



# 21WAYS

To Turbocharge Your Marketing, Fundraising,  
and Recruiting with the Power of Storytelling

HOW THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT IS REDEFINING COLLEGIATE COMMUNICATIONS AND CONNECTION





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



### In Brief:

The Oral History Project (OHP) is a revolutionary alumni relations program created by Publishing Concepts Inc. (PCI) to give colleges and universities an effective, meaningful way to connect with their graduates at no cost to the school. For each Oral History Project, PCI collects and archives hundreds to thousands of alumni stories. Then, in addition to printed and digital storybooks, PCI provides audio and written versions of the stories that schools can use for marketing, fundraising, and recruiting. To date, more than 200 colleges and universities have committed to an OHP and by the end of 2021, we will have collected more than one million stories.

## A LITTLE BACKGROUND

For more than 100 years, Publishing Concepts has been America's trusted collector of personal information, gathering data for colleges and universities, schools, and associations, and numerous Fraternities, Sororities, military and service organizations.



## POSITIVE FINANCIAL IMPACT



Started in 1921 by the grandfather of present CEO Drew Clancy, PCI has evolved from a simple publisher of alumni directories into one of America's oldest and most revered companies by staying true to its founding goal – not to be the biggest, but to be the best.

In 2019, inspired by our clients' need to reconnect with their alumni in an impactful, meaningful and cost-effective way, PCI launched a new initiative called the Oral History Project that put a 21st Century spin on alumni directories and ultimately, on alumni relations, all with no cost to the school.

Today, rather than simply collecting demographic information for a given school directory, PCI is using the Oral History Project platform to collect alumni stories that together, have uncovered and documented the history of nearly 200 colleges and universities with more to come. The immediate use for the stories is the creation of digital and printed OHP storybooks. But for each school, the stories provide far greater value than just that.

From a pure cost perspective, the positive financial impact of an Oral History Project is extraordinary. Search for life story interviewing services and you'll find companies charging \$117 and up for a 50-minute interview. In fact, most companies are so expensive, their rates are unpublished and only available by request. Even if those companies had the capacity to collect tens of thousands of stories – and they don't – their rates would simply make the project cost prohibitive. The Oral History Project is anything but.

Recently, PCI completed an Oral History Project for a major university in the Midwest where we collected 19,000 stories from their alumni. At \$117 per interview, that collection would have cost the university more than \$2.2 million. Their Oral History Project cost them \$0 and delivered two beautiful directories and 19,000 story assets the school can use for marketing, fundraising and recruiting – forever.

*Every OHP is planned,  
executed and completed at*

# ZERO COST

*to the college, or university.*

PCI not the big company  
Invoice

AMOUNT DUE:

\$0

## A CHALLENGING PRESENT. A BRIGHTER FUTURE.

There's little question that those in higher education have been among the hardest hit by the global pandemic. In fact, a recent report from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center shows undergraduate enrollment continues to struggle with the number of students enrolled for the 2021 Spring Semester down 5.9%.

To compound things for alumni directors and development offices around the country, alumni giving has also decreased significantly thanks to COVID-19. According to the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, alumni giving dropped 7.9% from 2018 to 2019 and that was before coronavirus hit.

U.S. undergraduate  
enrollment,  
Spring 2021

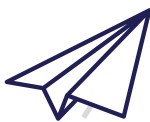
-5.9%



For schools searching for new and more impactful ways to engage their alumni, the Oral History Project has been a resounding success giving colleges and universities of every size, kind and geographic region countless story assets to use for marketing, fundraising, and recruiting. It's one thing for a school to sing its praises. It's quite another for prospective students and long-time supporters to hear that praise from passionate alums whose lives and careers were forever changed by their years on campus.

Your Oral History Project stories give you a treasure trove of assets you can leverage to connect with both new students and alumni in meaningful, impactful ways you haven't before. The balance of this document is designed to help you visualize HOW you can use the assets from your Oral History Project to bolster your marketing, fundraising and recruiting efforts to do just that.

# USING YOUR OHP STORIES FOR MARKETING



When your alumni dream about reliving their college years, what is it that will take them back? Every website has pretty pictures. Every social post has a clever headline. With the Oral History Project, you have hundreds to thousands of engaging alumni stories that can instantly transport your alumni to those special moments in time – an extraordinary college experience, great classes, caring professors, and degrees that will set them up for future success.

From a marketing perspective, the nature and number of your stories make them ideal assets to use throughout your marketing campaign. Whether it's your academic departments, your athletics teams, or your general marketing department that needs content, your OHP stories will provide the specificity they need with the emotion they want for any execution they choose to create.



## FOR YOUR UPCOMING MARKETING CAMPAIGN, CONSIDER USING YOUR OHP STORIES IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

### College, or University Website

Create a special "Alumni Spotlight" section on your website with 10, 20, or 30 alumni stories that highlight your school's diversity and the dozens of ways people find meaning in their alma mater. Add images of the storytellers with their names and graduation years to help people connect with them even further.



