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CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR *ALUMNI* IN BUSINESS SCHOOLS: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NOVA SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

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Abstract

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is gaining increasing notoriety in both the business world and academic articles, but there is a gap in the literature concerning CRM strategies for business schools' *alumni*. In this thesis, a qualitative research is performed in 4 schools of the Top 30 European Business Schools 2012 ranking of the Financial Times, with the purpose of knowing the current CRM practices being adopted and their results. Findings indicate schools value the benefits *alumni* bring and are investing in CRM systems to nourish strong, sustainable relationships with their *alumni*, by offering communication, educational/professional and social initiatives. This thesis points to some tools business schools can use to better manage and capture *alumni* value.

Keywords: CRM; Business School; *Alumni*

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1. Introduction

In the era of global business competition, companies are finding new ways to stay ahead of their competitiveness by deploying new technologies, like Customer Relationship Management (also know as CRM) systems, as a way to get closer to customers (Yu, 2001). Organizations are using their remaining source of competitive advantage: their customers (Crosby and Johnson, 2000; Battista & Verhun, 2000). Customers are important assets that should be valued and managed (Gupta and Lehmann, 2003) and it is through this management that companies can develop customer insight (King, 2007). The business model should shift from a transaction-based orientation to a long-term relationship-based orientation, with customers loyal to the company and not just the current offerings (Crosby and Johnson, 2000).

The increasing focus on CRM has led several firms to ponder on the necessity of building relationship strategies as a way to acquire, serve and retain customers, and thus reach better financial outcomes (Battista & Verhun, 2000; Mende *et al.*, 2013). Customers are important assets that should be valued and managed, to develop customer insight (Gupta & Lehmann, 2003; King, 2007). Business schools are also looking into the benefits of CRM and whether it is a worthwhile investment to help manage students, *alumni* and corporations. From cost and time reduction in managing these relations, to increases in donations, CRM has proven to be an effective way to reach sustainable relationships (Fayerman, 2002).

This thesis is a descriptive study on the current practices business schools around Europe are employing regarding their CRM initiatives towards their *alumni*. For this, the top 30 business schools of the Financial Times Ranking of European business schools of 2012 were selected – 27 were successfully contacted, but only 4 answered the request for an interview. The 4 business schools were from Portugal, Spain, Netherlands and United Kingdom.

There is a gap in the literature of CRM activities in business schools and especially towards *alumni*. This dissertation will contribute to fill this gap as it can provide business schools worldwide some insight on the initiatives and impact of the CRM strategies currently being adopted by top business schools in Europe. It starts with a literature review focused on the definition, processes, and key success factors of CRM, followed by the qualitative analysis. Finally, some conclusions and advices are proposed for NOVA School of Business and Economics, as well as the limitations of this project and proposals of future research on this subject.

2. Literature Review

2.1. A Change of Era

CRM is a fairly recent concept for businesses and is receiving increasing attention from companies as a program that can return high profits (Boulding *et al.*, 2005; Battista & Verhun, 2000; Ngai, 2005).

The shift from mass-production, mass-distribution and mass-advertising, as a way to obtain competitive advantage, into customer-oriented business models, where the customer is king is becoming more evident (Richarson & Howcroft, 2006). A two-way brand – a brand that allows communications to flow from client to company, and back – is given importance and it thrives on customer information and interaction. The company is permanently aware of the customer and tries to accommodate the needs of that particular client. This is the essence of CRM (Peppers and Rogers, 2011).

2.2. Definition and General Characteristics

In today's world, CRM has become a key tool for organizations (Ngai, 2005) and, increasingly more, they seek customer strategies that can have a long-term impact on the enterprise (Crosby & Johnson, 2000). CRM involves a change into a more customer-oriented view, in which firms try to know everything that they possibly can about every individual customer with the objective of creating sustainable relationship with every individual customer, so as to generate a constant in-flow of cash (Crosby & Johnson, 2000).

Management and business literature about this subject generally underlines that companies find it more profitable to retain their existing customers, by developing long-term relationships that meet the customer's needs, rather than attracting new customers (Garrido-Moreno & Padilla-Meléndez, 2011). In fact, Fornell & Wernerfelt (1988) mention that generating a new customer is three times more costly than retaining a customer. Customers are scarce and are every company's source of revenue (Peppers & Rogers, 2011) and, in order to capture them, firms take advantage of their marketing research capabilities, to understand the features, motivation and behavior of their customers. Once they know who the target client is, organizations must set the proper customer strategy that best meets their objectives (Crosby & Johnson, 2000).

Despite of CRM's increasing notoriety, there is still a lot of confusion about what it entails (Battista & Verhun, 2000). CRM should focus on the redesign and alignment of the relevant processes, technologies and human resources practices around relationship strategies (Crosby & Johnson, 2000), while serving customers in an improved way. It is not just about collecting, processing and deploying customer information or interacting more efficiently, but it should also focus on business strategy, supported by technology. As the knowledge about the client increases, the company's view of what that client buys will change (Peppers & Rogers, 2011).

The difficult task for an organization, as highlighted by Peppard (2000) and Finnegan & Currie (2010), is to modify the mindset that "the customer is being sold your product" into "the customer is buying your product". Thus, CRM becomes much more than a software package – it is "a strategic approach to manage the evolving relationships with customers, which require continuous adaptation in response to changing needs" (Finnegan & Currie, 2010: 154).

Literature is diverse when regarding the definition of CRM, and confusion about it is evident and mentioned by most (Wilson *et al.*, 2007). But Peppers & Rogers (2011) define CRM as being used to understand and influence customers' behavior and needs, with the goal of improving customer acquisition, retention and growth. In other words, "CRM is an enterprise-wide business strategy for achieving customer-specific objectives by taking customer-specific actions" (Peppers & Rogers, 2011: 7). The authors define CRM the best because it shows CRM's essence – strategies that are focused on trying to accommodate the needs of a particular client and aligned with the company's strategies. Companies should focus on getting, keeping and growing customers, as they are the source of cash, reputation and advertisement. This does not mean ignoring product development, or operating efficiency, but rather taking advantage of new strategies and new technologies to grow the value of the customer base (Peppers & Rogers, 2011).

2.3. Cornerstones for CRM

There are two aspects that are mentioned extensively in literature, that are considered as being essential for the success of any CRM initiative – Technology and Trust.

1. Technology: the driver for sustainable customer relationships

Technology is a very important tool in any organization, regardless of CRM, but it gains special importance if a company is considering customer-based strategies (Battista & Verhun, 2000). Due to CRM's nature, IT becomes essential in the gathering, analyzing and managing the constant flow of information that enterprises receive. By using low-cost technologies, companies can collect, process and establish customer information into a single system, so as to manage their customers more efficiently (Crosby and Johnson, 2000). However, CRM initiatives should not be narrowly focused on technical aspects, but rather they should be considered as a comprehensive approach to managing relationships with customers (Peppard, 2000). In reality, one of the main causes of CRM implementation failure is giving technology too much relevance and considering CRM merely as a software solution (Finnegan & Currie, 2010).

2. Trust: the key for a long-lasting relationship

Commitment and trust must always be present if an organization wants to engage with its customer (Barnes & Cumby, 2002). In the buyer-seller relationship, in which CRM is based on, both parties communicate, collaborate and respond according to each other's interaction. The customer prefers a certain product or service, and the enterprise reacts to this by changing its behavior for that specific buyer (Peppers & Rogers, 2011). When a client trusts the seller, he/she is more likely to share personal information (Barnes & Cumby, 2002) that companies seek to activate their customer strategies. As such, both parties need to trust each other and be open to work together (Peppers & Rogers, 2011).

2.4. The CRM Process

Peppers & Rogers (2011) provide a very interesting insight into the CRM process by introducing the IDIC Model – Identify, Differentiate, Interact, Customize. These are the basic activities that a manager must perform to take full advantage of what CRM can provide.

As a starting point, corporations should gather all the information they currently have on their customers, both in an electronic and non-electronic formats, and compile it into a single unified database, removing multiple entries from the same customer (Peppers & Rogers, 2011). Following this, companies need their customers to perform the identification themselves, linking them to their past transactions, and integrating them in the client compilation. Analyzing the past behavior of a client is the most helpful way to determine the future value of that client (Peppers & Rogers, 2011).

