Crossing to the Forefront of Student Programming

Case of the Lebanese Club @ MIT

2nd LCL Student Convention
San Diego, California

[Original presentation curtailed and adapted for printing needs. Animations, pictures, and hidden slides used in live presentation discarded in compatible print-ready version. Graphics resolution impaired due to conversion and size considerations.]

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http://web.mit.edu/lebanon
Overview

- About the LCM: Mission & Structure
- Key Programs & Achievements
- 12 Golden Eggs for Other Clubs
- 3 More Eggs for the LCL

[general disclaimer regarding dog-&-pony presentation objective/style]
LCM > About the Club

- Established in early 70’s!? (*controversial like everything else in Lebanon!*)
  with a two-fold objective:
  - Fostering a sense of community among the Lebanese, namely students
  - Promoting Lebanese culture and concerns in the Greater Boston area
  - Maximizing number of Lebanese student admissions per year in all fields

- Run by an LCM Government of 5 elected Executive Board Officers
  and appointed Committee Chairs (horizontal vs. vertical duties)

- Events and programs traverse areas of culture, arts, recreation, politics, history, philanthropy, among others

- Sources of funding include MIT(-affiliate), alumni, corporate sponsorships, NGOs, personal donations, in-kind donations, & profit proceeds

- The LCM is non-profit, non-political, & non-partisan; membership includes non-Lebanese, non-students, & non-MIT affiliates
Why and how has LCM evolved into one of New England’s most accomplished, visible, connected, & financially endowed organizations promoting Lebanon?

- Award-winning events…
- Record-breaking fiscal performance at MIT…
- Official proclamations by the Mayors of Boston & Cambridge…
- Official endorsements by the Lebanese Council of Ministers…
- Dozen of national & international media outlet features…

Yes, but how?
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[listed chronologically]
Now in its 7th installment; has become a legacy event awaited in Boston every year!

Free dabkeh and belly-dancing tutorial and performance (along with food, DJ, etc...)

Only 20% of attendance are Lebanese; party becomes an ethnic melting pot, even though it’s advertised as Lebanese

Received MIT’s annual Best Program of Year 2003 for an “impeccably planned event that sold out” – around 500 people attended (MIT is not known to be a party place!)
LCM > The Arts @ MIT

Focused on promoting the arts at MIT through hosting a variety of Lebanese and international artists & bands:

- **Performing Arts:** Sharq Arabic Music Ensemble, Zaitoun Dabke Troupe, Japanese Taiko Drummer Eaine Fong, Moroccan Gnawa with Boujemaa Razgui, South Indian Dance w/ Aparna Keshaviah, members of The Boston Camerata Early Music Group, Berklee School of Music Student Ensemble

- **Theatre:** Michel El-Ashkar’s “A Child of Life” theatrical monodrama

- **Film:** tribute to Hollywood director Mustapha Akkad; first public Bosta screenings in US; rising Lebanese talent in Hollywood, director Omar Naïm, in a director’s screening

- **Next Months:** Lebanese Pianist Rami Khalife and Syrian Clarinetist Kinan Azmeh in Sonic Dialogues (April, 2007), and Bassam Saba Ensemble (May, 2007)
Dramatist Michel Ashkar, writer, actor, and director; produced & hosted by LCM

Received 2 official Khalil Gibran Day proclamations for September 18 from Mayors of Boston and of Cambridge

Gibran’s 84 year-old godson and cousin was guest of honor; recognized and applauded for his achievements

Captured attendance of over 400 people and was featured in over 10 articles in Western and Arabic press

Launched campaign to spread it at universities/clubs; Cornell, UCLA, to date; now working w/ Berkley (LSA@B) & Virginia Tech (CL@VT)
The Arts @ MIT

[animated picture layers discarded in print-ready version]
LCM > The Arts @ MIT

Grand Theater
A Tale of Beirut

a film by Omar Naïm

Written & directed by Omar Naïm

Naïm’s Grand Theater in the Beirut Uncut Film Series

Wednesday, Feb 21, 8pm at MIT, Bldg 54-100
Free to general public
Donations go to

in the end he sees everything

Naïm’s Final Cut in the Beirut Uncut Film Series

Thursday, Feb 22, 8pm
at MIT, Bldg 54-100
Free to general public
Donations go to

[animated picture layers discarded in print-ready version]
Contributed to featuring Bosta in festivals in Sweden, Qatar, Montreal, Worcester (MA), Germany, Virginia
The Arts @ MIT