SEAHAWK SQUAWK



WAGNER COLLEGE



## Wagner Alumni Lend Their Voices To Oral History Project



THANK YOU TO THE THOUSANDS OF OUR ALUMNI WHO CONTRIBUTED THEIR STORIES TO OUR RECENTLY COMPLETED ORAL HISTORY PROJECT. ENJOY THIS COLLECTION OF EIGHT OF OUR FAVORITES AND CHECK BACK EVERY MONTH FOR NEW, INSPIRING, FASCINATING STORIES!

### CHECK OUT THESE STORIES!

**BILL REAVES**  
Class of '87

**"NATIONAL CHAMPIONS"**

**JIM WAVERKA**  
Class of '68

**"TIMES THEY WERE A'CHANGIN'"**

**MELANIE STAHL**  
Class of '77

**"THRILL OF A LIFETIME"**

**CAREN CLAY**  
Class of '54

**"SEA HAWKS IN SOCKS"**





## Print Advertising

Identify your most engaging stories and create a print campaign featuring the alumni who tell them. In each ad, include a QR code that lets the reader hear the actual story when accessed.



## Sponsored Links

When people do a search for your university, serve them a sponsored link with an engaging alumni story to match their search. Since your stories are so diverse, you can easily serve up stories to meet more specific searches like school academics, university sports, campus living, or social life.



## Social Media

Create series of Social Media posts featuring audio from your favorite alumni stories and mix them into your regular social rotation on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok.



## Radio

Because OHP stories are audio-based, they're perfect to use for Radio in both :30 and :60 formats. Plus, radio gives you a rich opportunity to add an emotional soundtrack to make the stories even more impactful.

## Display Ads

Create a digital display campaign with ads that tease engaging alumni stories and reward the reader with the full audio when they click through to listen.



## College, or University App

If you're utilizing an App, create a section featuring "Our All-Time Favorite [COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY] Stories" that people can enjoy. Give them the opportunity to like and share the stories with others via Social Media and Email.



## Direct Mail

Because of the volume of stories you have to choose from, OHP stories allow you to give your Direct Mail some extra bang for your buck. For a 6" x 9" postcard, choose four to six of your favorite stories and feature them on the back of the postcard with thumbnails, the name of the storyteller and an intriguing story title. A QR code will take the recipient to a link where they can listen and share the stories.

## USING YOUR OHP STORIES FOR FUNDRAISING

At PCI, we understand how difficult it is to raise money year in, year out. We also know that on the heels of COVID-19, fundraising is harder than ever. To date, we've helped our partners raise more than \$70 million for their institutions and we're excited about the fundraising potential of the Oral History Project.



For many alumni, the impact of their experiences on campus often fades with years and distance. That changes when they participate in an Oral History Project. The second they share old stories about their hopes, their dreams, their lives and loves on campus, they magically reconnect with what made their collegiate experience so special. Through the OHP process, alumni renew their love for their alma mater and with it, their willingness to make meaningful financial contributions. That is the power of storytelling.



## AS YOU PLAN YOUR UPCOMING FUNDRAISING EFFORTS, CONSIDER USING YOUR OHP STORIES IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:



### Emails to Prospective Donors

Rather than telling your donors what good their gift can fund at their alma mater, remind them with the voices of their fellow alums. In each email, include a link or two to your favorite stories with a Subject Line like "This is why your gift matters!"

UNF UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA.

### 5 EXTRAORDINARY REASONS YOUR GIFT TO UNF MATTERS!

Michael, I wish you could see and hear the incredible things happening on campus. The discussions taking place. The experiments under way looking for newer and better solutions to all kinds of challenges. The young men and women discovering their callings, deciding who they want to be and how they are going to change the world.

Without your support for the University of North Florida, and that of your fellow alumni, none of those things could happen. I know when we're separated by time and distance it can be tough to feel connected. But I want you to know how much everyone here on campus appreciates your support.

Recently, UNF completed our first Oral History Project collecting stories from nearly 6,000 of our alumni. Below are just a few of our favorite stories for you to enjoy. Our graduates are making the world a better place every day and it's gifts like yours that make that possible!

 <b>LESLIE HENRY</b> Class of '18 "FINDING MY CALLING"	 <b>MAJ. KYLE NELSON</b> Class of '07 "TO PROTECT AND DEFEND"	 <b>PETER BROWN</b> Class of '88 "BUILDING A BETTER WORLD"	 <b>GINGER ROBERTS</b> Class of '92 "OSPREY FOR LIFE"
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*Michael, thank you for your gift! Thank you for your support of the University and thank you for being the UNF ambassador you are to all who know you. If there is anything we can ever do for you, please let us know!*

Sincerely,  
*Whitney Riley*  
Whitney Riley  
Assistant Vice President  
University Development and Alumni Engagement

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## Print Ad in Alumni Magazine

Identify some of your most engaging stories and tease them in print ads in the fundraising issues of your alumni magazine. In each ad, include a QR code that lets the reader hear the actual story when accessed.



