



*The Small Chapter Guide:*

*The 5 Most Common Traps*

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CHAPTER LEADERS SHOULD AVOID

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TO INCREASE MEMBERSHIP AND ATTENDANCE RATES  
AND ENSURE BOARD CONTINUITY



# THE 5 MOST COMMON TRAPS CHAPTER LEADERS SHOULD AVOID

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There are five common traps small chapters should avoid. In most cases, ignoring these traps lead to major problems for their organizations, such as drop in membership and revenues, and burden chapter leaders to the point of exhaustion.

## AVOID THESE 5 TRAPS AND WATCH YOUR ASSOCIATION GROW

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When small chapters with limited resources, avoid these five traps their chapters thrive. They see increased activity. Members are more positive and enthusiastic about association meetings. Membership grows. The chapter has more revenue. The chapter can recruit and retain talented leaders.

- 1** They don't track member activity
- 2** They don't charge enough for meetings
- 3** They don't send timely messages and reminders
- 4** They don't charge enough for membership
- 5** They don't have the right chapter management tools

# TRAP 1

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## They Don't Track Member Activity

Not keeping accurate track of member activity is extremely detrimental to the strength and longevity of your chapter. It directly or indirectly leads to problems with revenues, communication, recruiting, and complacent leadership.

Even with small records, keeping track of activity may seem like a chore if you don't have the right tools. But effective leaders will get the right tools – Not ignore activity and attendance.

### Leaders Should Track

- + Membership counts
- + Non-member counts
- + Meeting attendance
- + Continuing education credits
- + Member to website interaction
- + Email delivery and open rate
- + Survey response rates and results
- + Expirations and renewals
- + New member counts

### Not Tracking Activity Will Likely Lead To

- + Poor event attendance
- + Dwindling membership levels
- + Shrinking revenue & budget
- + Heavier workloads and frustration for volunteer leaders or executives/administrators

## StarChapter's Solution

### Easily Track All Critical Numbers And Proactively Respond To Any Indicators Or Potential Problems

With StarChapter it's easy to track attendance, new member enrollment, visitors, email open rates, membership renewals, and more. Imagine having the transparency to see all those details in just a few clicks. Each of those numbers will tell you what you're doing well, and what you can improve on; if you observe high event attendance but low new member enrollments, you can initiate a campaign to convert visitors into members. Likewise, if a high percentage of your members are opening and reading their emails, but not showing up in strong numbers at events, it may be that you need to plan or advertise the events to create more enthusiasm – and get members back together. With StarChapter, you can stay on your chapter's pulse, and proactively respond to whatever your chapter needs.

## TRAP 2

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### They Don't Charge Enough for Meetings

People chose to sign up with the association because they anticipated certain advantages would accompany that membership. Especially with smaller chapters, networking has a huge advantage.

Some members respond to decreasing attendance at meetings by being overly cautious. They slash budgets and cut down on the quality of meetings. However, too often the result of these cuts leads to reduced enthusiasm among the remaining active members, and the chapter suffers.

If small chapters think they are looking out for their members by keeping dues below market value, they are mistaken. Don't shortchange yourself. The viability of your organization and its ability to thrive and thus provide the maximum amount of benefit possible for its members, now and for many years to come, depends on collecting equitably calculated dues. Make it understood at every opportunity the value of membership and how important the local association is to the industry or profession. In remote locations, the value of these chapters doubly increases.



### *StarChapter's Solution*

Do not be so price cautious that you end up having meetings that fail to excite your membership base. Instead of using a budget as the sole factor, start by planning an ideal activity, and then "work backwards" – identify the price that members would need to pay in order to deliver the ideal meeting or event.

When the meetings and events start to improve, higher dues will be justified. Great events are the best way to increase activity rates and membership. Plan activities that are certain to deliver the value your members are seeking, and then charge a rate that will cover your costs.

## TRAP 3

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### They Don't Send Timely Messages and Reminders

This trap can go unnoticed because chapter leaders seldom have the ability to tell when problems arise. Emails may be going out to all members, but they may often go to old or invalid email addresses, or end up in spam folders. Sending too many messages may cause members to ignore messages, but sending out too few risks neglecting members and depleting activity rates. While the level of communication may vary based on your association, all thriving associations have timely, highly targeted messages and reminders that keep members informed of chapter activities.

