



## Strategic Planning: Generating Bold Ideas

**Ideation** (the formation of ideas or concepts) is **foundational to the development of a strategic plan**. It is essential in order to move the alumni relations effort forward in a bold way. At the same time, effective strategy calls for a meaningful assessment of the attractiveness and feasibility of each idea among those generated. Clear priorities among an often wide ranging set of ideas need to be established.

Tap peer groups and engaging diverse stakeholder groups to identify a broad range of ideas. Ask what your alumni relations organization could do or be. Such outreach ensures a rich context for strategic planning discussions.

### Why Bold Ideas are Important

This may be self-evident, but without bold ideas, alumni organizations are destined to implement the same tactics in the same ways. They will likely serve a same, small subsection of alumni. Bold ideas are required in alumni relations to enlarge and engage alumni audiences.

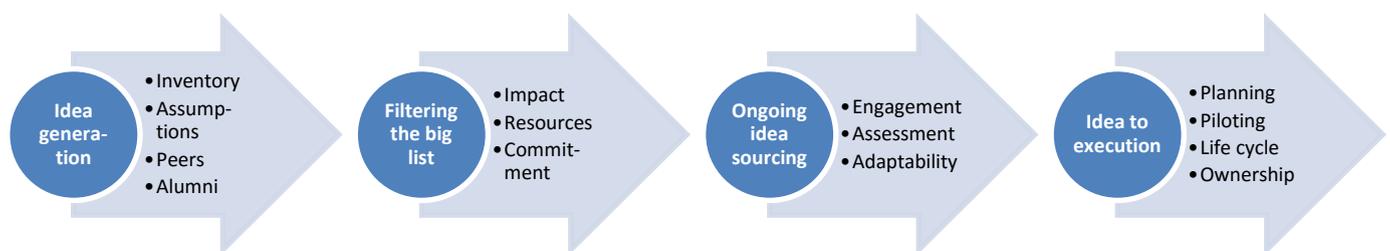
### Examples of Bold Ideas in Alumni Relations at Yale

- Organizing around Shared Interest Groups instead of just classes and geographic clubs
- Authorizing alumni to self-organize (a fundamental governance decision)
- Feb Club (Yalies will self-organize to party around the world)
- Yale Day of Service (once a year, all Yalies will be called upon to provide community service, and that will be sustainable and meaningful)
- YaleGALE (alumni volunteers sharing best practices in alumni relations others from around the world)
- Yale Veterans Association (a shared interest group of alumni who have served in the military)
- Yale alumni Civil War trip (educational travel run by a regional association for fundraising purposes)

### Characteristics of Bold Ideas

Bold ideas challenge assumptions in new and interesting ways. In essence, they are sometimes unsettling. The bigger the idea, the more change is involved – and therefore the greater likelihood for stakeholders to reject the idea (“That’s not how we do things here” or “We tried something like that and it failed”). Consider taking advantages of new opportunities caused by disintermediation. Examine where new technologies and social media platforms provide blank canvases for re-imagining existing activities. For example, what is the value of an in-person reunion in an era of Facebook and social media? Or, how does social media create opportunities for new forms of alumni engagement, including self-organizing?

### Idea Generation During the Life of a Strategic Plan



A successful strategic planning process will intentionally seek out and explore a range of ideas. A plan that propels the alumni organization forward will likely need a combination of ideas that are bold (giant steps) and others that are more incremental in nature (baby steps) . Cast a wide net. Then rigorously filter the big list of ideas. This creates a platform for a strategic plan with impact and enhanced alumni engagement.