

# The University of Chicago doubles its goals for pledge rate and amount pledged with international alumni



## Partnership Abstract

### Opportunity

The University of Chicago wanted to reach out to alumni living outside of the US, including graduates of the world-renowned Booth School of Business Executive MBA Program.

### Partnership

The university conducted a series of communications via mail and email, followed by outreach calls from Ruffalo Noel Levitz callers from our Buffalo call center in the United Kingdom.

### Results

The calls, in combination with multichannel communication efforts of the university, produced a response rate of 38 percent and beat its total pledge goal by 160 percent.



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**CHICAGO**

### Opportunity

The University of Chicago has a large number of alumni overseas. The university works hard to include these alumni in email and print communications, but sending mail across the globe can be a challenge. As Paul Leo, director of direct response explains, “Some of the alumni were getting very little in terms of mailing, and with international mail, we really weren’t sure if they were getting everything in a timely manner.”

For the Booth School of Business, engaging international alumni represents a sizable fundraising opportunity. About 10 percent live abroad, including graduates of the Booth Executive MBA Program who studied at their campuses in London, Singapore, and Hong Kong. Adam Niermann, director of leadership giving and annual fund, explains that these generous and highly influential alumni can’t be ignored. “Part of our business model is investment from alumni. That is what keeps us a top business school.”

### Partnership

To engage these international alumni and cultivate more of them as donors, the University of Chicago worked with Ruffalo Noel Levitz to create a customized phone outreach campaign. RNL used a UK-based outreach center through its Buffalo Consulting division, allowing the calls to originate in the home region for many alumni and more closely match time zones. This effort was combined with multichannel outreach via mail and email by the university to prepare alumni for the calls.

The ask from these international alumni was for the Jeff Metcalf Career Internship Program, which has supported over 4,500 students with experiences in the United States and abroad since its start in 1997. Booth alumni were also asked to support the school’s Global Visibility fund, an area that international alumni are ready to support: “Building the brand globally is very important to alumni, and they know we are drawing the best students from across the world,” says Niermann.

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Reaching out to international alumni of the Booth School tapped directly into a top concern of this group, according to Niermann: “Alumni who live internationally care a lot about seeing the brand of the school grow and become more recognized.” Many remain in touch with their faculty. The institution used this connection with a targeted email campaign featuring key faculty before calling, and leveraged a matching challenge to encourage gifts.

Niermann says that the trained international callers centered in Europe were crucial. “This was not something we could do out of our call center here—not something we could do logistically. Being able to call from the UK opened it up in a way we could not in the US.”



## RESULTS

The result of the combined multichannel program of mail, email, and phone greatly exceeded campaign goals:

| Area                     | Goal      | Results          |
|--------------------------|-----------|------------------|
| Total Mailed             | 2,000     | <b>2,057</b>     |
| Dialing Attempts         | N/A       | <b>8,591</b>     |
| Number Contacted         | 500 (25%) | <b>605 (29%)</b> |
| Pledge Rate              | 20%       | <b>38%</b>       |
| Average Gift Per Contact | \$60      | <b>\$129</b>     |
| Amount Pledged           | \$30,000  | <b>\$77,763</b>  |

For the Booth School calls, Niermann says the results were inspiring. “This is what Chicago Booth alumni do. They see their gift making a difference, and it changes their view of the institution. There is an eagerness to support the school that we tapped into with these phone calls.” Many were surprised by the call, Niermann says, but “when they had a chance to talk to an actual person about the Booth School, we received gifts from people who had never given before.”

The pledges gained from Chicago alumni are crucial to growing the donor base, says Leo: “Any incremental increase makes a difference in our goals.” For those considering adopting an outreach program like this, he recommends carefully preparing for the engagement, and analyzing the effects of calling: “I would probably do more research to understand the size of the opportunity first.” This analysis and reaching out to populations like alumni living abroad will be key as the University of Chicago works toward increasing alumni giving participation in coming years.



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**Adam Niermann**

Director of Leadership Giving  
and Annual Fund  
*The University of Chicago*

