

# If You Are Not Engaging Prospective Members, What's Your Growth Plan?



We speak with chapter leaders every month, and many share how they manage membership, events, their association chapter email communications, etc. There are two things they share that surprise us.



An overwhelming majority don't:

- Track guests, prospective members, or lapsed members
- Have a plan for meaningful prospective member contact and engagement.

All chapters want and need to grow their membership. To do that, they must pay attention to, and engage with, those who aren't current members, and make them a key part of their association chapter membership strategy.

Here are five ways to add a stronger focus on prospects to your association chapter growth strategy.

## 1. Track your prospective members

What do you know about the prospective members you're connected to? Have they attended an association chapter event? How many are members who let their association chapter membership lapse? Who has expressed interest in membership? Converting prospects to members requires an understanding of who they are and what they're looking for. Event registration, whether for in-person or

virtual events, registering at a table or registering online, is a highly effective place to focus your efforts. If you have a “members register here” link on your association chapter website or a spot on your event registration form for a membership ID number, you can be fairly certain that the remainder who register aren’t members. Don’t stop there. Use your registration form to collect additional information like:

- Up-to-date contact information, including email addresses
- Where individuals are in the membership journey.
  - Do they want to join?
  - Do they have questions about membership?
- Previous chapter membership

## **2. Market to prospective members**

Research shows that an individual must connect to a product or service multiple times before making a purchasing decision. The same touchpoint strategy can be applied to your association chapter membership. Develop a multi-point association chapter engagement plan for connecting with prospects via email, your association chapter website, your social channels and even by phone. Utilize your event guest list and send a follow up message to prospects, asking if they have questions or want to talk to a board member. From there, be sure to send emails directed to these guests about membership.

## **3. Charge a premium for prospective members event attendance**

Your first thought for attracting prospects to join might be to give a discount for the first-time event attendees. There’s a better way. Show the value of membership, not by discounting prospect attendance but charging more for them to attend than members, which allows prospects to get discounted registration as an association chapter membership benefit.

## **4. Expand your members-only value**

And make it easy for prospects to see that those things you provide just for members. In addition to the admission price we mentioned, how else do you show chapter value to your members? Do you have members-only content like webinars and meeting recordings, educational content, job boards or forums? Be sure prospects are aware of those benefits, by including them in your email marketing, on your web site, in newsletters and in conversations.



## **5. Focus on prospective members in your events**

When you hold in-person events, have all attendees wear name tags that identify them as members, volunteers, prospects, board members, etc., and color-code the badges so they're easier to identify, and allowing your board to easily see prospects and know who they need to talk to and vice versa. You might also want to hold events just for prospects. In person or virtual, these informal meetings give you a chance to connect more intimately with prospects and show them the value of membership in a less intimidating, friendlier way than as part of a bigger meeting.

These are a few of the many ways association chapters can better engage with their prospects. Adding methods like these to your association chapter growth strategy can go a long way to help you better understand your prospects connections and find ways to bring them on board.

