

## Highgate School

### Benefits from Blackbaud NetCommunity

#### *The Cholmeleian Society*

[www.highgateoc.org.uk](http://www.highgateoc.org.uk)

- With the new responsibility for communications to its alumni/alumnae, the Foundation Office required a tool to help improve online communications.
- The Foundation Office implemented Blackbaud NetCommunity to help launch a new alumni/alumnae website.
- The Foundation Office has significantly improved the number of responses to communications.



Highgate School in North London has embraced some significant structural development in the last few years, changing between 2004 and 2006 from an all-boys 13+ entry school to a co-educational 11+ entry one.

This followed the end of boarding in the mid-90s. At the same time, the Foundation Office at the school has taken over responsibility for communications to Highgate's alumni/alumnae, in particular through a website and a magazine.

Robert Wilne, Director of Sir Roger Cholmeley's Charity (which is named after the founder of the school), explained that relations between the School and its alumni/alumnae association, called The Cholmeleian Society, were "polite but not warm" until about six years ago, but since then a lot of hard work on both sides has created and nurtured what is now a strong and supportive relationship.

The Foundation Office had been using The Raiser's Edge as its database for some time, but with the new responsibility for communications to alumni/alumnae it required a tool to help improve online communications.

In 2011, the Foundation Office successfully implemented Blackbaud NetCommunity. The Solution was used to help launch a new website for Cholmeleians as well as to provide the facility to enhance online communication.

### The Outcome

Since the launch of the Cholmeleian website, things have been moving at a rapid pace. The Foundation Office continues to send out two printed glossy magazines each year to the entire database of around 6,500, which includes the 5,000 Cholmeleians with valid addresses, and also 1,500 current parents.

Since the implementation of Blackbaud NetCommunity, an e-newsletter has been introduced as well. The e-newsletter is sent to all Cholmeleians as an ordinary email with lots of strong encouragement to register on the website. This is one of a range of tactics that has helped to establish within six months more than 1,000 registered NetCommunity members, which Charlie Goldbatt, Development Officer at Highgate School, aims to increase to 1,500 in the next few months. The Foundation Office has improved significantly the number of responses to communications by personally addressing emails or letters to Cholmeleians, and by sending them from Housemasters or other memorable

teachers at the School when the content makes sense to do so (for example, invitations to reunions). Only two people have unsubscribed from e-communications. The Foundation Office has been able to tailor its communications because registration on the website encourages individuals to request the type of communication they would prefer to receive: for example, email or postal only.

The reporting function of Blackbaud NetCommunity has also helped the Foundation Office streamline its materials. At their most basic, the NetCommunity reporting spreadsheets show how many emails have been sent out, how many were opened and read, how many were forwarded, and also how many click-throughs were prompted. “We knew that we were probably sending too many and needed to consolidate the information we were sending. Blackbaud NetCommunity has been really useful because we can now target communications more accurately. No-one wants to receive an email asking them to sign up for an event they’ve already said they can’t attend!” says Charlie.

The Cholmeleian Society and the Foundation Office have seen a significant increase in the number of people attending events, reflecting better targeting of potential attendees (made possible with the improved data gathered from those who have registered), as well as the more personalised approach. Online replies through Blackbaud NetCommunity are strongly encouraged, but are not compulsory. Postal invitations to some major events are still sent out via mail because many Cholmeleians like something to prop up on their mantelpieces! At the moment, no charges are applied to events so there are no payments taken online, although this will be considered in the future.

Charlie took over the role as Development Officer when the Blackbaud software had already been installed, but he says that even with only a couple of days’ initial training from his predecessor he has found both The Raiser’s Edge and Blackbaud NetCommunity very easy to use. “They are very user-friendly and very self-explanatory,” he says. Charlie has now been on a couple of training days, including around importing data. “The data are too precious to import wrongly or delete in error, so I went on the course.”

## Future developments

The Foundation Office has commissioned a regional map, so that Cholmeleians will be able to see what events are planned in their areas. Development is also planned around Blackbaud NetCommunity’s Chapters. The potential of these for alumni/ae engagement is huge, but training the busy people who are the volunteer members of the Cholmeleian Society committees will take time.



“The support system at Blackbaud is fantastic. I’ve never had a problem that hasn’t been solved that day. I really wouldn’t have any reservations in recommending The Raiser’s Edge and Blackbaud NetCommunity to other schools.”

Charlie Goldblatt,  
Development Officer,  
Highgate School