Once this is done, it is important to separate their customers into groups of specific needs. Companies should understand that, at this point, they could compare customers and create long-term relationships with each consumer (Peppers & Rogers, 2011). The importance of differentiating customers lies on the basis of managing customer relationships – different customers have different needs, and different customers provide different values to the organization (Peppers & Rogers, 2011).

For organizations to reach the necessary level of intimacy, that allows them to understand their customers in ways that no competitor does, they must obtain information about the individual customer. The way to obtain this information is to interact with the client, on a one-to-one basis. Nowadays, this interaction is mostly done through technology and social media, as they are a cheap way to reach out to many customers at the same time (Peppers & Rogers, 2011).

Finally, they need to customize the relationship with each customer, modifying how they behave, how they communicate and how they deliver the value proposition to each individual customer (Peppers & Rogers, 2011).

2.5. Key Success Factors

Organizations, even those highly motivated and interested in what CRM has to offer, have a difficult time implementing CRM initiatives and fully capturing its benefits (Finnegan & Currie, 2010). In fact, the success rate of implementations is below 30%, according to International Data Corporation and Gartner Group (Rigby *et al.*, 2002).

One of the reasons for this failure is disregarding organizational aspects. Changes in the organization are required if new technologies are to be combined and used effectively (Finnegan & Currie, 2010). Regarding the culture of an organization, Finnegan & Currie (2010) explain the right culture is imperative to a proper implementation of a CRM strategy. If the technology that CRM brings is not a major obstacle, the managers should focus on the needs of the business and what the technology can do for the company and for its customers (Rigby & Ledingham, 2004; Finnegan & Currie, 2010). A shift to a customer-centered business requires a shift into an information and knowledge sharing culture (Finnegan & Currie, 2010). This shift is only possible if managers communicate and show their commitment to aid their employees in the inevitable transition – this can boost employees' motivation, enhance their knowledge and reduce their resistance (Finnegan & Currie, 2010).

Finnegan & Currie (2010) stress that successfully defined, delivered and deployed CRM strategies mean a collaboration from several parties – from sales and marketing, to IT professionals and managers. This may be very difficult to attain, especially if employees also need to be persuaded to embrace the CRM trajectory. The authors suggest that support from senior managers and a strong communication showing openness to change will help achieve a smooth transition.

It is also important to note that any CRM strategy needs to be aligned with both the IT capabilities and the strategies of an organization – the platform needs to be fully integrated into the business and help it achieve its objectives (Sen & Sinha, 2011).

2.6. Monitoring & Assessment

Regarding the assessment of a CRM strategy, Kim & Kim (2009) stress the lack of academic research in what concerns performance measurement for CRM program. To overcome this, they developed, as many other articles, a scorecard framework that can diagnose and assess CRM strategies and how well they fit with the organization's objectives. But this paper underlines that "to measure a company's CRM performance, the company must first understand what factors are important for performing CRM strategy and what interrelationships between those factors are the core relational mechanisms in the CRM performance measurement framework" (Kim & Kim, 2009: 487).

2.7. CRM as a tool to manage alumni in Business Schools

CRM can be implemented in any sort of business, and any kind of industry, since one of its major determinants of success is the existence of a clear customer's strategy (Kristoffersen & Singh, 2004). In non-profit ventures, CRM is typically applied to donors, volunteers and/or any other relevant constituents (Frankfurt, 2007). For instance, Kristoffersen & Singh (2004) document Plan Norway's – a non-for-profit organization helps children, families and communities in developing countries by investing in health, education, housing, and water – efforts to better manage their volunteers, donors and resources. In 1999, they wanted to invest in strategies that would reduce the 11% dropout rate for sponsors to 7%, and at the same time, manage more effectively their resources and time. After 3 years of building customer relationships, Plan Norway was able to increase by more than 35% the retained sponsors, reducing the dropout rate to 6.5%. In contrast*,* there is little published work on CRM applied to business schools or to schools in general.

Academic institutions want to reap benefits not only from their students, but from their *alumni* as well (Peppers & Rogers, 2011). *Alumni* relations can be advantageous financially, through their donations, but also academically, as they can sponsor graduating students or even return to teach. For *alumni*, Fayerman (2002) reports on a survey conducted in 1999, by a university with the goal of finding out what *alumni* look for from their institution. The results revealed that 50% of the *alumni* surveyed desired regular updates by e-mail or on the university's website. As a response, the institution built an *alumni* portal that would provide *alumni* information and would work as a platform to maintain contact with them. The portal eventually included additional features, such as newsletters that could be automatically customized based on the *alumnus* profile (*e.g.*: graduation date). Besides saving money in managing e-mail updates, the university experienced an increase from 13% to 30% in *alumni* donation, and is hoping to expand this strategy to allow for more customization, and also spread the word about the institution itself (Fayerman, 2002).

Facing this example, it is evident why business schools pursue CRM initiatives directed at their *alumni* – their relationship could improve considerably. This thesis is intended to provide some insight to the literature regarding CRM activities for *alumni*, as well as some knowledge concerning what is being done in business schools around Europe.

3. Methodology

The dissertation consists of a descriptive study on the current practices of European business schools with respect to their CRM initiatives for their *alumni*. It is important to clarify that an *alumnus* is a student that finished his/her course, graduating in the institution he/she was enrolled at[1]. This is critical because different definitions will result in a different target group, and thus, different strategies are needed to actually have a relationship with them. To achieve this, the top 30 business schools of the Financial Times 2012 Ranking of European business schools were selected. Of these, 27 were successfully contacted, but only 4 answered the request for an interview. The 4 business schools interviewed were all from different countries: Portugal, Spain, Netherlands and United Kingdom.

3.1. Why a Qualitative study?

This research was conducted on a small number of subjects that are, usually, not randomly selected, so as to obtain their perspective on the general theme (Brown & Suter, 2011). As the information is gathered, certain hypotheses can be formulated and later tested through quantitative research (Brown & Suter, 2011), although this thesis does not address that stage. This research's goal is to understand what CRM strategies schools are using to manage their *alumni* and with what impact. As such, the use of qualitative interviews was suitable and helpful. The qualitative research was done through interviews focused on obtaining information about school's CRM programs, compared with the literature and analyzed to reveal relevant results. These interviews cannot be considered as an exploratory research *per se* – exploratory research looks for

[1] http://www.thefreedictionary.com/alumnus

perceptions, explanations or emotions (Brown & Suter, 2011), while in this research, actual actions and results are the main focus, what is working and what is not.

A questionnaire (Exhibit 1) composed of 15 questions was used. These questions were *Alumni* related – introductory questions and description of *alumni* activities; – IDIC model related – as introduced by Peppers & Rogers (2011); – Assessing Success related – metrics used by schools to measure the outcome of their initiatives'; and – Technology & Organization related – challenges faced by schools when implementing their CRM activities. These questions worked as a guide, as interviewees would expand and explain with their own experience on the subject.

3.2. Why the Top 30 of the Financial Times?

Financial Times is a well-known, respected, worldwide British newspaper. Since its creation, in 1888, the newspaper has become one of the top sources of international information discussing international politics, economics and businesses.

Every year, the newspaper ranks European Business Schools according to several factors – from the average salary three years after graduation and percentage of female or international faculty, to the ranking the school's MBA and Master's in Management had that same year. These rankings have been accepted and considered important, to the point that Business Schools strive to be a part of it. Its accuracy and truthfulness are widely acknowledged and only the best qualify to be a part of the list.
Any school from the Top 30 is an established institution, instantly recognized for its education, service and top-notch, driven students. On the other hand, the schools themselves will strive to capture the best students, as well as to be a part of their *alumni* journey. It is for this reason that these schools were chosen to be interviewed.

3.3. How was the study conducted?

Interviews were conducted to schools' personnel responsible for the activities towards *alumni*. These interviews were done through Skype taking approximately 30 minutes. The interviewees were asked questions from a questionnaire, which is in *Exhibit 1*.

3.4. What was expected to be found?

These schools are the best business schools, and thus, they are fully aware of the benefits *alumni* relations can bring to their institution. The expectations were that the majority of the schools would have strong relationships with their *alumni*. These *alumni* initiatives would be mostly Internet based, given their low cost and high reach, nonetheless they would have a great impact on their subjects, as *alumni* wish to keep in contact with their schools as their careers progress. Although schools might not be aware, the IDIC model will likely be the base process to initiate, maintain and grow sustainable relationships with their *alumni*. Furthermore, facing the confusion in the literature regarding measuring a CRM strategy's success, it should be important to analyze how the interviewed schools perform this task. Finally, in order for their relationship to be sustainable in the long run, schools would need to alter their culture or organization to accommodate the new CRM frame of mind and technology. These schools suffered through several changes, at all levels of the institution – big technological investments, departmental changes and employee changes – to allow them to reach their goal of *alumni* relations.

