

About The Author

John Suart is one of Canada's foremost experts in non-profit marketing and communications. Based in Kingston, Ontario, he runs his own successful consulting company, JohnSuart.Com.

John is an author, blogger and speaker. He is the author of the Non-Profit Marketer Blog, the editor of NP Humour (the world's only comedy website for charities), the moderator of the Canadian Non-Profit Marketing Group at LinkedIn, and a frequent guest blogger at the Guardian Newspaper in London. His 2012 eBook, The Revolution, has been downloaded more than 600 times. He is also the author of a number of influential, non-profit marketing publications:

- The 2010 Non-Profit Marketing Year-in-Review
- PAGE NOT FOUND: Canadian Hospitals & Their Websites
- The 3% Give or Take Marketing & Communications Budget Benchmark



John worked for the University of New Brunswick on the \$100 million Forging Our Futures campaign, Atlantic Canada's largest fundraising campaign. He later went back to UNB as a consultant for their Alumni Association. John's work inspired him to write "Reforging the Bond", a white paper on new ideas in alumni communications. He later became the creator of the Alumni Communications Group at LinkedIn.

Find out more at <http://www.alumnicommunications.org>

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INTRODUCTION

In the last 50 years, universities have changed. University campuses in the 1960s were much different. There were fewer students. Classes were smaller – campuses, too. As a result, friendships were somewhat stronger and networks were deeper. Back then, a university education was a ticket to a better life. A Bachelor's degree was enough to start a career. Graduates weren't rich by any means, but they could look forward to a well-paid job that would last them for most of their careers. Because of all of this, going to university really meant something. Alumni were generally proud to wear the university's colours and to donate to scholarships and capital projects. In a way, for many of them, their university experience never really ended. A part of them never left the campus.

We know that those days have passed. Universities are bigger, more crowded places. As a result, the student experience has changed. Today, many students go to university poor and graduate even poorer, with massive amounts of debt. Their job prospects are uncertain, and many don't have jobs or are underemployed. Graduating from a university still means something, but it is a far cry from the experience it was 50 years ago. Today's students are less connected to their universities than they have ever been. For many of them, their university experience ended on a sour note. For these graduates, it was if they were never really on campus.

While many things about universities have changed in the last 50 years, the basic assumptions universities have about their graduates have not. Universities still expect graduates to have the same lasting bond with them. They still expect them to give and to keep connected. With the increasing need for more fundraised dollars, universities are putting even more faith in this connection and are ignoring the evidence of the cracks that are beginning to form within the relationship.

So, while graduates are feeling less and less of a need to keep the relationship going with their universities, the universities are feeling more and more pressure to strengthen the bond between them.

They are on diverging paths.

The clearest picture of this trend is with the Millennial generation – the cohort born between 1982 and 1999. The oldest of this group have already graduated from university and the youngest are about to enter as freshmen.

Millennials are unlike all of the other generations that have come before them. They have different expectations. They live in different worlds. They think differently. And, they face a much different future than their Boomer counterparts did 50 years ago.

If universities don't change the way they think about students, then this group of graduates could very well become the **Lost Generation** – the first group of graduates in the history of post-secondary education in North America that universities can no longer count on for donations and support.

John Suart

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