## Audio at Alumni Meetings

When you meet with alumni, start with a story. Tell them your favorite. Ask them to tell theirs. And then play the group a few of your favorite audio stories from your Oral History Project. Nothing inspires connection like storytelling.



## Direct Mail with Flash Drive

For your key donors, send them a special direct mail piece – a box with a school-branded flash drive with 8-10 of your favorite OHP stories. Inspire them to give with the messaging on the piece. Close the deal with emotional storytelling.



## Invitation to Tell Their Story

Whether digitally, or in a print piece with a QR code, give your donors an opportunity to hear emotional stories that remind them of all the good their gifts make possible. Then, at the end of the piece, invite your donors to call in to a special answering machine where they can share why they give and what that giving means to their lives. The following year, use those testimonials to reach out to other donors.



## Social Media Posts

During your fundraising season, mix a series of posts into your social media campaigns featuring emotional stories that remind donors why they give. Where possible, use great images that help illustrate the stories.



## USING YOUR OHP STORIES FOR RECRUITING



Whether you're facing more applicants with more choices, or too few applicants for the spots you need to fill, attracting great students to campus and securing their admission has never been more important, or arguably, more competitive. That's where the stories from your Oral History Project can become an extremely effective asset.

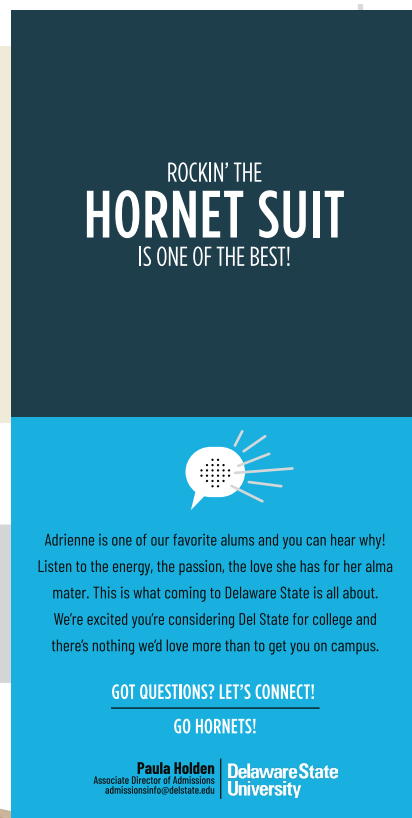
To prospective students, hearing first person accounts of life on campus, what attending the school is really like and the meaningful impact your college or university had on the lives of its graduates are both fascinating and inspiring. Your OHP stories are authentic, heartfelt and at times, vulnerable, and that's why students connect with them.

### TO BOLSTER YOUR UPCOMING RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN, CONSIDER USING YOUR OHP STORIES IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:



#### Direct Mail with a Sound Chip

For your key prospects, imagine sending them a direct mail piece with a sound chip that plays one of your most engaging alumni stories the second they open it.



THERE ARE

17,342

INCREDIBLE  
REASONS

TO COME TO DEL STATE.







## College, or University Website

Create a special “Alumni Stories” section on the website where prospective students can listen to your school’s most inspiring, historic, and poetic stories from the people who lived them.



## Emails to Prospective Students

Nothing brings an email to life like the actual voice of an alumnus or alumna recalling their fondest memories of life on campus. In each of your emails, include a link to one of your favorite stories with a Subject Line like, “You’ve got to hear this!”



## College Admissions Fairs

When admission fairs get busy, it can be hard to keep all your prospects engaged. What if you had a kiosk, or computer set up where those prospects could listen to dozens of engaging stories directly from your alumni?

