

Looking For New Volunteers? Time To Tap Into Your Student Population For Help With Your Association Chapter Activities



StarChapter clients are mentioning with increasing frequency that they're seeing a decrease in association chapter membership for people 55 and younger. And that's a bad sign. For chapters to survive, they must be able to bring in and keep younger members, especially as they continue to watch their membership age. And as those members age, they retire and often don't want to spend as much of their time on chapter-related activities, if they even choose to remain members.



You know from experience how hard member engagement can be, regardless of their age; and you're very aware of how difficult Millennial and Gen Z members can be, whether you're trying to keep them engaged or get them to do things for the chapter, like volunteering on your board, helping with events, website management, social media, etc. Finding enough and the right association chapter volunteers is always a headache.

How can your association chapter survive, when you're losing members and can't replace them, because you can't get the help you need to put on the programs and offer the services they want and expect? It becomes an unbreakable cycle.

Or maybe you can break it. What about looking outside your chapter – and we don't mean hiring outside help, though that's always a viable option. We're talking about connecting with local high school and college students to fill some of your volunteer needs, while simultaneously filling your membership pipeline.

Getting the help your chapter needs from local students

If you're preparing your membership pipeline appropriately, you already have connections at your local high school and colleges. Reach out and ask for a slightly different kind of help. You're not going to be looking for members (though is a great way to get younger people interested in joining your association chapter).

Most high school students need volunteer hours to graduate, and college students are always looking for experiences that will give them expertise that looks great on their resumes and real-world examples of what work could be like after college.

Here are a few things to do before you reach out to your local high schools and colleges to have the best chance of connecting with students to get the association chapter volunteer help you need.

Give them specific details. "Need volunteers, three hours a week," isn't likely to get you the kind of help you need. These students want to know the specifics – will they get volunteer hours? College credits? Will this look good on their resumes? Tell them exactly what they're going to be doing, who they will be working with, what the outcome will be, etc. Students are more likely to respond with interest or to learn more, and tell others about the opportunity, if you tell them exactly what's in it for them.

Categorize your opportunities. Do you need help planning association chapter events? Writing blog posts? Website management? These are things that high school and college students will be great at. Write your volunteer help wanted ads in ways that will engage and excite these groups, and you'll have a better chance of getting the right people.

Create a volunteer schedule and opportunities that work for students. Students probably can't volunteer during the day, and they might be more interested in helping if they don't need to meet in person and the work can be done in short blocks. Consider remote and micro-volunteering opportunities and activities that can be done on their schedules. And, if you're working with students



remotely, hold regular zoom check-ins to be sure everyone is on track to meet the goals of the assignment.

Attract students at National Student Volunteer Day

Know what your spring volunteer needs will look like? Take advantage of the timing of National Student Volunteer Day (NSVD) to get the word out. NSVD takes place every year on February 20, and the program is a chance to encourage student volunteering and community service and promote volunteering innovation and discussion.

Turning student volunteers into members

When you engage the right way with students and show them how your association chapter volunteer needs fit into their short term and/or longer-term career plan, volunteering with your chapter can become exactly what they're looking for. Then, once they get involved and see how interesting and fun your organization can be, you may find yourself with a new group of younger members.