#### What Messages Should We Send, And When Should We Send Them?

Be careful that your messages are well-targeted and timely. Mass emails should include information that is relevant to the masses, but should avoid topics or issues that do not pertain to the whole group. Too many emails that are intended for other people can frustrate members and cause them to 'tune out' of future emails.

#### Local Associations Should Send Mass Emails for

- + Event invitations and reminders
- + Post event surveys
- + Announcements
- + Newsletters
- + Dues reminders  
*(30, 60, or 90 days out or expired)*
- + New member welcome messages

### StarChapter's Solution

Maintain lists and sub-divisions within those lists so that emails can be easily delivered to the proper recipients. It's best to use a system that allows you to have all of the member contacts and non-member contacts properly segmented so that they receive only the messages and emails that pertain to them.

The result will be that more messages will get through to your target members, and they will be read, and members will respond to your excellent communication. With StarChapter Lite, suited for small chapters, you can send out up to 1,500 emails a month, so can always deliver your messages.

## TRAP 4

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### They Don't Charge Enough for Membership

The same logic applies to membership fees as it does for meetings and event fees.

**It is a false belief that if an association has low membership dues they will have more members.**

Price of membership is a factor, but not the most important factor. If price was the most important factor in decisions, the Yugo would be the world's most popular car, and deluxe vehicles like BMW, Lexus, Mercedes Benz would be out of business. In fact, Yugo is out of business, and the luxury vehicles are thriving. Why? Because the most important factor for membership is value. Will the members gain the advantages and the value from the quality meetings and networking they can participate in as chapter members?



People believe that you get what you pay for. If small chapters think they are looking out for their members by keeping dues below market value, they are mistaken. Don't shortchange yourself. The viability of your organization and its ability to thrive and thus provide the maximum amount of benefit possible for its members, now and for many years to come, depends on collecting equitably calculated dues. Make it understood at every opportunity the value of membership and how important the local association is to the industry or profession. Dues are the lifeblood of smaller chapters. Don't shortchange your chapter.

### *StarChapter's Solution*

Instead of working to reduce the price of membership, think first of what members want from their membership in your chapter. Then, set a price for membership based on the value your association will provide.

When the meetings and events start to improve, higher dues will be justified. Having said that, it is important that you not sell your chapter short. Take a good look at the value your organization currently provides and be sure you assign a corresponding dollar amount to the dues rates.

## TRAP 5

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### They Don't Have the Right Chapter Management Tools

To solve these problems you need the right tools. **StarChapter** is an online application that provides all the critical tools necessary to build and support a thriving small chapter, like yours.

Running a small chapter properly is a big job. Whether your association is run by volunteer leaders or paid executives and administrators, time is a critical asset that is often in short supply. Because of this, important tasks often get overlooked, pushed down the list of things to do or simply avoided. This can exacerbate any of the above problems.

**How can I avoid these traps when I have limited time and resources?**

### *StarChapter's Solution*

StarChapter is easy to use for the members and non-members as well as the administrators and leaders of the local association.

StarChapter is a member-friendly association management system, and is the best way for small chapters to avoid these traps and reduce the amount of time to complete important tasks and objectives. It is an online software system that has all the necessary features to handle these critical areas of association management, you can send out 1,500 emails a month, assign 3 administrators, and record up to 400 non-members and a 100 members.

# THANK YOU FOR JOINING US

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See why StarChapter is called the Ultimate Tool for Officers to Build Thriving Associations. [Contact StarChapter Today!](#)

“ StarChapter is user friendly and the more we use it, the better we get at accomplishing our goals for its use. It has saved a HUGE amount of time for our annual Business Matching and Tradeshow event and the online registration is helpful for our treasurer to track funds. Customer Service is great - I always get a timely response and if they don't have a solution, they do offer to ask for one in upcoming enhancements. Well worth the money we spend!

— Penny Owens, Webmaster  
East Tennessee Purchasing Association

**Schedule a FREE Personal Online Demonstration** and discover how StarChapter can help you avoid these common traps.



StarChapter is a member-friendly association software company serving local chapters across the United States and Canada. StarChapter's mission is to help local leaders of national associations grow their chapter's attendance, membership, and revenue and achieve lasting board productivity even when the board changes. Our software provides event registration, membership, communication, website management, web services, and eCommerce features as well as responsive website layouts, dedicated StarChapter specialists, 24/7 online support, phone support, and ongoing board training webinars.

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