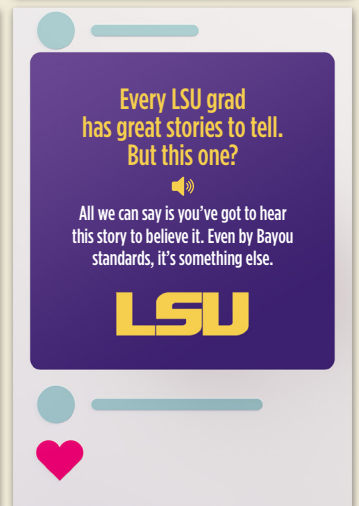
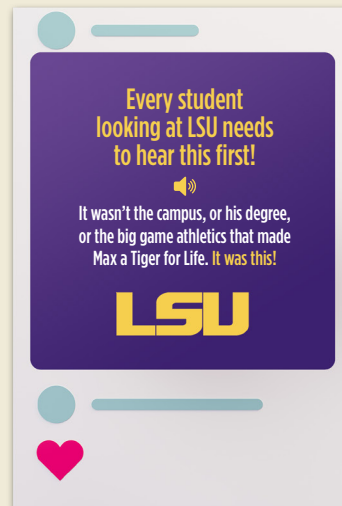
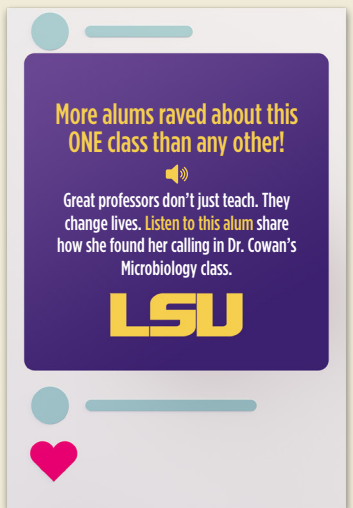


## School-Branded Flash Drive

Today’s students love all things digital, especially when those things are also useful. By itself, a school-branded flash drive makes for a cool gift students would keep and use, but it also gives you the opportunity to include numerous audio files featuring the best stories from your alumni.

## Social Media Posts

The sheer volume of great stories generated by your Oral History Project make them great assets to post on social media a few times a week, or every day.



## Direct Mail

For prospective students, send them a teaser postcard they won’t be able to resist. On the front, tease them with a headline like, “10 reasons [COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY] could be the perfect place for you,” or “10 ways [COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY] could change your life.” On the back, simply put a QR code with instructions about where it will take the reader. Once the person scans the QR, they’ll arrive at a landing page where they can hear your 10 most extraordinary alumni stories about the impact the school made on their lives. It’s different, it’s emotional and uses the power of storytelling in an extremely intriguing way.



## SOME HELPFUL NOTES

Finally, a few helpful suggestions about the tools and technology you can use to help manage and edit your story assets and host them while still maintaining a preferable level of high fidelity.

In order to edit or combine your story audio, add music if you choose and further manipulate the files, you will need some type of Digital Audio Workstation (DAW). Fortunately, there are a number of FREE and paid versions to choose from depending on your needs and know how. Some of our favorites include:



### FREE VERSIONS:

*Audacity*  
*Garageband (Mac)*  
*Ableton Live Lite*  
*Traktion Waveform*

### PAID VERSIONS:

*Ableton Live Suite*  
*Pro Tools*  
*Bitwig Studio*



In addition to editing your alumni stories, like many of our clients, you may need tools to host and broadcast your audio for say, a podcast. Here are some of our favorite platforms to consider:



### FOR HOSTING:

*Soundcloud*  
*Spreaker*  
*Google Podcasts*  
*Apple Podcasts*





## CONCLUSION

With the thousands of stories collected for your Oral History Project, you have an extraordinary set of assets that are genuine, emotional, and perfect to use for marketing, fundraising, and recruiting.

Nothing connects us like the power of storytelling. It's literally the fabric that holds us together generation to generation. Hearing a story that involves somewhere, someone, or something we're intimately familiar with isn't just shared history. It's meaningful. It's special and it elicits a genuine sense of ownership.

Take the time to listen to your alumni. Hear the inspiring things they recall from their years on campus. Their professors and classmates. The big games. The lifelong friendships they formed. And the profound effect your college or university had on their lives, their careers, and their futures.



Alumni across the country are waiting to be heard. We listen to their stories. We marvel at their collective history. And then we catalogue and archive their stories so you can have them forever. Now it's time for you to share those stories with the next generation of students and donors.



*Use your Oral History Project for everything it is and everything it was meant to be.*

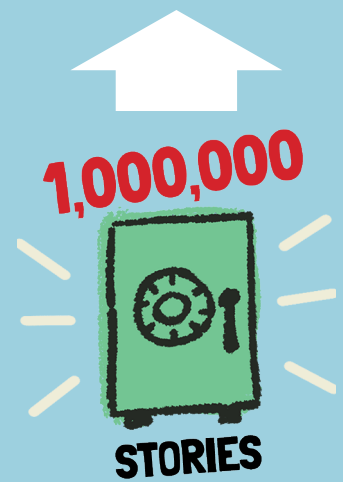
**TODAY IS THE DAY TO START WRITING**



**A NEW HISTORY OF YOUR OWN.**



*If you have not yet committed to start an Oral History Project and would like to, please contact Rex Petrasko at: [rpetrasko@publishingconcepts.com](mailto:rpetrasko@publishingconcepts.com)*



*Over the past two years, more than 200 of your peer institutions have committed to an Oral History Project and in that time, we've collected more than a million stories.*





THE  
ORAL  
HISTORY  
PROJECT