BERNARD KHOURY/ DW5
COMBAT ARCHITECTURE
7:00 p.m., March 2nd, 2006
MIT, Room 34-101

B018 Beirut, Lebanon
3 experts: Dean Philip Khoury (historian on Syria), Prof. Noam Chomsky (analyst on US-Syrian relations), and Advisor Adib Farha (insider on nuances of relationship)

All lectures reached hall capacity (total of ~800 persons); 500 on Chomsky alone in overflow rooms, day after assassination

Event was funded by President’s Office given timeliness of event!

Note: LCM is apolitical, yet addresses Lebanese concerns and provides forums for constructive debate without official opinion
LCM > Lebanese Awareness Week

(political)

- Annual week-long promotion of Lebanon:
  - Plasma screens and projections
  - Rahbani & Fairuz music
  - Touristic brochures, and books
  - Imported sweets (Hallab)
  - CD giveaways courtesy of MEA

- Flag signed by over 2,000 people previously mistaking Lebanon for Albania!

- Invited to address Boston community on April 13 Unity Dinner
Supported Counterpoint International on its first two interfaith dialogue-through-music conferences at Harvard University by providing logistical, publicity, and speaker panel support and helped it stage its first orchestral tour in Lebanon (setup meeting w/ Ziad Rahbani)

Co-founded the Harvard-MIT Lebanese Affairs Think Tank, an independent forum for developing innovative strategies to promote Lebanon's political sustainability, economic advancement, social equity, and progressive role on a regional and international level. Two events have been held to date on transcending confessionalism and on national leadership archetypes; a third focusing on the representational system and electoral law is in the planning.
… aims to define the roadmap of development strategies and initiatives essential to making Lebanon a vibrant and sustainable technology hub in the Middle East & North Africa region (MENA).

- Inclusive (aims to involve/address all players, all building blocks)
- Solution-driven; mission is not to “study/research/…”, but “define…”
- Beyond ICT/Telecom (not follow w/ IT; lead with high-tech)
- Has government in mind from the onset (our “disabling enabler”)
- By and in the Diaspora; with and for Lebanon
- 52 speakers
- 18 planning committee members
- 41 on-site volunteers
- 15 countries (registrants)
- 20 states (registrants)
- ~$250K budget
- 18 months planning
- 168 unique organizations
- 36 corporate sponsors
- 1 PM TECHLEB Unit
- 12 concurrent roundtables
- 6 ministers
- ...
- 8,311 emails!
Forged **Boston-wide campaigns** in response to the July War 2006 and the assassination of Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in 2005, resulting in multiple rallies, vigils, fundraisers, and creative action events attracting thousands of people; those public events were called for by LCM members and planned at MIT.
Launched the ongoing ‘Boston to Lebanon’ grassroots fundraising campaign to raise public awareness and funds in support of aid efforts for Lebanon, offering donors tax exemption and ensuring direct transfer to local NGOs in Lebanon at no overhead. Target aid areas have ranges from environmental aid (current focus on oil spill), cluster bomb & landmine removal, and relief for the displaced. Around $50,000 have already been transferred to fund activities conducted by the Lebanese Red Cross, Bahr Lubnan, Offre Joie, and the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) in Lebanon.
Exceeded the programming size and scope of most student organizations at MIT by **breaking multiple budgetary records** such as annual operating budget, single event budget, and single deposit after a weekend fundraiser (some records still being validated), culminating in the **LCM’s Treasurer, Fadi Kanaan, receiving MIT’s Outstanding Treasurer Award for 2006**

Raised money for LCM activities and programs **from club alumni and many corporate sponsors** such as ABC Group, ACT Holdings, ALES, **Al Rifai**, AUB, Bank Audi, Bank Byblos, Banque Libano-Francaise, Berytech, Booz Allen Hamilton, Cambridge Energy Solutions, CSAIL, Cyberia, Diapaper, Dubai Silicon Oasis, Fransabank, Genesis Microchip, Hariri Foundation, Inconet Data Management, Investcom, Kafalat, Kommsult, **Ksara**, LAU, MathWorks, MDS UAE Holdings, Microsoft, Middle East Airlines, Millennium, Mobius Logic, MTC Touch, NavLink, **Patisserie Rafaat Hallab & Sons**, Reebok, SHASS, Sloan School, Solicar, TagLogic, UNDP, UOB, WLCU, among others
Interviewed/featured in major media outlets including:

