

Heading Into Summer? Time For A Chapter Membership ROI Checkup



Networking. Education. Advocacy. Leadership development. Business connections. The list of services you provide for your association chapter members is long. Some years, you may adjust what you offer, adding new services you think members want and eliminating others you believe are past their prime.

Or maybe you've kept your service offerings the same for several years.



How can you be sure your members continue to value your services and believe that they are worth what they pay in dues? In other words, are they getting an appropriate return on their investment (ROI), or are they looking for more?

A chapter ROI checkup can give you a clear scorecard and show you how they value your offerings against their needs.

What is a chapter ROI checkup?

A chapter ROI checkup is a strategic exercise that helps you evaluate how well your chapter is performing against the expectations of your members. The goal of a chapter ROI checkup is to assess whether you're delivering the appropriate level of benefits for what members are paying, and it's a great way to see where your chapter is at a particular moment.



3 signs your chapter could use an ROI check up

The following could indicate that your members might not have the same view of your chapter as your board when it comes to the value of their membership.

- **Declining member engagement.** Event attendance is dropping; it's becoming increasingly difficult to get the volunteers you need; and less people are opening your chapter communications and responding as you expect.
- **Financial issues.** Your chapter is relying on your reserves to survive; chapter finances are dwindling; your fundraising efforts are bringing in less than you anticipated; and your sponsorships are dropping off.
- **Operational inefficiencies.** Board members are leaving mid-term; and your members are finding simple administrative tasks, like registering and paying for events and updating contact information, time-consuming and complex.

Completing a ROI checkup

How you execute a chapter ROI checkup is up to you. Think about what will work best for your chapter, what you and members have time for and what you can find enough volunteers to administer.

Is it difficult to get your members together? Ask members questions in an in-depth survey. If members are available for meetings, smaller, moderated focus groups could work, either online or in person.

Follow the process that will allow you to gather detailed feedback effectively from both members and leadership. Explore what your members think is going well — and what isn't — against how your chapter leadership believes things are going. If you don't explore both sides, you won't have real data that allows you to see any gaps.

Summer break: great time for a chapter ROI exercise

Most association chapters take the summer off. And everyone deserves a break. But as you know, we're big proponents of using some time during the summer, a time when you're not running events and managing member relationships, to complete items on that never ending chapter To Do list.



Without all the chapter “chatter,” summer can be a great time for to both complete a chapter ROI and adjust based on what you’ve learned. And to get it all done before the new chapter year starts and things get too busy to concentrate on any of it.

Using what you learn from your chapter ROI

Once you review the outputs of your ROI, you’ll have an idea of the value your members place on your chapter services. With this, you’ll more aptly understand where you may need to adjust to add more and different services that better meet their requirements.

Perhaps they don’t believe you’re giving them what they need around education, they don’t like the food or maybe they’re asking for a better variety of speakers. All of these take resources, both money and time, and if your chapter’s aren’t where you need them to be, here are a few other things you could use the summer to work on.

To improve your sources of non-dues revenue, consider:

- **Reinvigorating your sponsorship program.** Sponsors are a great way to bring in revenue to help pay for your chapter programming. You may have members who would be interested in chapter sponsorship, or your members may know of organizations that would be excited to get in front of your membership.
- **Testing your pricing strategy.** Are you charging the right prices for dues and events? If you’re offering guests free attendance to multiple events before they join, what equal benefit do you offer members? If guests don’t have to pay, why would your members want to pay? Maybe guests get to attend just one event free, or members can attend free if they bring a paying guest.

If your members have mentioned that they find some of your processes difficult and time-consuming, or it’s not intuitive to complete a task, like updating their contact information, try these:

- **Improving your processes.** Still having members and guests register and pay manually? It’s time to consider moving to an Association Management System (AMS) or transitioning from the AMS system you have to a new one, to give members and guests the ability to do all of that online and on their schedules.



- **Enhancing your membership process.** How can you make it easier for members to become aware of, and begin to participate in, all the great things you offer? Automate a series of welcome emails, so all new members get the same information after joining. Provide links to things new members will need, like contact information, the meeting RSVP process and current volunteer opportunities.

A chapter ROI exercise can help you connect with members to understand why they aren't actively participating in your events and taking advantage of your services; without it, you won't know how well your offerings align with their needs. And summer is a great time to consider what you've heard and make changes that will allow you to better meet their needs when the next chapter year starts.

