Connecting During the Pandemic: Pointers from ’76 Together Apart on Zoom

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’76 TOGETHER APART ON ZOOM
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Building Class Engagement: ’76 Together Apart on Zoom

- Audience is SOLELY ’76’ers
- Speakers and performers are ONLY ’76’ers
- Designed to attract BROAD audience of ’76’ers
- Secured support from Class of ’76 Officers
- At the beginning, unifying theme was how COVID-19 impacted our society, e.g., economy, race relations, airlines, performing arts, vaccine development, higher education, scriptwriting
- Fast-paced, informative and fun Zoom sessions that bring ’76’ers together during the pandemic
- Balance content to include interactivity through Q&As, breakouts, and chat
- Started in April 2020 at very beginning of COVID with a program every two weeks
  - Went to one per month starting September 2020
  - Now four programs per year
- Broadcasts on Sunday at 4pm Eastern
- 75-minute program plus 20 minutes for breakouts
The goal of ’76 Together Apart is to engage ’76 classmates which will:

- Stir enthusiasm
- Engender connection with our class and Princeton

Strategy has 4 elements that align with this goal:

- Know your audience
- Focus on format
- Do lots of outreach
- Be sure to measure
**Know Your Audience and What Interests Them**

**GOAL**
Engage ‘76 Classmates!

**Know your audience**

Classmates want **QUALITY**
- Classmates have high standards
- Make 75-minute program worth it
- ’76’ers read every word of announcement

Classmates want **CONNECTION**
- Use **bios** as a way to get to know one another (Ensure bios are same length. Every speaker is a star!)
- **Random Breakout Rooms**—meet new ’76’ers and see old friends
- **Wrap Up Emails** list attendees

Classmates want **INFORMATION**
- Program to the zeitgeist
- Broad range of topics that attract large audience
Know Your Audience and What Interests Them—Use Class Dues to Hire A Professional Tech Team

The Professional Tech Firm we hired ensures the technical quality of the program. They...

- Partner with us on ‘76 Together Apart
- Focus on technical support so we can concentrate on the content of the program
- Enhance audience engagement strategies and provide guidance on best practices from their work with other organizations
- Provide technical checks with speakers prior to the event to ensure success on the day of the program
- Make sure backups are in place in case there are technical problems

BOTTOM LINE: Audience members are more likely to drop off and not come back if there are technical problems, e.g., lose a speaker, someone Zoom bombs, order of presentations is not maintained.
Format Strikes Balance Between Content and Interactivity

Key Ingredients:
- Fast-paced television news magazine format (not Alumni Faculty Forum or webinar)
- Balance content—mix of information and fun segments
- Speaker variety
- Mix topics to attract broad range of classmates
- Interactivity through Q&As, breakouts, and chats
Doing Outreach Brings the Uninvolved Into the Tent While Maintaining the Stalwarts

- Get the word out to recruit speakers and performers
- Make concerted effort to contact classmates who have not been involved
- Need to show diversity in speakers
- Don’t take your base for granted!
- Elicit programming ideas and test possible topics
- Build the brand and create buzz
Data Indicates That We Successfully Attract and Engage a Large Number of Classmates with ’76 Together Apart

- 20 programs since April 2020
- Over 400 classmates have viewed one or more episodes
- More than 100 classmates Zoom in per program
- 100 classmates have appeared as speakers and performers
- Record-breaking 275 classmates attended Special Reunions program (5/23/21)
- More ’76’ers are paying dues and also making contributions in the form of back dues or donations
- Helps bring in ’76 donors to Annual Giving
Example of Recent Lineup for ‘76 Together Apart-1/29/23
100 ‘76’ers Zoomed in for the program

I. President’s Corner
   ◦ Rosalie Norair ’76, Class of ‘76 President, welcomes attendees and gives class news

II. An Inside Look at Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Silicon Valley
   ◦ Illa Brown ’76, Producer and Moderator, interviews:
     ◦ Dan’l Lewin ’76, President and CEO of the Computer History Museum; formerly Apple Inc.’s Director, Education Sales and Marketing (recruited by Steve Jobs)
     ◦ Jim Hornthal ’76, entrepreneur, angel investor, and educator

III. Q&A session. ‘76’ers ask questions of Dan’l and Jim

IV. The Foreign Correspondent’s Report: Live from the Democratic Republic of the Congo
   ◦ Ted Witmer ’76, Director of Development, Shalom University of Bunia
   ◦ Dana Witmer ’76, Medical Doctor, Shalom University of Bunia

V. Brice Marden: Exploring the Work of a Preeminent American Artist
   ◦ Tiffany Bell ’76, Art Curator and Editor of Catalogues Raisonnés

VI. Old Nassau
   ◦ David Newberg ’76, former member of the Glee Club and its principal accompanist

VII. Random Breakout Rooms
Classmates Have Been Enthusiastic and Complimentary about ’76 Together Apart

I have never had an experience that made me feel more connected to Princeton. Seriously. And that includes graduating two children.

It’s glorious enough to revel in the glow of long-time acquaintances, but how much more rewarding it is to discover that I was surrounded by treasures that I didn’t even know....I’ve never felt so connected to the class, and best of all, it’s during a period when we all yearn for human contact.

...We can’t have these discussions during the P-rade or the fireworks, so in some ways this is BETTER than reunions.
1. **Build camaraderie and spirit**  
   - Feature speakers only from your class. Build pride in the talent in your own class

2. **Reach out to all classmates, not just those who have traditionally attended reunions**  
   - Target the influencers  
   - Foster trust with different segments of the class who are underrepresented or dissatisfied  
   - Remember to nurture your base (those who have been active)

3. **Identify classmates with expertise, knowledge and talent who might not otherwise be recognized**  
   - Perform extensive outreach  
   - Get introductions to classmates (emails go into spam)

4. **Inform and educate classmates on important issues of our time—preferably by classmates who have the knowledge and expertise**  
   - Program to the zeitgeist  
   - Develop a pipeline of speakers

5. **Remind classmates of the importance of Princeton in their lives and that Princeton is a place for all seasons in their lives**  
   - Stress value of being involved with your class. We are all the same age and share a common history.

6. **Use class dues to hire professional tech team**  
   - Enables you to focus on program content
Thank You!!!
Feel free to contact me with questions or for help.
TIGER-SIS-ZOOM-AH!!

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