- CNN, MSNBC, NECN
- LBCI (*Kalam el Nas*), Future TV (*Iktisaduna WAL Alam*), AlHurra TV (*iTECH*)
- Boston Globe, Boston Herald, Brookline TAB
- Annahar, Assafir, AlBalad, Daily Star, Dar AlHayat, L’Orient Le Jour
- Lebanon Opportunities, Executive magazines
- Profile News, Eagle Tribute, Tech Talk, the Eagle Tribute, the Tech, Harvard Crimson
- ...
Hosted top-tier and executive-level speakers from many corporations, NGOs, and government institutions; those include Edgar Masri, CEO, 3Com; Linda Rottenberg, CEO, Endeavor; Georges Gemayel, EVP, Genzyme; Fadi Chehade, VP, IBM; Mike Haidar, General Manager, Analog Devices; Nassib Chamoun, CEO, Aspect Medical; Maroun Chammas, CEO, Berytech; Louis Lataif, Dean, BU School of Management; John Cullinane, CEO, Cullinane Group; Tarek Mitri, Minister of Culture; Declan Glynn, Director of R&D, Dublin Institute of Technology; John Chory, Chairman, Hale & Dorr Venture Group; Fawwaz Habbal, Associate Dean, Harvard; Kevin Carroll, VP, IDA (Ireland); Farid Abboud, Ambassador, Lebanon (US); Ramzi El Hafez, Editor-In-Chief, Lebanon Opportunities; Sami Abi Esber, President, MDS UAE Holdings; Salah Dandan, Former Director, Microsoft IP Ventures; Ghassan Bejjani, Managing Partner, Morgan Stanley; Kamal Shehadi, Chairman, Telecom Regulatory Authority (Lebanon); Walid Maalouf, Director, USAID; among others
Fostered value-adding collaborations with a multitude of MIT-based and off-campus organizations in joint efforts to hold different events & programs; those included the MIT Lecture Series Committee, MIT Arab Students Organization, MIT Public Services Center, MIT Agha Khan Program on Islamic Architecture, MIT Public Services Center, United Nations Development Program, Kennedy School of Government Arab Caucus, American-Arab Anti Discrimination Committee, American Lebanese Engineering Society, World Lebanese Cultural Union, Network of Arab American Professionals, International Network of Lebanese Entrepreneurs in Technology, Lebanese Campus Link, Evelyn Abdalah Menconi Memorial Committee, among others.

“I was already awed by the qualifying process the Club has for evaluating possible programs with other organizations. In my decades of work with student groups, I have never experienced one that established criteria and an evaluative process for collaboration with community groups. The Club officers and members were basically ensuring quality control by demanding the requesting organization to be accountable to a set of principles they deemed important and proper. I confess, I was, to use a common slang expression, “blown away.” – Prof. Emeritus Elaine Hagopian
Advanced club’s level of institutionalization through:

- revamped, exhaustive **constitution & bylaws** crystallizing lessons learned from the club’s operating experience over the past few years
- original **Activity Point System** to objectively assess, incentivize, and reward members’ contribution to the club
- **knowledge-transfer mechanisms** to ensure the smoothest transition of leadership
- **financial checks & balances** to ensure responsible fiscal performance
- among others -
Sustained level of scholarship reflected in LCM members receiving the annual American Lebanese Engineering Society Graduate Student Scholarship for 4 consecutive years.

Transcended the boundaries of MIT and the student community by doubling membership to include active non-student, non-MIT affiliate, and non-Lebanese national/expatriate members.

