

5 Signs It's Time To Move To Another Association Management System



A few years ago it probably seemed like everyone in your association chapter was happy with the association management system (AMS) you were using. However, as your chapter grew and evolved, the system that served you well could be holding you back.



Some older systems lag behind modern capabilities and can't offer what chapters need to function effectively. Are you hearing grumblings like these about your current AMS?

- **User interface (UI) and user experience (UX).** It's getting harder to find what you need and complete tasks. Members are starting to complain.
- **Support.** The support is more frustrating than the issues you're dealing with.
- **Website.** The website design hasn't kept up with the trends and you can't make the changes you want.
- **Cost.** You're paying a lot; the cost isn't worth what you're getting and you're paying for functions you don't use.
- **The Board.** You're losing association board members because they're getting frustrated with these issues, the overall AMS administration and more.

If your AMS is causing more frustration than efficiency, it may be time for a change. Here are five signs it could be time for an AMS upgrade.

1. **Your existing AMS feels outdated and clunky.**

Technology is constantly evolving. If your chapter AMS feels slow or is difficult to navigate, it may not be keeping up with changes in tech.

Indicators that your system is outdated could include:

- A confusing or non-intuitive interface
- Frequent crashes or slow performance
- A user experience that frustrates your executive director, board and/or members.

Your AMS should simplify chapter operations, not make them more complicated. If you're spending more time troubleshooting it than using it effectively, it's probably time to explore more current, user-friendly options.

2. **The system isn't growing as your chapter grows and evolves**

What worked when your chapter was smaller or starting off might no longer be enough as your membership grows and change. If your AMS lacks critical features, like the ability to have a members only portal, it could be hindering your ability to engage members effectively.

Features you need but aren't available could include:

- Robust event management tools
- Advanced reporting and analytics
- Integration with accounting software

A strong AMS should scale with your chapter, allowing you to manage more members, events and data with ease. If your current AMS feels like a roadblock to chapter growth, consider an upgrade.

3. **Member engagement is declining, and members are leaving**

Your members want to have a good experience with your AMS – using it should improve member engagement, not be time consuming and frustrating. If you're noticing a decline in participation, renewals or event attendance, your system could be part of the problem

Think about whether your AMS makes it easy for members to:

- Update their profiles and preferences
- Register for events and pay without difficulty



- Communicate with the chapter and other members
- Access resources and benefits seamlessly.

If the AMS you're using makes these tasks difficult, frustrating or impossible, your members may disengage. A modern AMS with a focus on user experience can help strengthen member retention and involvement.

4. **Reporting and managing data are a nightmare**

Data is a powerful tool in chapter decision-making. If your AMS makes it difficult to collect, analyze or use your data, you're missing valuable insights that could help you run your chapter more effectively and offer better services to your members.

Keep an eye out for frustrations like these:

- Limited or confusing reporting options
- Difficulty tracking membership trends
- Inability to generate customized reports
- Manual data entry that wastes time and increases errors

A new AMS should provide clear, customizable reports with the information you need easily accessible. It should also make data management simple and intuitive and reduce the burden on your team.

5. **Your AMS doesn't integrate well with other tools**

Your AMS shouldn't operate in isolation, requiring your board and your members to continue to use multiple systems to complete tasks. If it doesn't integrate well with your chapter website, email marketing platform, payment processor or other tools, it's making your chapter operations, and your member engagement, highly ineffective.

Signs of poor integration include:

- Manually transferring data between systems
- Difficulty syncing information across platforms
- Inconsistent, missing or duplicate records
- Limited automation, which requires extra manual effort.



A well-integrated AMS can streamline operations, improve data accuracy and save time. If your current system forces you to rely on disconnected tools, upgrading to one with better integration capabilities can significantly enhance your productivity.

The fear of saying “yes” to switching to another AMS

A big piece of an AMS upgrade is determining who will manage and execute all the many details. And when you ask for volunteers, this is where there’s a good chance you’ll hear crickets. People are scared to step up. Not only do few people really like change, most worry they’ll be left to manage the project on their own – no one wants that level of responsibility or stress.

When you speak about the possibility of an AMS upgrade, talk about how this is a problem for the entire board in so many different areas and how “we” as in the entire chapter need to work together to make the right changes. Develop a committee of board members and members at large, and assign roles to people based on their skills, interests and availability.

Once the idea of choosing and migrating to a new AMS becomes more of a shared effort, the fear of the change diminishes, as the workload is shared across the entire group.

Time for a change? What happens next?

Here are some things you should do to be sure you’re making the right decision.

1. **Assess your needs:** Identify features and functionalities your chapter needs to operate smoothly.
2. **Research your options:** Look for AMS providers familiar with association chapters and ones that align with your needs.
3. **Get input from those who use the existing system and will need to use the new one.** Collect the pain points those in your chapter – board, members – and those on the outside– accountant, lawyer, staff, sponsors, etc. – who use your system have with it and any improvements they’d like to see.
4. **Request demos and trials:** Test different AMS platforms to see which offer the right user experience and functionalities for your chapter.
5. **Plan for a smooth transition:** Before you transition to a new AMS, ensure your data will migrate smoothly, you can keep downtime to a minimum and training will be available.



Upgrading your AMS isn't just about technology — it's about empowering your chapter to function more efficiently, serve members better and continue to grow. If your current chapter AMS is causing more headaches than solutions, don't be afraid to take the leap and figure out what needs to happen next.

