

Gain New Association Chapter Members with Incentives



Many association chapter organizations continue to face the challenge of bringing on new members while retaining the ones they have. With the abundance of places members and prospective members can spend their discretionary income, what are you doing to entice them to join your association chapter and stay for the long-term?



Hopefully, your association chapter member engagement strategy already includes the programming, development and advocacy opportunities people are looking for. How about getting people to stay by making it financially worthwhile for them to join and remain members?

Before you say that you have no financial options, you really do. While your national organization controls the fees members pay to join the national chapter and what they pay to join your local association chapter, you control what you charge for your meetings, events, chapter swag, etc., and you can use that flexibility to your advantage with both association chapter members and guests. There are several changes you can make at the local chapter level to incentivize membership in your chapter. Here are some ideas you might want to consider adding to your association chapter member engagement strategy.

Give bonuses for completing certain activities. This can help entice prospects and new members as well as your existing members to attend meetings, volunteer and participate in your chapter programming. Offer incentives for the behaviors you want to see, but don't provide the reward until after the person completes the activity. Consider incentives like:

- New members attend their first meeting for free.
- Once a member attends five meetings, they attend their next meeting for free.
- Members who bring guests to a meeting attend that meeting for free.
- Members who get a new member to join get half off their membership renewal.
- Members who write a series of blog posts for your chapter website (or perform other chapter volunteering activities) attend your chapter's year conference for free.

Make your incentives time sensitive. To create a sense of urgency, add an end date to your association chapter membership renewal offer, like "join in January and get \$25 off your membership," or "renew your membership before the expiration date and save \$25."

Have multiple incentive options. What interests one of your members may not interest another. Have a range of incentives for potential members, new members and existing members to choose from. Maybe some will want to attend more meetings for free, while others would be happy with a piece of chapter swag when they join. Do some research to see what could work; be creative. Review your options regularly, to see how well the incentives are working and make any necessary adjustments.

Be sure to include offers for existing members. The worst thing you can do is ignore your current members by offering incentives just for new people joining your association chapter. What would your existing members be interested in? Craft an incentive around those, like discounts on membership renewals, free swag, etc. and make it easy for existing members to see how much you continue to value their membership in your association chapter.

In this economy where people are being forced to choose which "non-essential" activities are worth paying for, find ways to make it financially worthwhile for new members to join your association chapter and for your existing members to renew their memberships. Then, once both groups see how you continue to meet their needs and value them as individuals, they'll understand how your chapter is the right place for them for the long term.

