketing Services
A Partnership to Build A Modern Annual Giving Program

STRATEGY

- Analysis of 10+ years of institutional data
- Segment alumni and friends by likelihood to give, predictive models identify top acquisition prospects
- Create an annual program customized to your institutional goals

MARKETING

- Multichannel strategy to optimize investments
- Customized creative to reflect your brand, personalization to reflect donor interests
- Complete digital and print production, Giving Day support

DATA

- Benchmark performance to previous fiscal years, cohort of peer institutions
- Custom reports identify pockets of opportunity, prospects with higher propensity and capacity
- Ongoing testing to innovate practices

14% Increase in donor counts in average first year of partnership

2:1–7:1 ROI via sourced and influenced giving

▶ To learn more, visit **eab.com/ams**.

ABOUT EAB

At EAB, our mission is to make education smarter and our communities stronger. We work with thousands of institutions to drive transformative change through data-driven insights and best-in-class capabilities. From kindergarten to college to career, EAB partners with leaders and practitioners to accelerate progress and drive results across five major areas: enrollment, student success, institutional strategy, data analytics, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). We work with each partner differently, tailoring our portfolio of research, technology, and marketing and enrollment solutions to meet the unique needs of every leadership team, as well as the students and employees they serve. Learn more at eab.com.