LCM’s Alumni Relations Chair/Committee just completed tracking the full information of 300+ Lebanese MIT alumni; designing a campaign to fully engage them in various is underway.
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[in random order; idiosyncratic viewpoints reflecting only personal takes]
One should be able to do well from doing good, as long as one does not do good for the reward of doing well.
“Vision without action is a day dream; action without vision is a nightmare.”
(a Japanese proverb)
The act of creation is lonely (from God – the one & only – to the singular patent holder), but that of application.execution.optimization is collective.
To be successful, you should not shy away from projecting an image of success.
There are 2 ingredients to a beef omelette: a chicken that is barely involved and a cow that is totally committed.
The ‘system’ in the US may be smarter than the ‘individual’ and sustains the wellbeing of the whole; the ‘individual’ in Lebanon may be smarter than the ‘system’ and does everything possible to outwit it.
Golden Eggs > Force-Walking a Baby

Experiment-> Assimilate-> Institutionalize

But beware of premature institutionalization!

(babies have to spill before eating, to fall and toddle before walking.)

[‘Golden Eggs’ statements intended to accompany live commentary during presentation and may read out of context]
Sustain whatever of your programs/events goes well, but push yourself to leave your comfort zone and… innovate!

(Is Lebanon only about haflis, dabke, tabboule, shisha, nightlife, etc.? Jean Paul Gautier & Angelina Jolie would strongly disagree!)

[‘Golden Eggs’ statements intended to accompany live commentary during presentation and may read out of context]
The best teacher (and leader) is one who seeks and succeeds in educating the disciple that outperforms him/her.
Money is obviously not the objective… but nor should it be the barrier.
“The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man.”

(George Bernard Shaw)
Some lead by including & outperforming, while others by isolating & ruling their islands.

Applies when interacting with new, atypical members, new collaborators, new audiences, etc – We should manifest our essence of being the ‘gateway’, the ‘most hospitable’, the ‘ambassadors of the alphabet’, the ‘most adventurous’, the ‘seamen heading anywhere with anyone’…

And after all, resources – especially Lebanon’s/clubs’ – are finite!

[Golden Eggs' statements intended to accompany live commentary during presentation and may read out of context]
It’s not enough to love Lebanon, you need to earn the status of defending/promoting/helping it ... and the benchmark for that goes well beyond love/passion/good intention.

Just like how your beloved wouldn’t necessarily choose you just because you happen to love him/her more than your ‘competitors’. It’s important to know our limits, seek to transcend them... but until that happens and to serve the mission best, empower the ‘less limited’.

And there’s an F-Matrix and L-Matrix to help assess this, but the terminology is X-rated, so I’d be happy to explain it to anyone interested after the talk.

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[high-level; regarding mission, structure, & image]
LCL > On Mission…

- Stay away from the all-‘representing’ / ‘foundation’ / ‘umbrella’ role & terminology for 2 reasons: 1) it won’t work due to the peculiarities of ethnic student clubs/programming, and 2) it won’t serve its mission best, as it needs the grassroots efforts of clubs.

- “Lebanese Campus Link” – It’s about linking / connecting / networking / exchange between autonomous organizations:
  - Brining them together at a convention
  - Centralizing information resources on club events in various cities
  - Creating cross-campus student exchange opportunities
  - Providing exclusive ‘social network’ a la ‘A Small World’ style
  - Listing info of interest to traveling students (cheap stays, Lebanese eateries, travel agents, work/internship opportunities)
  - Bridge for students in Lebanon!
  - …
LCL > On Structure…

- As flat, as thin, as light, and as agile as possible…
  What’s the best ‘network’ out here?

It’s the **Internet** backbone;
and for those very same reasons!
LCL > On Image…

- It’s an organization by the students… and for the students.
  - Students should remain the face and the meat
  - How can top elected LCL representative be a non-student?
  - How can a student convention only feature non-student speakers none of whom are addressing student-related affairs?
  - Future conventions could also feature awarding/recognizing excellence in Lebanese students’ academic, artistic, sports, etc. accomplishments; bringing in students from Lebanon and linking them with the right stakeholders here; having a call for student papers on Lebanon-related issues; among others

- Don’t take subtle (yet potent) ‘image affecting’ nuances lightly! Especially when you claim an apolitical, nonpartisan, nonsectarian stance… given example(s) on “revival” terminology, “assets to religious (!?) institutions upon dissolution”, “FBI lecture/marines honoring”, “lebanese lobby” shadow website, among others.
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Many thanks to
Fadi, Daniele, Cyril, & Maurice
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LCM Executive Board-Elect

Lebanese Club @ MIT (LCM)
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