

# Is It Time to Hire a Chapter Administrator? 3 Signs Your Association Chapter Needs Some Paid Help



Running an association chapter comes with countless rewards, as you watch members build connections and impact your industry and your community. At the same time, chapter leaders face countless challenges with all they need to accomplish to make these great things happen; coordinating events, managing membership databases, answering questions and handling routine communications can overwhelm even your most passionate volunteers. And when these volunteers get overwhelmed, not only is work left undone, but they may stop showing up completely. Or they could show up and not do their job appropriately.



When cracks start to show (or even before), bringing in a chapter administrator can help strengthen your chapter's foundation, get you back on track and move you further than you ever expected.

## **What is a chapter administrator?**

A chapter administrator is a paid professional whose primary focus is to manage the operational aspects of a chapter. Full-time or part-time, they can take on chapter operations tasks such as:

- Keeping your Association Management System up to date
- Maintaining membership records and ensuring timely renewals
- Coordinating event logistics, from booking venues to managing registrations
- Managing budgets and financial reports
- Overseeing member communications including newsletters, emails and social media and creating a chapter communication plan.

Patrick Algyer, chief strategist and owner, Encore Management Solutions, an Association Management Company (AMC), and a StarChapter Preferred Vendor Program (PVP) member, provides administrator services to chapters across the country. He explained that when an administrator takes on these responsibilities, it “allows the board and volunteers to focus on strategic leadership and member engagement while ensuring the chapter operates efficiently and effectively,” adding that a chapter administrator’s flexibility allows the role to be “tailored to the specific needs of the chapter.”

### **3 signs hiring an administrator could help your chapter**

**Volunteer delays, inconsistencies and burnout.** Missing deadlines? Projects not getting completed? Chapters rely on volunteers to manage day-to-day operations, and when they’re overwhelmed, things can easily fall apart.

While your volunteers are often enthusiastic and committed, they may not have enough time to get everything done, or they may lack the skills or expertise to handle certain work efficiently. Your treasurer, for example, may not know anything about bookkeeping, and your webmaster may spend more time learning your web system than actually updating pages.

Delegating responsibilities to an experienced administrator can help an organization run more smoothly. where tasks are completed on time and to the high standard your members expect.

**Membership numbers are declining.** Are members leaving with no explanation, and you’re having trouble replacing them? You know you need to do a better job engaging members, and you really want to know what keeps you from meeting their needs. But, which of your volunteers has the capacity to respond to members’ day-to-day questions, let alone figure out what other services the chapter should be offering?

A chapter administrator can help you hold on to the members you have and bring in new ones, by providing consistency, responsiveness and professionalism. They can:

- Respond promptly to member inquiries, answering questions or managing concerns
- Keep members informed of upcoming events, opportunities and news
- Implement and managing systems and processes that make joining, renewing or registering for events seamless
- Be your point of contact for feedback and suggestions.



When members feel valued and supported, they are more likely to remain loyal, participate actively and recommend your chapter to others.

**Maintaining momentum and success for the long term.** One of the most significant challenges faced by chapters is keeping everything moving forward. Board turnover, inconsistent processes and a lack of knowledge can all work against that success.

An administrator can provide a chapter board with stability and continuity, allowing operations to move forward even as board members and other volunteers rotate in and out. They learn about and understand the ins and outs of your chapter and use that knowledge to document processes, create templates and implement tools that help a chapter function more efficiently.

### **Making the decision to hire a chapter administrator**

While the benefits of hiring a chapter administrator are clear, you still need to approach this decision thoughtfully. Take the time to:

- **Understand your budget:** How much can you spend? Ensure your chapter's financial resources will allow you to pay for an administrator, whether part-time or full-time.
- **Assess your needs:** Identify the tasks or pain points an administrator could address. This helps define the role and ensure it aligns with your chapter's priorities.
- **Define the role:** Outline the administrator's responsibilities, expectations and reporting structure to get, and keep, everyone on the same page and maximize the administrator's effectiveness.

Hiring a chapter administrator is an investment, but it's one that can yield significant returns. Patrick calls it a partnership and equates it to hiring someone for your own company. "You want this person to connect with the board," he explains, "connect with the members and have the skills to get the job done." One of the most important things in this process, says Patrick, is ensuring the chapter "hires someone with association and/or nonprofit experience." (Patrick pointed out that the StarChapter PVP Program is a great place to start on your path to hiring the right administrator for your chapter).

With professional support for your daily operations, volunteers can focus on what truly matters — meeting your mission and making a meaningful impact on your chapter, your members and your community. An administrator frees up your board to focus on more strategic initiatives and higher-level decision-making, around things like expanding membership and outreach, creating more innovative programming and more.



To survive and thrive, chapters need to be agile, efficient and member focused. A chapter administrator brings the expertise, consistency and professionalism needed to support these goals. Whether your chapter is struggling to keep up with all your administrative activities or simply wants to do better, a dedicated administrator could be the key to making it all work.

