

Clean Up Your Association Chapter Email This Summer For Success This Fall



Association chapters send a lot of emails. And they send them because they work. Emails provide association chapters significant ROI (Return on Investment); when you use them correctly, association chapter emails engage readers much more effectively than other channels like your social media or website.



However, at some point, association chapter ROI can start to decrease. Members often become overwhelmed by the volume of emails they're receiving, like multiple registration reminders for an upcoming event even after they're registered, multiple reminders to attend the event when they don't even plan on attending, emails that don't apply to them, etc.

When that happens, recipients disengage, ignoring and deleting mails without reading them and missing out on all the great information a chapter is trying to share. Chapters suffer too, losing time, money and member engagement, when the same association chapter emails don't get to their intended recipients, and members, guests, sponsors, etc., unsubscribe from chapter emails.

Many association chapters know this is a problem, but they never do anything about it. Who has the time during a chapter year to review and clean up emails, reviewing all of the email addresses they send to as well as the content of all of those emails?



If a chapter does decide to review their emails, it's typically last-minute. And whoever agrees to do it (or whomever gets assigned the task) grudgingly steps up when it's time to change Association Management Systems, or when the chapter reaches their limit on the number of emails they can send through their email provider.

Are you one of those chapters at risk of putting your audience into email fatigue with the volume of emails you're sending? Are your emails going to those who really need them? You're trying to keep members engaged and interested in what you're doing, without realizing that volume could also be causing a problem with member engagement.

Cleaning up an association chapter email database should be a yearly priority, an event on the calendar you can't back out of. Summer, when things are typically quieter for association chapters, is a great time to complete this activity, to be better prepared for your next chapter year.

What is an association chapter email cleanup?

There are two parts to cleaning association chapter email. And to make this project a little more manageable, this can be a great micro-volunteering opportunity for chapter members.

Part 1: Gather and analyze your association chapter email data

Here you'll compile and map your email data to understand things like:

- How much email you're sending to each of your audiences
- Where in your chapter that email comes from
- How much of what you send doesn't end up where it's supposed to.

Look across each of your chapter areas – membership, marketing, education, advocacy, etc. – and review each email that's gone out from that area in the past year. Track trends – like open rates, deletions, similar information types sent from different areas, different information going to the same groups, frequency, etc.

The result will be a list of all email addresses, good and bad, and a compilation of all the emails your chapter has sent in the past 12 months (or whatever time frame you choose).

Part 2: Skinny it all down

After you complete your email review, it's time to:



1. Delete “bounced back” email addresses and all those “info@” addresses you’ve connected with but have never received a response from. But before you delete those addresses, see if you can connect a bad email address to a good email address you have. Maybe Membership has a current one for Josie Smith, but Marketing has an email address for her from two jobs ago.
2. Audit your association chapter emails for type and recipient. What are all your emails about, where do they come from and where do they go? For example, the emails you sent to promote your most recent association chapter educational event. Who received them? How many other email lists are those people on? Understanding that will help you see how many emails your members get, monthly and quarterly, weekly and even daily.

Find better ways to use what’s left

Armed with a clean email list, it’s time to ensure everyone in your audience gets the emails they’ll benefit from the most. What did you learn from your review? Are there some association chapter emails you can combine? Or some that you can stop sending? Do some of your audience show up on multiple email lists and if so, do they need to be on all of them? And do some of your emails really need to go to everyone in your database? Gather volunteers from the different areas of your chapter and strategize about what you might be able to combine. It’s possible that the advocacy and education content for your Millennial and Gen Z members could be combined into a single email, instead of sending separate emails for each.

Or maybe you could filter email lists based on attendance. Are there people who have attended just one event during the year? Or more than 3? Keep in mind that these lists will change as people’s interests and needs change – as they change roles, move out of state, attend more (or less) events, etc. Use your filtered lists to target specific groups. Those who have already registered for an event don’t need additional registration events. They should receive messages around the event itself, like directions, promotions, like a book signing for VIP attendees, etc.

To keep that high ROI, don’t waste your association chapter emails. If you have a cap on the number of emails you can send or the number of email addresses you can send to, or even if you don’t, don’t bother people with emails they don’t need. A summer association chapter email audit can allow you to start the new year right and do a better job of keeping everyone you connect with happy and engaged, when you’re engaging who you need to by providing exactly what they need.