4. Analysis & Discussion

The approach to the study was to conduct a content analysis of the answers given to each question, from the questionnaire (Exhibit 1), individually and retrieve the appropriate conclusions. All answers were captured and can be seen in Exhibit 2. Analysis and conclusions about each topic are presented below.

Q.1	*Do you have any activities focused on the alumni?* Although in several stages of implementation, all schools interviewed are pursuing activities with their *alumni*. They stated *alumni* as an important segment that should be carefully analyzed and pursued. One of the interviewees explained the model the school uses to interact with the *alumni* – the membership mode*l*, as opposed to the free model. As it can be interpreted by the interviews, the free model gives *alumni* all the services the school is able to provide and the student decides what he/she would like, or not like, to receive. The same interviewee asserts this model to be more focused on fundraising as a way to finance most of the *alumni* activities. The membership model asks *alumni* for a membership fee for full access to the services offered by the school, while those who do not pay are either not part of the *alumni* network, or receive a smaller amount of services. Also, the financing to support all these services is guaranteed through these fees.
Q.2	*Which activities do you have?* The schools interviewed have a clear idea of the projects they want to initiate to have a sustainable relation with their *alumni*. They claim they are offering activities to their *alumni*, which can be classified as communication,

	education/professional and social activities. Communication activities are the ones used by schools to reach out to their alumni. Newsletters were the main activity chosen by the interviewees to relay the institutions' news and achievements. Magazines were also mentioned by one of the schools. Education/professional activities are those that improve the *alumni*'s resume or knowledge about a specific topic. As examples, schools mentioned conferences, both accessible live or virtually, classes, access to the library of cases, articles and other research materials. Finally, the social activities are those in which *alumni* get together in a social and non-professional way. Schools stated dinner or cocktail parties, as examples of social events that are arranged, both locally and internationally and that promote networking. Also, they stated that they are a great way to meet old colleagues.
Q.3	*What are the strategic goal you hope to reach by reaching out and creating relationships with the alumni?* Each school stated its own version of a strategic goal towards their *alumni*, although, ultimately, they all seek the same. Two of the schools stressed the importance of having relationships with the *alumni* as they are the main stakeholders of the school – *alumni* will always be part of the school, long after they finished studying there. It is this sense of belonging that all schools want to promote and grow. *Alumni* are ambassadors of the brand, as stated, and all these schools have brands to be broadcasted. *Alumni* want to give back to the school and their feedback is very important for the school's growth. It is because of this that Universities seek long-term relations with their *alumni*. Every school is looking for ways to keep the *alumnus* close, connected and

	engaged – this is their main goal. In the long run, as it was mentioned by one of the interviewees, schools seek financial support.
Q.4	*What do your alumni seek from the university?* Schools believe they have a clear picture on what *alumni* want from them. It was declared that *alumni* want to communicate with their Faculty – *alumni* want to be closer to their school and give their feedback; – educational/professional opportunities – from conferences, classes, to networking opportunities; and – social events – parties, networking and other events that bring them together with old colleagues as well as meet new ones.
Q.5	*Do you differentiate alumni? According to which criteria?* Schools started with the first step towards a sustainable relationship – Identification. *Alumni* Relations Department start by trying to know as much as they can about their *alumni* through 1-to-1 communications, social media, like Facebook or LinkedIn, or the information provided by the other departments. Another method of identification, as explained by two of the schools interviewed, is through the discovery of the *key alumnus* – an *alumnus* that could be used as a representative, as he/she would know about old colleagues and is in the position to work as an intermediate between the *Alumni* Relations Office and other *alumni*. Schools claimed that they would then proceed with differentiation, by using generic criteria, such as geography, age, working status, industry they worked in, and interests.
Q.6	*In what ways do you interact with alumni?* All interviewees stressed the importance to always keep a close contact with the *alumni*, so that they feel connected to the school. One school

	mentioned that constant communication is key for a long relationship. While some activities serve as interaction, like the newsletter, schools declared that most of the interactions are done either one-to-one, by phone, by e-mail, or through social media, like Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn. One of the schools said that most of its interactions with its *alumni* were done through LinkedIn, arguing the platform is a quick method of obtaining feedback from their *alumni*.
Q.7	*How do you customize the information to satisfy each alumnus' needs?* Schools referred that, once differentiation is done, every content, event, conference, newsletter, can be, to some extent, customizable for the *alumni*. But, as mentioned by one of the interviewees, the *Alumni* Office could not go to the point where the content is customizable to satisfy each individual need and characteristics – they do not have the resources or the time to do so. Interviewees claimed they group those with similar characteristics and deliver the service that satisfies that group. As exemplified by one of the schools, institutional communication is done to every *alumnus*, but some news or events are made specifically for one group, and not communicated to others. Also, interviewees claim that their schools can customize *alumni* initiatives, while only one school mentioned its *alumni* could customize their contents themselves, without having to inform the school. The other three schools, though, claim they have plans to allow for such actions to occur in the future.
Q.8	*Which metrics are you using to measure the success of your initiative?* Schools announced effective metrics for the evaluation of an initiative. In fact, one of the schools argued that any school could use simple metrics and

	focus their attention on satisfying their *alumni*. It maintained that metrics like attendance and feedback of an event or a conference, can reveal a lot about that initiative. Moreover, it asserted that social media, like LinkedIn, could be used to create surveys and thus giving an immediate insight on the success of a future initiative. While, another defended that these metrics allowed for their *alumni* department to examine their initiatives as a tool to better serve *alumni*. It stressed that Google Analytics can draw several analyses and conclusions by analyzing the clicks of a page, what was read or, how the user reached a certain page. Similarly, another school claimed that the CRM system used could also provide useful information to make decisions, but only concerning initiatives made using the system. Furthermore, the school that adopted a membership model announced that the actual payment of the fee could be seen as a metric. Lastly, schools were not asked about CRM globally and its success, and they did not spontaneously talk about it.
Q.9	*Did you find an improvement in the relationship with your alumni? In which ways?* Two of the schools interviewed claimed they had just started their CRM analysis and assessment, so no improvements were found, yet. The other two realized that their systems and strategies allowed for closer relationships. One of the interviewees asserted the importance of LinkedIn in the creation of more personal relationships and thus, satisfying *alumni* needs to a higher degree.
Q.10	*Are these strategies proving to be successful? If not, what will you do? What will you change?* All schools stated that their strategies are being successful, and that

	their *alumni*'s feedback is very positive. Three of the schools relayed that their biggest failures were due to lack of proper communication – an event, or conference that did not receive the expected turnout due to weak communications to the targeted *alumni*. It was also mentioned by one of the interviewees that *alumni* benefits were too physically tied to the institution. It was also claimed that, due to the increasing international exposure the school's programs were having, these *alumni* benefits needed to be accessible anywhere, concluding that their strategies were quickly reexamined.
Q.11	*How do you engage and manage your alumni? Through a CRM platform? Which one?* Schools asserted to use a CRM platform. Two of the four interviewed schools used the platform SalesForce, while another used a SAP system and Microsoft Dynamics. The fourth interviewee claimed the school used a custom-made platform for their *alumni* relations.
Q.12	*Did you find that this CRM platform helped in accomplishing such activities?* Schools recognized the benefits of discarding the Excel files and using a single database as being very time saving. Two of the schools stated that the implementation of their CRM platform was too recent for them to be aware of its full capabilities. The other two schools claimed some functionalities were missing – integration with their e-mail systems, or payment systems, but one concluded by stressing that a system is only as good as the people who input the necessary information into it.
Q.13	*Which functions are able to access this information? Do they access it?*

	Will they access it in the future? Interviewees declared that other departments do not have access to the same database or the same system, while recognized the importance of a single database. They also state to have plans to implement a single platform.
Q.14	*How would you classify the level of engagement of workers with your CRM goals? Far below desired? Desired? Far above desired?* Only school stated that the level of engagement was above desired level. Two of the other three interviewees claimed the engagement to be below desired. The other one declared that it was below the desired level, but maintained that this engagement was improving and reaching desired levels.
Q.15	*Were cultural or organizational changes necessary to implement the CRM initiatives? Or to implement the technological changes? What were these changes and how did you make them?* Schools realized that the investment in CRM did not need major changes at a technological level, but at organizational and cultural level. In fact, the schools reacted in two different ways when dealing with the changing cultural and organizational needs – continuous process – employees carryout the change in CRM set of mind and its importance to the satisfaction of *alumni* needs; – or new team – a fresh team is implemented accommodating the new strategy from scratch. One of the interviewees claimed that in the school several organizational changes were needed to adapt to the new *alumni* strategies. Another interviewee relayed that there was impending need to reach out and create relationships with their *alumni*, and thus, the school set out to create an *Alumni* Relations Office.

