

Automatic Membership Renewals: Chapter Game Changers



Many chapters, even those with strong sources of non-dues revenue, from conferences, education, networking, etc., rely heavily on membership renewals for financial stability. Knowing they have this reliable source of income helps them operate smoothly and provide the programming members expect throughout the year.



This focus on dues means chapter boards have to put significant effort into bringing in new members and getting current members to renew, both of which take time and effort and add stress to already overworked volunteers. This means that in addition to marketing chapter benefits and services to member guests, board and committee members are chasing renewals, sending countless reminders, making countless announcements and looking for creative ways to increase membership, maybe even trying to reconnect with lapsed members.

To continue to engage members and member guests, board members need to always think about what's next and how they can continue to evolve. What does your chapter do to always remain one step ahead?

Membership renewal is an area that's easy to take to the next level to make the process less of a chase and/or a slog. Your members have already automated so many parts of their lives, like bill paying,

magazine subscriptions, food delivery, etc. What if you added an automatic chapter membership renewal option to your list of benefits?

Traditional Membership Renewal Roadblocks

Renewals are time-consuming and difficult. Chapter volunteers spend hours sending reminders, updating membership lists and processing payments. And with all the human input required at every step, a manual membership process is at risk for both mistakes and volunteer burnout.

Many members don't renew because it's hard, not because they're unhappy. Most likely, most of your members really want to remain in your chapter, but...missed emails, busy schedules and life in general kept them from following through.

Revenue can be unpredictable. Because of the high number of missed renewals, chapters often struggle with budget planning and forecasting, as a significant piece of their income is unstable.

What Automatic Renewals Deliver

Higher renewal rates with less effort and friction from members. Members don't have to do anything. When renewal is automatic, it means fewer surprises, fewer lapsed members and increased retention.

Immediate relief for volunteers. No more chasing payments or tracking deadlines. Free up volunteers for the higher-value activities you've been meaning to get to, like new events and education or other ways to increase member engagement.

More predictable revenue for planning. When you can count on a certain amount of revenue in a year, chapter cash flow stabilizes. You can more confidently budget for activities, like stronger events, more sponsorship outreach and improve your long-term chapter planning.

Better member experience. Members appreciate the convenience and uninterrupted benefits. Without completing paperwork, mailing a check or making a payment online, they retain uninterrupted access to chapter resources, certifications, community support and more.



Addressing Common Automatic Renewal Concerns

As more StarChapter clients implement automatic membership renewal processes, we've watched fears like the following, and others, disappear.

“What if members feel trapped?”

Many members already use subscription-style renewals in their daily lives; it shouldn't be a surprise to them that you're moving to it. But to help eliminate that feeling of paying without having a choice, you'll want to be transparent:

- Create a page on your website explaining the program, the terms and the benefits of the shift. Include a contact for questions.
- Send automated reminder emails in advance of the automatic renewal and automated emails to let members know when their payment method is close to expiring.
- Provide easy ways to opt out, for those who may not want to automatically renew.

“Our members prefer paying manually.”

There will always be those who prefer to make their own payment. Let them know you value their membership and continue to have a self-pay option. But also share how automatic renewals are an easy, beneficial option and how they can make their lives easier. And remind them how many services (streaming music and videos, gym memberships, professional tools, etc.) they take advantage of already using automatic renewal and billing.

“It sounds complex to set up”

It's not. Chapters have shared that using a modern association management system(AMS) like StarChapter along with an electronic payment processor makes setup and execution of an automatic renewal program straightforward. And once you implement an automatic renewal program, maintenance is minimal.

Successfully Introducing Automatic Renewals to Your Chapter

Success requires that everyone in the chapter understands what you're doing, why and how. Have a plan that includes the steps required to implement automatic renewals successfully along with the



communications you'll need to send and the talking points to get people excited and explain the program.

Send clear, member-friendly communications. Explain the benefits of automatic renewals, including convenience, uninterrupted access, fewer emails to hunt for and less tasks to complete (and don't forget, much less work for volunteers). Tell them you'll schedule reminders that renewals will occur on a certain date unless members opt out.

Give members control. Give them the ability to choose the option that's right for them, update their payment methods and even opt out.

Launch during renewal season or during member onboarding. Do your members renew at the same time or throughout the year? Promote the benefits of automatic renewal during your existing member renewal period and, during your onboarding of new members, introduce it as the default option (with the option to opt out) for new members.

Train chapter leadership. Ensure anyone involved in membership—membership chair and committee, all board members, etc.—can explain the process confidently, with talking points, FAQs, email templates, etc..

Make Chapter Renewals Effortless and Watch Your Engagement Rise

Automatic membership renewals aren't just a technological improvement—they're a strategic advantage that goes beyond chapter finances and leads to increased retention and reduced administrative burden to a more stable, sustainable chapter.

Smoother renewals mean fewer accidental lapses and stronger year-over-year member retention. It also means your volunteers can focus on building value and engagement across your chapter as they expand programming, scholarships, community initiatives and overall chapter growth.

Are your renewal rates where you want, and need, them to be? Maybe it's time to look at your existing membership renewal process and identify opportunities to improve. We're happy to help!

