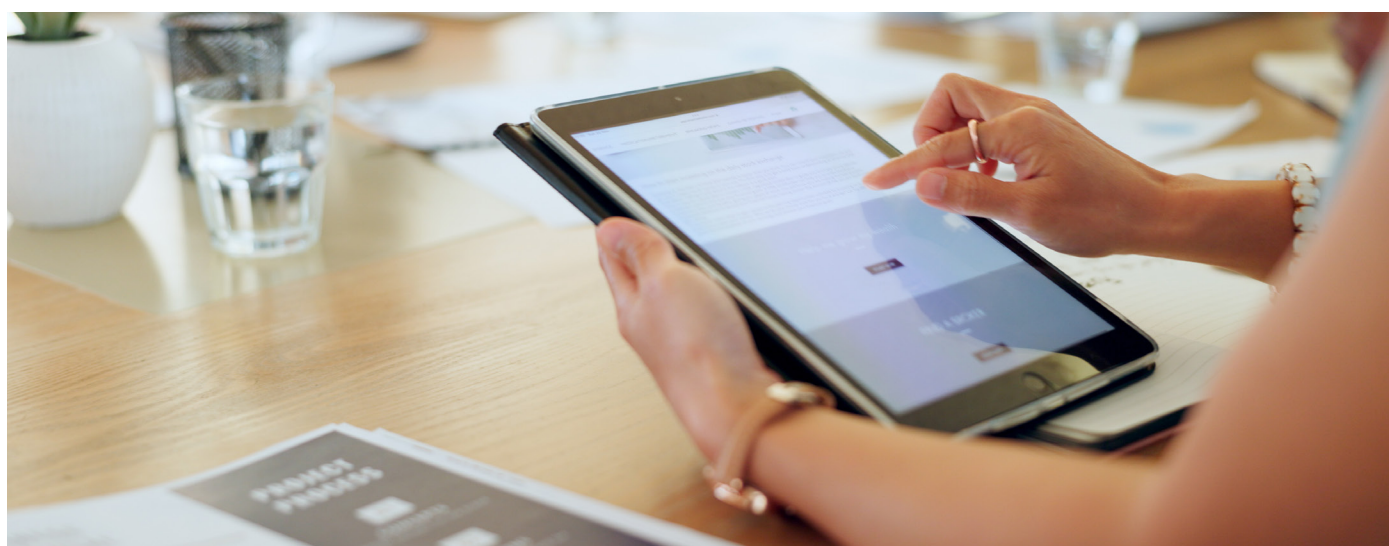


Bring Your Chapter Newsletter Back from the Dead – 6 Proven Tips



Newsletters can be one of the most effective and valuable tools for association chapters to connect with and engage their different audiences. Keeping chapters visible to members, members guests, sponsors etc., newsletters are an easy way to make people aware of chapter opportunities like events, conferences, job openings and more, and they do a great job highlighting the value of your organization.



As much as newsletters can provide, however, some chapters struggle to keep theirs going. The reasons we've heard related to newsletter troubles range from lack of strong content to lack of volunteers, which can lead to burnout in the volunteers left to manage the newsletter. When things seem tough, some chapters pull back on the frequency of their newsletters while others cancel theirs altogether.

Does your chapter have a newsletter? If so, how's it holding up?

If your chapter newsletter isn't where it needs to be, that doesn't necessarily mean its demise is near. With some clarity and direction on things like the following, you can return yours to its glory as a reliable, high-impact source of chapter news:

- Audience(s)
- Topics



- Format
- Frequency
- Volunteers

6 ways to increase the value of an association chapter newsletter

1. **Diagnose the drop-off.** Before you can fix the problem with your chapter newsletter, you'll need to understand what happened. Do any of these sound like plausible explanations for yours?
 - Was a single volunteer responsible for the entire newsletter process, leaving you with a bunch of bottlenecks and confusion when they stopped helping?
 - Was the frequency too ambitious to manage?
 - Did low open rates discourage your newsletter committee from continuing?

Review past issues of your newsletter to see which issues and, more specifically, which articles, resonated, and which may have missed their mark. Gather this type of data by exploring comments, likes and shares and open rates. Ask members for feedback into how your newsletter resonates with them — what they like and don't like to read and what they'd like to see in future issues.

Also explore your newsletter frequency. Do they go out weekly or monthly? Or quarterly? Ask how often people want to receive this type of update. You may find that once a quarter is enough (which could be the right move for your chapter if you're short on the volunteers you need to get it done.)

2. **Determine what your newsletter should be.** That might sound a little strange but effective chapter newsletters have clear missions and goals. Do you want to use yours to educate members, share events, gain volunteers, recruit new members or recognize members, sponsor or vendor accomplishments? Narrowing your purpose and your intended audience will let you make better decisions about the tone, content and structure.

3. **Choose the right length and format.** Once you understand your audience and what you want to share with them, determine how much space you need for articles and the format for the different sections. Your readers are busy, so avoid long paragraphs and endless announcements. Maybe a clickable table of contents or dropdown navigation would help readers get to what they want more quickly and allow you to more clearly share content and information most relevant to



different groups. Here are a few other format ideas that could help people more easily navigate your newsletter:

- Make the content scannable with bold headlines, bullets and short paragraphs.
- Use graphics and images.
- Include links to your website, LinkedIn page or event description on your website to provide further details.

4. Create a content plan. One of the easiest ways to avoid the “it’s Tuesday and our newsletter needs to go out Friday, but we don’t know what to include” problem is to create a simple, repeatable content structure and assign ownership for the different sections. Set up a schedule that allows you to send the right information when people need it, while not overwhelming volunteers. Here are some good options for engaging newsletter content:

- Note from the president or other board member
- Upcoming events and registration deadlines (don’t forget the registration link!)
- Member spotlight or volunteer shoutout
- Chapter or industry news
- Links to your latest blogs or LinkedIn posts.

5. Use the right tools. Technology can save your volunteers time and reduce their frustration while allowing you to replicate your newsletter for future issues. Platforms like StarChapter make it easy to design templates, manage subscriber lists and measure engagement. They can also help your newsletter committee and your board track how a newsletter issue or an article was received, through open rates and clicks, which in turn helps you refine the content, format, frequency, etc. over time.

6. Promote the newsletter beyond email. Think about ways to increase your reach and share your chapter information more widely. Consider posting a link to your latest issue, as well as back issues, on your LinkedIn chapter page, your website and your chapter’s member portal. Mention the newsletter at events, in board meetings and in conversations with sponsors. Encourage members to forward the newsletter to peers or colleagues.



Make your newsletter work for your chapter

A chapter newsletter doesn't need to be lengthy or complex to be what your audience(s) want. What matters most is that it's consistent, relevant and aligned with your chapter's goals, which should reflect your members' needs.

If your newsletter doesn't seem to have the power it once had, or if it's been dormant for a time, it's possible to restart it in the way that works for your chapter, which could mean a short issue that goes out quarterly. Then, over time, you can expand and refine it as your capacity grows.

A chapter newsletter is an effective tool that can help strengthen your community, celebrate members and showcase the ongoing impact of your chapter. You just need to take the time to figure out what type of newsletter is best for your chapter.