5. Conclusions & Recommendations

5.1. Main Conclusion: Theory vs. Practice

Before recommendations to NOVA School of Business and Economics are made, one must evaluate the schools' knowledge of their CRM strategies towards their *alumni*, with the theory presented by the articles and cases in the literature review.

There are two aspects that need to be stressed – know your customer and organization over technology. The first aspect is the fact that in CRM, one must know the customer. These schools believe to have a picture of what they want and what they hope to achieve. They believe they know their customer – their *alumni*. They have shown that, in order to give their *alumni* what they want and maintain a sustainable, long-term relationship, they need to be familiar with them; differentiate them according to who they are, what they like, and what they want; constantly communicate and record every interaction with them; and customize the services to satisfy their individual needs.

The second aspect is that these institutions have clearly put the organization over the technology. These schools realized the importance of managing their *alumni* relations and thus, they have invested in CRM initiatives. A part of these initiatives is, in fact, investing in technology, but studies have shown that one of the main causes of CRM failure is focusing too much on the technical aspects. In fact, these institutions have embraced the technology, but did not let it overpower their goal. One of the interviewees pointed out that these technologies are highly dependent on the data that is put into it. The employees responsible for the input of data need to realize the importance of this task – decisions are being made based on the information inserted and if the information is wrong, decisions will, most likely, be wrong as well. So, these institutions have arranged to input this mindset in their employees, which allows for better-informed decisions, which in turn will result in better and more positive relationships with the *alumni*.

5.2. Other Conclusions Found

There are other conclusions that can be taken from the interviews and the analysis.

- The topic of CRM strategies towards *alumni* is still being discovered – for both the academic world, and for business schools. It is still a new area, and it appears that schools are still trying to find out the best way to manage and interact with their *alumni*. So, despite having strong relationships with their *alumni*, as predicted, schools realize that more can be done. Namely, a single database throughout a university provides high flow of information, and could prevent several hassles, such as contacting *alumni* for information the school is already suppose to have.
- These schools had several of their activities as online-based, but an equal amount of non-online activities – conferences, classes, parties and networking events. These activities can be, in a general manner, divided into three classes – communication, educational/professional and social.
- The IDIC model explains the process that will lead to long-lasting relationships. Although schools have shown that they follow the steps, demonstrating its importance, no reference to the model was made.

- No school mentioned analyzing CRM strategy as a whole, but only their initiatives. This might be due to the confusion in the literature on which metrics are the best to assess the success of a CRM strategy. Schools might tend to measure their initiatives as a way to gather some short-term data and through the analysis of multiple initiatives they will be able to measure the strategy's long-term success.
- Finally, these schools are fully aware of the changes needed to accommodate CRM, and they are completely willing to make them – departmental changes, to accommodate new needs, and employee changes, to accommodate a new strategy and a new culture. However, no big investments were required, as there are simple CRM platforms that could be implemented to satisfy the most urgent needs.

5.3. Recommendations: NOVA School of Business and Economics

Given the gathered results and NOVA School of Business and Economics' (NOVA SBE) (Lisbon, Portugal) specific situation, it is possible to recommend a course of action to best take advantage of the relationship with the *alumni*. This course of action can be split into short-term recommendations and medium to long-term recommendations.

The most immediate, short-term actions that NOVA SBE can perform are:

- Gather more *alumni* information: this school needs a database with more accurate information regarding its *alumni*. In order to speed this process, the *Alumni* Office should take full advantage of social media – Facebook to capture the youngest generation, LinkedIn to capture a more mature generation. Also, for the older generation that might not have social networks, the school needs to identify them by firstly identifying that class' *key alumnus*.

- Understand and refine *alumni* needs: in order to take advantage of all the potential benefits as soon as possible, NOVA should try and investigate, through the usage of LinkedIn or their CRM platform SalesForce, what their *alumni* want. Namely, gather feedback to proposals of *alumni* activities directly from their former students. This will allow for the *Alumni* Office to line up a number of events, their theme and foresee their success.
- Customize school contents visible to alumni: it is important that, once a 2-way interaction has been established, and information about the *alumni* and their needs is gathered, *alumni* are able to customize the information they would like to receive, as well as any other additional information like areas of interest or their current job. This information should provide further insight into the preferences of the *alumni*.
- Focus on communication activities: they are cheap, which means that the school can satisfy their *alumni* needs without spending scarce resources. Newsletters, e-mails and others types of one-to-one communication will surely help NOVA SBE gather a *alumni* information.
- Invest in education/professional activities: conferences, classes and other education/professional events, they should have high attendance, and can be a source of financing for further activities, despite its potential costs.

Furthermore, NOVA SBE could implement initiatives in a medium to long-term:

- Invest in *alumni* magazines: this communication activity is quite expensive and requires several other complementary investments, but it is a good way to relay institutional information, as well as achievements of the faculty, staff, students and *alumni* themselves.

- Invite *alumni* to social events: these activities should not be disregarded. Although they are costly and generate low return, social initiatives are a good way of showing the *alumni* community concern, and a way to give them, and the school, recognition. The benefit of social activities is the networking it provides to the *alumni*, and to the school itself – NOVA can find interesting business opportunities that should allow it to grow and deliver its services in a more efficient manner. Also, an *alumni* award ceremony could gather positive feedback, and it would be a good opportunity for networking, a celebration of *alumni's* accomplishments and a good opportunity to do fundraising.

6. Limitations & Future Research

The thesis has some limitations that prevented it from providing better tools for *alumni* relations. The first is that there is a lack of literature concerning CRM and *alumni* relations, which means that several deductions had to be made from CRM for corporations or non-profit organizations. Another limitation was the lack of response from the schools, making it difficult to obtain more insight into the current CRM strategies for *alumni*.

As it was mentioned in the methodology, this thesis was intended to be a qualitative research of current CRM practices being applied to *Alumni* by the Financial Times Top 30 Business Schools. As for the recommended future research, this study is missing a continuation into a quantitative research. A qualitative study provides insight, while a quantitative research should provide validation on quantification of the hypothesis raised in the research:

H1: "Adopting the membership fee model leads to higher donations from *alumni*";

H2: "Social activities lead to higher donations from *alumni*";

H3: "Education/professional activities lead to more satisfied *alumni*";

H4: "Social media initiatives are the most effective in bringing *alumni* into the *alumni* network";

H5: "SalesForce is the platform that better satisfies the needs of *Alumni* Relations Office";

H6: "A new team can more effectively achieve the CRM goals".

Conclusions on these hypotheses, and others may put us on the right track to provide business schools worldwide tools to better deliver *alumni* value.

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8. Appendices

Exhibit 1 – Questionnaire

Alumni:

1. Do you have any activities focused on the alumni?
2. Which activities do you have?
3. What are the strategic goal you hope to reach by reaching out and creating relationships with the alumni?

IDIC Model:

4. What do your alumni seek from the university?
5. Do you differentiate alumni? According to which criteria?
6. In what ways do you interact with alumni?
7. How do you customize the information to satisfy each alumnus' needs?

Assessing Success:

8. Which metrics are you using to measure the success of your initiative?
9. Did you find an improvement in the relationship with your alumni? In which ways?
10. Are these strategies proving to be successful? If not, what will you do? What will you change?

Technology & Organization:

11. How do you engage and manage your alumni? Through a CRM platform? Which one?

12. Did you find that this CRM platform helped in accomplishing such activities?
13. Which functions are able to access this information? Do they access it? Will they access it in the future?
14. How would you classify the level of engagement of workers with your CRM goals? Far below desired? Desired? Far above desired?
15. Were cultural or organizational changes necessary to implement the CRM initiatives? Or to implement the technological changes? What were these changes and how did you make them?

