

## 3 Signs It's Time For An Association Chapter Board Member Reboot



As association chapter boards explore possible causes for some of the problems they're experiencing, like low retention, low revenue and disengaged members, they often realize they have one, or multiple, board members who – intentionally or unintentionally – are doing things that show they just don't have the bandwidth to see the board, or the chapter, succeed.



These people are in limbo – they aren't in a hurry to change, nor do they want to step down. Some StarChapter clients have even shared that for positive change to occur, and to get these individuals to step down, they've had to turn over their entire board.

Here are three signs it could be time for a board member reboot. Are any of your board members:

- **Reluctant to implement a new chapter technology because they don't think it's user friendly.** It's not that it is, or it isn't – they just don't want to take the time to learn about it or see how using association chapter management technology could benefit the chapter. Because of their lack of attention, the board and probably the chapter, are stuck using multiple systems, like one for sending emails, a different one for managing the web site and multiple spreadsheets for tracking meeting registrations. This makes everyone's role on the board, and how the chapter functions, even more complex.

•**Not overseeing your executive director or any staff.** You can't expect your chapter administrator, executive director or other paid association chapter staff to always understand and be able to execute on your expectations. They need someone to report to and oversee their work. You may find the board member in that role assuming everything is getting done and they don't need to be involved. However, lack of direction is still bad direction; there are countless stories of chapter admins retiring or moving and sending the chapter immediately into a rebuilding phase because no one on the board knows enough about what the person did to easily step in.

•**Ignoring the need to invest in the work of being a board member.** Do you have long-term board members who haven't taken the time to understand or be trained on the programs you use regularly? If they don't want to invest in the training, why are they on the board? It is important to have clear roles, responsibilities and expectations. We've seen successful organizations adopt contracts of sorts, where board members agree to specifics regarding their role, so that when/if things start to fall through the cracks, others can point to that document and talk about next steps.

### **Onboarding puts association chapter boards on the right path**

Board members are the face of your chapter. They must remember that though it may be difficult, they must do what's best for the chapter, which typically requires an investment in time and sometimes, training.

We spoke with Ann Ahrens, a retired admin who has worked with various chapters of professional associations and who is now a volunteer for the Gem of the Hills organization. Ann shed light on the StarChapter onboarding process and how onboarding helps keep board members engaged and working toward what's best for their chapter.

"The organization I worked for at the time had a vested interest in making the transition to StarChapter as smooth as possible. We had a big event, also our biggest fundraiser, in a short amount of time, and our current provider was no longer a viable option.

StarChapter was just as vested in ensuring a smooth transition. The project team offered many valuable resources like training videos and quick live training calls. The best advice I can give is to be present and receptive to the resources provided. If you are willing to invest in some upfront time to familiarize yourself with StarChapter you are going to save so much time in the long run.



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I would recommend StarChapter to anyone involved in nonprofit organizations, whether their role is administrative or volunteer. I have been a 10-year StarChapter client with four different organizations and roles. I still take advantage of occasional catch-up calls with the StarChapter support team to review best practices, challenges I am facing, or quick tutorials.”

### **All is not lost, hopefully**

If you see signs early enough, it's possible to get the person to understand why they must focus on their board role and be responsive to training and other support. Is there another board or chapter member whose opinion they value and trust? Set up a conversation for them with that person. Ask them to explain your concerns and the available options, which could include taking on a more active role, going through training, or stepping down.

If they continue to show no interest in changing after a conversation like this, it's time for a board member reboot to keep the interest of the board and the chapter front and center. Be sure this information is in your chapter bylaws or board responsibilities so everyone on the board clearly understands what happens if they don't fulfill their role.

