

# Membership Extensions – Are They Right for Your Chapter?

**Y**ou may be a little nervous about being able to continue to deliver the value you're known for. To meet the changing needs of members, you've switched your monthly in-person meetings to virtual ones, and you've recorded a webinar or two on topics you think members would be interested in. But you worry you haven't done enough to keep members committed to your chapter, so you continue to look at ways to add to what you offer.



Someone mentions extending membership end dates, and you wonder if that's what your chapter needs. Maybe you could extend all membership end dates by six months or give all who renew two years of membership for the price of one. Or, you wonder if you should make other changes and keep your membership program as it is.

Before you make any quick moves, here are a few things to think about.

**What do members want?** Don't make any moves without talking to them. Ask through a combination of methods, like surveys and phone calls, and asking for feedback during a virtual meeting.

**How will members and your chapter benefit from an extension?** If your industry and/or your geographic area has been hit hard by current events, you may learn members are cutting back on spending and would use what they save on essentials. Or, maybe they'll use the money they save on membership in other parts of your organization, like on additional networking or the training they've been putting off.

**Are there any offerings you haven't thought of?** This is your chance to take advantage of some of the down time your members have. Add to your training program with courses they can take on their own schedule to get them up-to-speed on



the changes in regulations in your industry or create a virtual speaker series to improve their soft skills like communication and project management. Invest in solid speakers for those webinars and charge for attendance.

**Repurpose content.** What content do you already have that you could push out to members? Stay in touch with members by sending it to members in email. Or, do you have content you could add to and make available for purchase as a white paper or eBook?

**Utilize your members-only forum.** Give members a place to talk about what they're experiencing in their personal and professional lives, as well as an easy way to access your training materials and members-only recordings and review your up-to-date job board.

**Send chapter swag and hold giveaways.** There's a good chance members would enjoy receiving something "just because." What could you send to those who attend a certain number of your virtual events? Or, do you have a sponsor that's willing to donate an item for a raffle?

**Include free in your plan.** Think about what you can add that doesn't have a physical cost to you, or members, just your time, like online networking and cocktail hours, adding an online job board, or

keeping yours up to date.

## IF YOU DECIDE TO MOVE FORWARD WITH AN EXTENSION...

Figure out what makes the most sense for your members, whether they've been furloughed, lost their job or income, or have a membership due to expire on X date, as well as those guests who are thinking about joining. Consider tiered options, like an extra month, three months or six months, instead of automatically providing everyone with two years for the price of one just because you've heard that's what other organizations are doing. If you learn you have only a few members who could benefit from an extension, address each individually.

Whatever you decide to do, be sure you have a contact for questions listed on the website.

## MAYBE THERE'S A THIRD OPTION.

Perhaps a combination could work for your chapter – extending memberships while also adding services that allow you to add value and engage members. Whatever you do, be sure you continue to offer what your members need, so they don't leave the chapter when they can leave the house again.