Exhibit 2 – Interviews Analysis

School 1

Alumni	Interview	Interpretation
Q1	"Este departamento faz 2 coisas: 2 áreas em termos de CRM – frente externa que no lifecycle do aluno vai desde candidato até aluno até alumni. Nós focamo-nos nesta frente de alumni, mas que numa perpectiva de CRM de alumni, um alumni também é um contacto corporate. Também trabalha numa empresa."	Yes, they do. They combine Alumni relation with corporate relations, taking advantage of the emotional connection alumni have with the school to be a source of corporate relationship.
Q2	"Foi identificado que queríamos fazer uma newsletter regular, uma explicação aos alumni. Uma newsletter regular."; "(...) se eu quero fazer jantares por ano, por exemplo, que é uma forma gira de eu fazer com que eles se revejam e que se aproximem da escola (...)"; "Depois em meio internacional, tem-se feito cocktails. Há 2, 3 anos que se faz cocktail internacionais também nos vários..."	Newsletters, Dinners, Cocktail parties.
Q3	"Nós definimos 3 áreas, focos para essa estratégia – communicate, interact and engage. (...) o alumni é o	Alumni is the main stakeholder of the School, and keeping him close, connected and engaged with the school should be

	principal stakeholder da faculdade – uma pessoa que sai da faculdade, para toda a vida será aluno dessa escola. (...) O objectivo final é ter as pessoas próximas da escola. Ter os alumni na órbita da escola. E a interagir com a escola."	the main objective.
Q4	"É um misto. (...) nós identificamos aqueles que estão em quadros chave... (...) aqueles que são top alumni são identificados, aqueles que tiveram determinado percurso. (...) Porque também são pessoas que tipicamente superaram a média, e que são pessoas têm perfis interessantes para passar aos estudantes, são pessoas que tipicamente são mobilizadoras (...). (…) se calhar é um contacto mais 1-to-1."	There is a pursuit of knowledge to be aware and to fully know a alumnus and what kind of person he/she was when he studied at NOVA. When they find a key alumnus, they ask him/her for more information about his/her classmates. It is also thought this alumnus, that they push their events. Besides the key alumnus, those alumni that hold key positions or have interesting careers are also of importance. Generally, the differentiation is made through 1-to-1 communications.
Q5	"Há 4 áreas chave pelas quais um antigo aluno se aproxima da escola. (...) Há 4 áreas chave – as pessoas tendem a olhar para a sua escola quando repensam a carreira, pensam no trabalho, saber os outros estão a fazer (...); networking – estão dispostos a vir cá para voltar a encontrar os amigos, para saber o que é que eles andam a fazer, ou porque querem simplesmente montar uma empresa e querem perceber quem é que são os antigos alunos que podem	Alumni want networking opportunities for personal and career starting chances and career growth. They want to be reunited with their colleagues. They want to improve their knowledge and learn more. They want to be involved in the school's activities.

	ajudar a vender num pais distante e estejam la pessoas da nova em que possam ajudar nisso. Uma terceira frente é knowledge – as pessoas procuram uma business school, porque a business school está ligada a conhecimento. As pessoas ao longo da vida podem procurar a escola por causa de knowledge e podem procurar a escola para se envolver... get involved. Gostavam de ser mentores, give back, gostavam de patrocinar, de ser speaker (...)."	
Q6	"A nossa ideia é comunicar regularmente e ao mesmo tempo desenvolver iniciativas de interação. (…) iniciativas (…) em que nos interagimos com todos os antigos alunos (...); e iniciativas (…) por grupos, e vamos construindo grupo dos antigos alunos empreendedores, de marketing, de finanças, porque o que interessa a um antigo aluno pode não interessar a outro. (...) Esses sim tem uma estratégia one-to-one. Portanto, transversal, por grupos de interesse e one-to-one." "[(…) a forma mais directa neste momento de contacto, é email, telefone, eventos, e a partir daí conseguem agarra-los.] "	Constant communication is key. Institutional communication that goes out to everyone. Specific information for specific groups of alumni. One-to-one strategies for smaller numbers of important alumnus. Right now, the interaction is done by talking to them and asking for information and profiling them.
Q7	"Nós sabemos que aquele perfil é de uma determinada	By identifying the alumnus, Nova offers and asks specific

	maneira. Por exemplo, se tens antigos alunos que são CEO's, é óbvio que eles vão convidados para poderem vir a ser speakers. (...) Aqui o trabalho é um misto de as pessoas trazerem, de haver outros antigos alunos que dizem vai falar com este, fala com aquele, este tem interesse, este está assim, este está assado, como nós irmos convidando proactivamente."; "(...) iniciativas (…) que são por grupos, e vamos construindo grupo dos antigos alunos empreendedores, de marketing, de finanças, porque o que interessa a um antigo aluno pode não interessar a outro."	thinks for him. Customization is done by the school. But also, because alumni want to get involved, they might offer to provide something that is missing. They want to be involved.
Q8	"Pelas respostas. E medimos... porque nós conseguimos ver quem é que clica e quem é que não clica. Nós usamos um software de CRM ligado ao SalesForce, que me permite saber quem é que carregou onde, e que items abriu e o que não abriu. E eu consigo medir que tipo de conteúdos que as pessoas carregam mais. Isso é CRM."	A metric currently being used is the number of responses to a certain initiative and the number of new alumni information gathered through it. Also, the platform provides certain analytics, like the number of clicks, what was clicked, etc.
Q9	"(...) dessa newsletter, de pessoas que por iniciativa própria mandaram e-mails a pedir para actualizar os dados e queriam receber a nossa newsletter, e pessoas que depois de terem recebido essa comunicação regular mais umas	Even though this was just started, from the newsletters, dozen replies came, so, the relationship is already improving. Now, its about knowing them better, and delivering what they want.

	informações que enviamos aos antigos alunos sobre o novo campus, vieram dizer que estão dispostas a interagir (...).”	
Q10	“(...) posso dizer que mais de 1 dezena de pessoas logo nos dias a seguir e... tem vindo a descer, que tem havido menos comunicação. Cada vez que há comunicação por e-mail ha mais uma data de pessoas que mandam mails por iniciativa própria.”; "Que tenham corrido mal eu não tenho exemplos neste momento que isto é muito recente. Mas daqui a 1 ano tenho de certeza. (...) Portanto não consigo dar dados concretos ou fazer uma análise. Não tenho track record suficiente."	So far, they are, since they had a lot of positive responses and several alumni reached out to nova wanting to engage. They just started their alumni strategies, and thus, no negative stories to tell, so far.
Q11	“Então, nós estamos a montar, através de um software de CRM chamado SalesForce nós estamos a registar todo os tipos de interacções, desde setembro, que existem entre antigos alunos e actuais alunos. E com esta base de dados actualizada... eu estou a desenvolver a BD em 2 sentidos – em actualizar os contactos dos alumni, que são chave para CRM e ao mesmo tempo a registar nessa base de dados todas as interacções que eles têm com eles."	They use the platform SalesForce to manage the alumni. In this, they register every interaction between the office and current and previous students, as well as updating their database.
Q12	"Estamos a implementá-lo. Não existia há uns meses atrás.	They are starting from scratch, thus they are still learning

	Estamos nesta semana a ter formação sobre carregamento de dados e gestão dos relatórios e optimização."; "Ainda não conseguimos dizer. Está identificado que é preciso usar um software para CRM, e está implementado... a 1º fase, que é preparar os dados, carregar as coisas e a informação."	about the full capabilities of the platform. They still don't know whether it fully answers all their requirements for alumni relations.
Q13	"A ideia é que todos os que têm relações externas usem o software."	They are the only ones, or one of the few, who use the platform.
Q14	"Existia uma área de marketing e relações externas, que tinha desde o marketing aos antigos alunos, até ao marketing institucional, e toda esta parte de relações externas. E percebeu-se que se tinha de se partir... tinha que se de criar uma área nova, (…)."	One could conclude that the school, only now implementing their CRM related objectives for alumni, means that the level of engagement is still below desired.
Q15	"Existia uma área de marketing e relações externas, que tinha desde o marketing aos antigos alunos, até ao marketing institucional, e toda esta parte de relações externas. E percebeu-se que se tinha de se partir... tinha que se de criar uma área nova, (…)."; "Em termos de cultura, como é uma área nova, as pessoas vão ter de se adaptar. (…) é uma área que muitas áreas internas pediam que houvesse."	The idea is for this to be the ultimate place where information comes. The schools realized the need for alumni relations, and quickly tried to fulfill it, by creating a department that dealt with the need. The culture was immediately set to be the "proper" one, and people will adapt to it.

