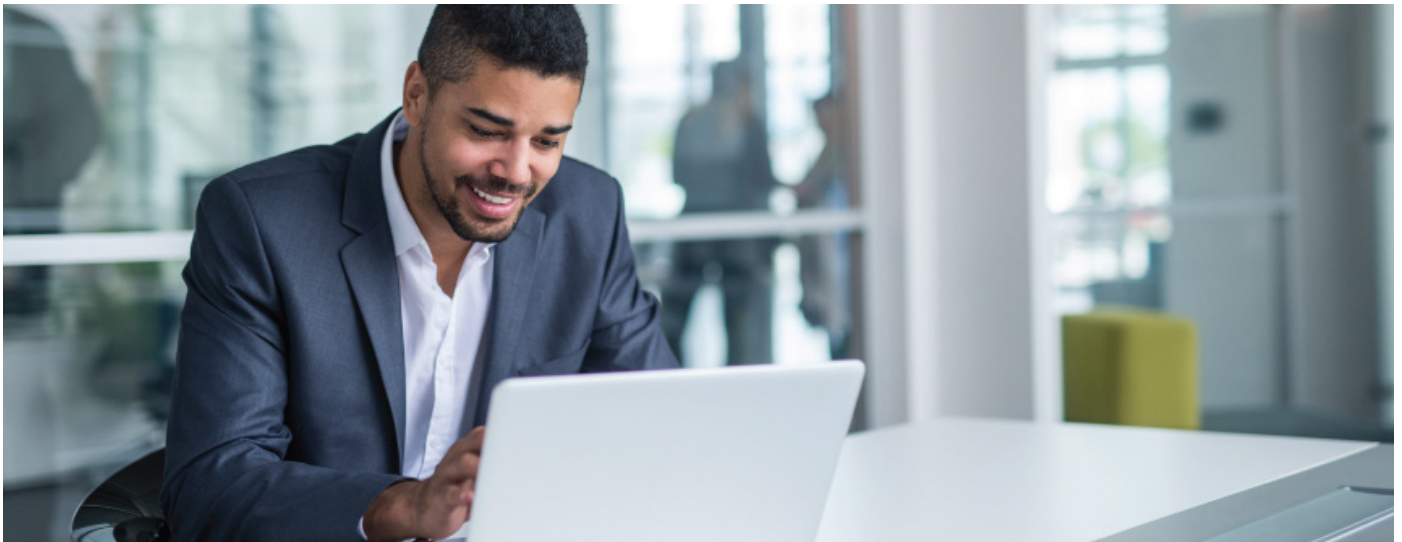


# Is Your Chapter Website Playing Enough Of A Role In Your Overall Awareness?



Many chapter organizations can't figure out why they aren't able to meet the goals that they set for their chapter's online programming. These goals might include getting new sponsors, bringing in new grants, donations, members, etc., or keeping X percent of the ones they have. They believe they're doing what they're supposed to — connecting directly with potential members and sponsors, holding events, managing their website and social media, etc. — but these efforts aren't translating as they expect.



Chapter boards often believe that maintaining a social media presence for their chapter should be their primary online focus. Social media is an important chapter tool; however, it isn't typically enough to connect the chapter with their different audiences and provide these audiences with what they're looking for from the chapter online.

The website for a chapter association may even be of greater importance when it comes to providing details and completing tasks. To be the most effective, a chapter's online presence should include a clear, easy-to-navigate website as well as a well-run social media program.

### The limits of social media for chapters

Have you ever tried to fit an entire story or provide all the necessary details for a chapter event, job board or discussion forum into a single social media post or even a series of posts. Something gets



lost or forgotten or is confusing to read when the posts show up in the wrong order. And worse, what about trying to go back and find something you saw on social media? Not an easy task, is it?

A social media post should provide a taste of what's to come. It should be a short, timely piece of relevant information related to something going on at the chapter. You could, for example, use your chapter's social media to give the date and topic for an upcoming meeting or conference, highlight a speaker, a contest or a continuing education class. Then, link that social media post to page on your chapter website with the necessary details and the call to action, like registering and paying for an event, exploring a job board or adding their thoughts to a discussion on your forum.

### **Many Chapter Websites Miss the Mark**

Chapter websites should be the central, public, credible home for information related to association chapters.

#### **How easy is it for visitors to your chapter website to do things like:**

- Understand your mission
- Meet your Board
- Register for a webinar and pay for it
- See the dates for and topics of upcoming meetings
- Find chapter volunteer needs

Chapters sites don't always do a solid job showcasing all the important things a chapter does. It can be hard to find enough of the right volunteers to maintain and update a chapter site. As a result, the content may be out of date, pages use language that's too complex for an audience, the site has a design that's too cluttered and pages include tasks that take too many clicks to complete.

If visitors to your website can't quickly and easily understand who you are, what you offer and find what they need, there's a good chance they won't stick around. When that happens, their leaving is a loss for your chapter.

### **What makes an effective chapter website?**

For a website to give your different audiences what they need, it should be:

- Easy to navigate. Make it simple for people to find what they're looking for. Keep the number of steps (also called "clicks") to a minimum. For example, if people want to pay their dues, renew



their sponsorship or register/pay for an event, they need clear instructions and an easy way to get there. If that action takes too many clicks to get to and finish, they may not bother.

- Simple. Who makes up your different audiences? What do they need to find? Think about the steps they'll take – what should come before and what should come after. Member guests for example, want details about an event before they pay, and volunteers will want to learn about your different volunteer opportunities before they commit to volunteering.
- Contain easy-to-read content. Remember your audience. Websites aren't the place for a lot of complex language and jargon. If you need to use either, consider including short definitions as well.
- Include calls to action. Want event volunteers for an upcoming meeting? Add a **Want to Volunteer?** button on your home page that links to a chapter volunteering page. Want members and member guests to pay online for an event? Add a **Pay Now** button to the event detail page. Have a page with content that could lead to questions? Add a **Get More Information** or a **Have a Question?** button.

A website is the right place to show the impact of your chapter, on members, your industry, etc. When you couple an effective website with your social media platform, your audience gets the full picture. That picture will provide a clear, simple idea of how strong your organization is and how you can meet the needs of a range of audiences.