School 2

Alumni	Interview	Interpretation
Q1	"Yes."	Yes.
Q2	"2 times a year we organize a really big event where our whole team is involved. That's an alumni day. Where we have content speakers about a specific theme and leadership (…). Then, we have industry specific events (...) for example we organize specifically for supply chain management, for marketing, one for... that sort of things. That can be like a conference, but it can also be company visit, once we had a simulation game (...). Then, we also have events together with students, organized, usually, by the student association. We invite alumni for those events to either attend or advise students on… how is it to work at a consultancy company. Next, we also have local chatter events, which are organized by our alumni working and living abroad for other alumni who are living in that same city or same country."	Alumni day with themes and guest speakers. Industry specific events. Student events and alumni are invited as mentors. Chatter events for alumni working and living abroad to meet.
Q3	"It's to build a strong network, which we can use for	The school wants to build strong networks and hearing for

	recruitment of new student but also graduate recruitment. Where we can use input from alumni to improve our school activities, like the programs we have. Also, giving advice to students. And, on the longer term it is financial support and in return we'd like to offer alumni life long learning and possibilities."	alumni inputs to improve the school can only help. In the long run, the school seeks financial support, and in return, offers more learning opportunities for their alumni.
Q4	"We are now doing that for people in different areas, on different places on the globe and also in different industries. We are not yet doing that for people in different age categories, that something we are now exploring how we could do that more in the future. (...) For a large category, in our database, in our CRM system, we register where they work and what kind of industries they are interested in. Next to that, because our database in not always completely up to date, we have different linked in groups to group people who have things in common (...). (...) People can also invite themselves, if they think that they want to be part of a different group than we group them in. Next to the social media, we also ask for our alumni for ideas and for what they are missing in our current activities and what they	Differentiation is done by geography and industry. They register onto the CRM system all interactions and all relevant information. Also, LinkedIn allows for the creation of some groups, which allows for differentiation to occur. Also, 1-to-1 communications.

	would like to see more and more."	
Q5	"I think, the networking opportunity, so staying connected with other alumni, and using them for what they need. The life from learning, as I spoke. Staying up to date about scientific research. And I also think alumni like to stay updated about what kind of things are changing here at the university, how things are done differently, and… as they would like to contribute to making our school better for future students."	Alumni seek networking opportunities, learning opportunities (up to date with scientific research), school news.
Q6	"We use a lot of social media. (…) 4 times a year, we have a digital newsletter.(...) [Also, when we] have an event [on a specific area], we filter on our database all the alumni that are working in [that specific area] and we sent them for e-mail, an invitation for the event as well."	Social media - LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter; newsletter; e-mail.
Q7	"From the information that we have about them, we can customize the information that we sent them. And we also have a portal where they can look in themselves. We ask them to update the data there as well. If they don't tell us, or don't inform us, we look them up via social media and we try to make it as accurate, ourselves, as we can."	The customization is done by the school or by the alumni himself, by asking to receive certain information. By updating their information, customization is possible, otherwise, the school tries to be as accurate as possible, by investigating the alumnus.

Q8	"We've just started with that. In the past, it hasn't been done. (...) For our websites, we use Google analytics to see what kind of things people visit, what kind of things they read, how do they go through our website. I'm also analyzing our database. Every 3 months I check how things have been changed since the past 3 months (…). And, something we already did before I started, was evaluations after events. But that's mainly, to see what's the topic relevant for the audiences, what could we improve. (...) For the newsletter, we were already checking before, how many people opened the newsletter, and how many people clicked after reading an article, and we didn't know which article they read and where they were clicking to. But now, since a couple of weeks, we started with Google analytics, and now we can also see how they continue to our website and what they are looking for there."	Google analytics - what was read, what did they visit, how did get to the website. Improvement of database updates. Evaluation of events - attendance, feedback.
Q9	"Not yet, we haven't collected that much data, so we are not able to see any improvements."	Not yet. Success assessment has just started. Not enough information.
Q10	"Last year, 2012, we canceled our alumni day, which is an annual event, because we didn't have a lot of people	Generally, yes. They had problems with some, which revealed some communication and feedback issues. Communicated

	subscribing to attend. After that, we checked why people didn’t subscribe and we also let them vote for topic for next year. And we really questioned ourselves, but also our alumni, is it worth to organize it next year again, or is it something we should stop it. This year, 2013, we had 150 participants, where we expected at least 75."; "It was a combination of factors. First of all, it wasn’t communicated really well and marketed really well. Topic wasn’t interesting for a lot of alumni. Also, the weather expectations were really good, so also people who would usually subscribe last minute, they didn’t subscribe this time, because they wanted to do something else, where they could enjoy the weather and not sit inside and… so we also, because of that, we changed the date, we put it in April instead of June. To make it more appetizing."	better, ask for feedback, and opinion. Take care of other factors - weather.
Q11	"We are using SAP system. We’ve been using since 3 years."	SAP system for 3 years.
Q12	"Yes, it is saving a lot of time, in keeping all the data updated, not having excel lists anymore to keep it up to date, but just a system where students who graduate are	Saves time, since they don't have to use several excel sheets, it's all in one place. But some functionalities are missing - not integrated with e-mail systems, payment systems - so the

	automatically uploaded in the system, so that also saves a lot of time. (...) Because at this moment we can send e-mails from the system, or with the system, but we can't track how many people opened the e-mail or which e-mail subscribed for that particular e-mail. (…) Now we don't have the data, in our database, which alumni has been sent which e-mail, we would like to keep track of that. The same goes for events. In our CRM system, is not possible to pay for an event. (...) Because now we still have to manually register who is coming to which event, so that you can also see the track record of someone, or history."	tracking of these students is trickier.
Q13	"No, we have different databases, different systems. We work with SAP and the student administration work with Microsoft Dynamics. So it's a different system, which is also making it more difficult. (...) their student file is not uploaded. Only their contact details and what kind of program did they graduate from, but not their entire student history, so we are missing that. (...) Yes, there are plans for the students department. They are now organizing it or have been finalized, because there were also different systems for	Functions have different databases. Once the student graduates, he/she is transferred to the alumni database, but the department has to input all the information in.

	the exam registration and student registration. (...) I think high. Because we are more far ahead than other faculties, we are usually asked to think on the goals to help implement them, to test new things that have been implemented."	
Q14	"I think high. Because we are more far ahead than other faculties, we are usually asked to think on the goals to help implement them, to test new things that have been implemented. So I think high."	The level of engagement is high.
Q15	"[The department] has been there for quite a while, but the people who are sitting there, right now, are rather new. So we started with a fresh team and are… a fresh strategy. I started 6 months ago and my colleagues started 1 year ago. And we are now going in a different direction than the team before us."	New people in the department more easily allowed for the right culture to be implemented as well as the right strategy.

School 3

Alumni	Interview	Interpretation
Q1	"Yes (...) Regarding our school, the alumni association is a… internally has a very specific division, but its part of the school. So its sort of an independent unit, as in other business schools acts… committee of alumni themselves. (...) Internally, it is a department, a division, it's part of the [school] but externally it is regulated by these bylaws and involving the alumni more on the volunteer basis. Of course they are always volunteers, but also to be very transparent on how we manage the incomes, which comes from membership fees, which is also different from other business schools that are based on fundraising or through donors. (...) The difference between alumni and members are those ones who are paying the membership fee. For (…) the alumni we keep some services that are for all those who finish programs at [the school], but not all of them become members."	Yes. The system works differently, as alumni need to pay a membership fee to enjoy all of the benefits provided by the school. Also, the alumni relations department is an independent entity, although still part of the school. It is composed of alumni who decide the activities and initiatives to implement, among other activities.
Q2	"We could divide into different clusters, what we call education. We have from conference (...). For education, we offer not only these conferences, web-seminars, e-	Education - conferences offered live and online, as well as web-seminars, also accessible in iPad and other devices, library of research from Harvard with cases, articles, etc., a magazine. Career

	conferences, so we combine conferences with online services. These conferences, not all of them, (…) are recorded and then offered specifically to the members of the alumni association. We can connect through the laptops or iPad system and attend the conference live. (...) Also, they have as members, full access to research portal, but also related to education, they can find some articles through cases (...) Plus in a specific issue, we have an alumni issue (...) similar to Harvard review, (...) it's under subscription, but for members, again, it is free (…). Then we have another cluster of services around career development. (...) So I developed in this area services through a platform. We compiled a huge number of materials that our faculty developed in different areas. (...) Also, help to develop your network, how to manage your (...) interviews, CV, etc. Now that we created this job portal, we can just take all the information from LinkedIn, have this information in the cloud so they can use in other portals (...) Then we have another one that we call network, pure network, that we support and organize important meeting (…)."	Development - platform with materials for self-assessment and development, network, job portal (through LinkedIn), also cloud accessible. Network - meetings, classes, events, get togethers, global alumni reunion at the many campuses.

Q3	"This reflects, in terms of, "pertenencia", the identification of our alumni." "(...) So with this idea in mind, because it is our specialization in management, so we try to help and develop better managers, and more realistic managers, also adding these humanistic values. (...) It just means that we try to develop leader who are ethical leaders and are acting to provoke the best for the stakeholders, but also concerning that they are managing people within the organization that are part of the society. (...) So the first aim is to give a lot of services compared to other business schools. (...) That is why we also create… make a lot of research through these cases, that we produce. (...) Of course being close to these people, making decisions and helping them on these decisions and education, its clear that we again are quite towards that mission."	To increase the sense of belonging, promote good, ethical values on their students, and make a contribution to society by creating leaders. Bring out the best of their stakeholder. Be the most provider of services, make a lot of research.
Q4	"(...) when we ask them to evaluate the programs. So that's the first main link when we offer them to become members. And also, we have a quite intensive sales process, contained by (...) program and faculty for them to understand we are not offering services, we are offering to just give back to the	Differentiation is done by program, by the membership fee, the events serve as a way to know them better, to identify the proper ones, and also, in their class, knowing them is differentiating them.

	school and be close to the school. (...) We are smaller, with personalization and dedication from the faculty and staff. (…) For them is an opportunity to meet their faculty, their colleagues (...), but also some activities that they arrange by themselves. (...) Once we identify, you could be the president of the class (...), could be from close friends, people that the president and some members of the board identify as more active in the area, eager in helping and giving ideas. (...) We also have people who are not part of [the official association], but are still contributing and helping the alumni community."	
Q5	"Depends on the profession cycle they are and depends on the age. Not the same approach from a MBA from a senior executive who are taking this year's programs (...). Network aspects and the services can help them in certain moments of the activity or their life. (...) Its because its an investment for them to be part of this extensive community and of course it's a way to give support, also helping some research projects from our faculty, or supporting the education of our faculty."	Depends on the professional cycle and age; they look for education, network, working opportunities, and services to help them. They want to be a part of the school, give back through research projects, supporting education of the faculty.

Q6	"[We interact through phone, e-mail, etc.] It's a constant combination. (…) Many alumni are in contact with the dean, or me, or the president of the committee, they consider them family. We are always open to opinions. It's not an organization that is detached from the rest. They are very corporative."	Internet, phone, classes, several events, and they may enter into direct contact with the dean, president of the alumni committee or some other responsible.
Q7	"Yes. It is through the interaction that we can customize the information."	The information is customizable.
Q8	"In term of usage. [Attendance is] one of the metrics. (...) The other is usage of certain services, through internet, e-conferences. Career development became very important, due to the economical circumstances, so it's a key service for many of our alumni, so we measure this. Another one is level of affiliation (…). We also have an economic review exclusively for alumni (…). We use these metrics, mainly, but we also created when we saw people only evaluating services. Not discounts because you can destroy yourself in terms of pricing, and we are more for the area of a range of services, rather than [just one] service, that really then position us as a service vendor, and nothing else. People are	Attendance of events, and conferences and such. Usage of services. Affiliation - reacting in advance as they choose to stop paying the membership and all of these allow for a proper delivery of services to those who need and want it. Leads are also bought.

	not only part of this not only for services, its about being part of an exclusive community, etc. For us the metric of affiliation, we’d react in advance when they decide to leave the association, so we have personalized or customized services for certain period. If you say, I’m only interested in career services because I don’t use conferences, we’ll offer it for 1 year fee, but its not substantially reduced, but its less than the annual fee, and having only access to career services. We try not use it massively, because it can damage the positioning, but also we try to adapt to the needs of the alumni."	
Q9	"And I think the model is different from schools that focus on alumni association for fundraising. (…) In Europe is different because we don’t have the fiscal advantages of discounting donations, which is really an advantage in the American market. While Europe is not like that. (…) That is one of the reasons that we didn’t reach at the level of American business schools. (…) Of course we do some campaigns for fundraising for campuses but not in an annual basis."	Because of the model that they use, not necessarily focused on fundraising, closer to the American model, it's difficult, as they can't reach their level. But it is successful, as they have a high degree of affiliation.

Q10	"I think it is successful, but I'm ambitious. Or it is moving to communities that can sustain themselves, by their own interest. So, I know that these platforms that we try to develop, (…) are very important." "A campaign we did last year was more based… we were focused on having very good data, because you would be connected to your colleagues, the institution, but we had a low response. And then, we [changed the strategy]. Believe it or not, the reaction was amazing. We had almost 2/3 of the alumni updating the data. (…) Not we are combining this with the LinkedIn facility (…). So we always have to be in the alumni shoes. (…) You always need to identify the tipping point, to identify social profiles from the experts (…). I would really love to elaborate, as part of the CRM, an identification of these social profiles. It would guarantee the sustainability of these communities."	The strategies are successful. The majority of the alumni, 2/3, updated the data after a correction on the strategy. Also incorporating it with social media, like LinkedIn, and by trying to find out more thoroughly what alumni want.
Q11	"Now [the school] is involved in the process of the renewal of our systems. So, we are using SalesForce as a first tool and will be deployed to all divisions I think in the upcoming months."	Yes, through SalesForce.

Q12	"Not yet (…). I really knew technology was crucial for this community that is really diverse. (…) I think that for the natural work of the community, technology becomes crucial. Now [the school] is involved in the process of the renewal of our systems. (…) It will be a model that we will integrate that will give us more opportunities to better segment the needs not only by classes, geographically (…). We incorporated now, being inspired by our jobs platform, for me the tool you need to for a correct CRM system is to have a very healthy data. And with the existing network platform such as LinkedIn, Facebook, etc., I think instead of seeing them as enemies, we need to see them as allies. So, what we did is to adapt the internal profile for alumni and our customers. I am updating data that they can import from LinkedIn. (…) [We could use] this information (…), so that we can save time, and we don't have to ask twice. In the upcoming months, SalesForce and business intelligence units that will go together with CRM will be able to identify all the interest or create some new ones."	Not yet. The implementation is still being done, and a healthy set of data is still being gathered. This information will be gathered mostly through social media and every interaction with alumni is recorded – saves time and the schools do not need to ask the students twice for the same information.
Q13	"So, we are using SalesForce as a first tool and will be	It is not used by all the functions yet, as they haven't fully given in to

	deployed to all divisions I think in the upcoming months. (…) We incorporated now, being inspired by our jobs platform, for me the tool you need to for a correct CRM system is to have a very healthy data."	technology, through the renewal of systems, as it will allow for better segmentation. They need a set of healthy data.
Q14	"Not yet (…). I really knew technology was crucial for this community that is really diverse. (…) I think that for the natural work of the community, technology becomes crucial. Now [the school] is involved in the process of the renewal of our systems."	One could interpret that, since there is a renewal of the systems underway to accommodate the CRM objectives, that the level of engagement is still not up to par.
Q15	"Internally we are another division. We are one the first divisions to be heard. In many ways, we'll have a huge impact on the customer service. (…) It's an ongoing process of adapting and changing the minds and there is a need to see the importance of the alumni community. (…) My colleagues from all the divisions have a clear idea that they need as a showcase or as a lever. So approximately 60% of our prospects of future customers come from alumni endorsement, so its clear that, for them its important the alumni community."	The department and the people involved, and employees have a clear idea on what they need to do. There is a sense of a continuous process towards change, but people have it in their minds that this is a must needed change.

School 4

Alumni	Interview	Interpretation
Q1	"We have a series of activities that we do. We do segment the activities depending on who the alumni are, because, [the school] has a large executive education business with people… with programs specifically for their company, but also open companies. We also have a portfolio of masters programs, where people spend 1 or 2 years (...). I've done some alumni research in this area, and if you've spend 1 year or 2 years at [a school], you are going to have a much bigger emotional engagement and attachment rather than having on an open program, say, 1 week."	Yes. The school has alumni focused initiatives.
Q2	"I think the first thing to say is, its all about communication. So, we have a series of newsletter that we sent out to our alumni talking about the latest (…) research, our news and events for alumni. Events are an important part of what we do for alumni. (…) Events that we organize that our alumni are invited to, and (…) helping alumni to organize their own events. (…) The third, really, is building what I'd call the alumni network. The enormous benefit now that we have	Communicate - newsletters with research, events and news; events where alumni are invited or were helped in organizing; build alumni network; LinkedIn groups and discussions.

	people who work in alumni, platform such as LinkedIn… so, LinkedIn is a huge platform for us and we have around 4000 alumni on of our groups and there is a place where people (…) can come together and discuss things and meet and ask questions."	
Q3	"I think the first thing to say, and which I think most people would agree with, is that alumni are brilliant ambassadors for your brand, so if you can keep up good relationships… its important that you maintain good relationships with them. Related to that particularly on the masters side, is that they are very helpful to us in recruiting new students. I think the 3rd element is that they are very helpful as a base for all our research, because they are very keen to take part in research. And lastly, (…) as we are an executive education provider dealing with big companies, when people leave our masters program, some of them will go set up on their own, but some of them will go on to fairly senior positions in big companies, and so its important for us to maintain relationships with those people because that is where future business is won."	Alumni are ambassadors of the brand and good recruiters, so good relationships are important. Also, they like to take part in research. Finally, some of the students will have good corporate connection, which are important to contact.

Q4	"That's really all down to CRM database. We know the alumni that have been on masters programs and those that have been on executive education programs, so when we send out a newsletter, rather than sending a single newsletter to [every alumni], we will segment… now, some of the stories will remain the same, but some of them need to be adapted."	Alumni are differentiated by their program, their job and position in that job.
Q5	"I think a fundamental objective for them is very much the network. And I know when people are researching schools to go to, the alumni network is clearly a very important part that they look at, because when they have gone through the program they want to be part of a network where they can benefit from people in other organizations. (…) I think also the school is a source of useful information, and information resources. (…) As people rise up the career ladder, they need to be kept up to date with the latest management business thinking. And being an alumni of a business school, gives you access to that information. And then lastly, I would say, in more of a social element, generally, when they are part of alumni, particularly a masters community, they've had a	Alumni seek networking opportunities, learning opportunities, and social events.

	good time at a business school, they spent a long time there, they formed some very good friendships, and they want help in keeping up with people that they studied with."	
Q6	"The enormous benefit now that we have people who work in alumni, platform such as LinkedIn… so, LinkedIn is a huge platform for us and we have around 4000 alumni on of our groups and there is a place where people (…) can come together and discuss things and meet and ask questions. (...) But generally, I would say it is working. I think the biggest success we've had is using LinkedIn. And I think for people working in alumni relations, LinkedIn… or for a younger audience, Facebook… you know, these systems are fantastic, because, in the past, schools would spend huge amounts of money and time developing their own directories of people and, a great cost and expense in resources. And LinkedIn is ready made."	LinkedIn and other social media.
Q7	"Yes, in terms of contents for our newsletters, for example, we have very different… we write different contents for different audiences. (…) We also do the same with events, as well. If you are a freelance consultant, or again a chief	School customized the information based on the segmentation. School customized the content and events.

	executive, your needs are very different. So, it’s all about adapting events, adapting content, and making it relevant for the audience."	
Q8	"I think you can spend a lot of time coming up with metrics, but there are some very simple things you can do. So, for example… and I think online technology is brilliant. When we send out an e-newsletter, we could track, for example, which articles in the newsletter are the most popular by, which ones have been downloaded most, which ones have been read. Equally, for events, we can check who has come to the events, with feedback form for the events. There are fairly simple things that you can do, and again, with something like the LinkedIn platform, if you want to test something, if you got a large alumni community there is no reason why you can’t do some fairly simple surveys on LinkedIn to get responses from."	Simple metrics - most clicked, most popular article, feedback from events. Use LinkedIn for testing and surveys, getting immediate feedback.
Q9	"(…) Generally, I would say it is working. I think the biggest success we’ve had is using LinkedIn. And I think for people working in alumni relations, LinkedIn… or for a younger audience, Facebook… you know, these systems are fantastic	LinkedIn allowed for better and more personal relationships to happen.

	(…). And LinkedIn is ready made. The beauty in LinkedIn is when someone moves from job to job to job, or country to country, they generally update their LinkedIn profile. That is not the case if they are part of a private directory."	
Q10	"Its… we are trying to grow the number of masters students that we have. So I think… we've just started that process. So I think in the next couple of years, we can look back and better analyze has the alumni relations strategy helped us in this regards. But generally, I would say it is working. I think the biggest success we've had is using LinkedIn."; "In the past, [the school] had an alumni model where you paid to be a member. But a lot of the benefits were physically tied [to the school]. So, they were revolved around having access to the library, being able to use meeting rooms. So, if you're based in [the county of the school], that's absolutely brilliant, if you're based in Lisbon, such as yourself, that's not particularly helpful. And as [the school] become more and more international, we had to make the alumni network more virtually based and do more events and meeting in other countries."	Yes, LinkedIn allowed for better relationships. Old model of charging an annual fee wasn't working, because benefits were too physically tied to the school, so they changed. They recognized the international trend, so they adapted.

Q11	"Yes, we use a CRM platform. Well, it was built by us (…), so it's not an off-the-shelf product. And, yes, its something that started very much as a simple booking process (…) in terms of logging people onto programs. We've expanded it to be more of a CRM system. I think, like all CRM systems, they are only so good as the data you can put into it. So, you can have the best technical platform in the world, but unless the people that are within the organizations are very much geared towards using it, it won't work."	The CRM platform was custom made for the school.
Q12	"I'm not sure. I think there are a lot of good platforms out there that we could have bought off the shelf that would probably do the same. (…) It doesn't really matter what CRM system you got, cause there are loads of really, really good ones out there. It's very much, [related] to the culture of the organization and the realization of the staff that they have to use this thing. So, you can have a platform that is really shiny and glittery and does all these wizzy things, but if people don't use it, it's useless."	Maybe other platforms, ready-made, could perform the same. It's more related to the culture and employees than the technology itself.
Q13	"You can. You can access it on your pc. I mean, one of the things we're doing, we're about to make it web enabled,	Not necessarily. But it depends on people inputting the information needed for it to actually work and for the goals to be reached. Yes,

	because one of its faults at the moment is, if you're out visiting clients, its not the easiest thing to use on an iPad or iPhone or whatever. We're making a bit of an effort to make it more user friendly when you're out of the office. But, yes, everyone has access to it."	you can even access it outside the school, which is especially good if you're visiting clients.
Q14	"Yes, in theory, but it depends on people putting in the information. Ideally, what you want to see on a CRM is the point at which the student signs up for a program, then going through the program and out the other side as an alumni member and of course their status on the CRM system will change as they go through the program. (…) I would say, its getting better. We've made a lot of efforts to try and encourage people to use it. I think with CRM you can either… you encourage people to use in positive means, but then you also, formally have to put it into job descriptions, so its part of your job to update the system. (…) If you don't have up to date data, the data that you draw out the other end on which you may well base your decisions, may not be correct. So you've got ensure the data is up to date."	The engagement is improving, because people are realizing that it's part of their job and they need to input the information for a good relation to occur. Decisions depend on this.
Q15	"The most important thing, I think, for a CRM platform, is	It's been a continuous process to make people realize that it should be

	people have got to realize that is part of their job to use it (…). Because if you don't put in the data, it doesn't matter how good the system is, it just won't work. So, the secret to CRM success, (…) is more of a human element than a technical one."; "[It is] a continuous process, we're going through that at the moment (…). As a business, [you will] base decisions on the data that you've got and that data is not accurate then you could be making (…) wrong decisions. (…) It's getting people to understand that it is a commercial imperative to keep data up to date (…). I think it has been in place in pockets at the organization. (…) I think what is happening (…), it's becoming something that everyone is involved in. We've gone through various reorganizations (…) in terms of bringing different departments together, aligning some of our business development activities (…). You can encourage people individually, but then sometimes you actually have to make changes in terms of how the organization is structured in order to change things."	part of their job to input the necessary information. Everyone is slowly, but surely getting involved. Reorganizations were needed to fully adopt the CRM frame of mind, and aligning some of the business areas. People can be encouraged individually, but at some point, the whole organization has to change as well so as to keep up or lead by example.