

Launch Your Chapter's New Year With Purpose And Energy



Once association chapters wrap up another busy year, they hit a natural pause: the time between finishing the current year's activities and starting next year's. But this break can be accompanied by a flood of expectations, when chapter boards worry they'll end up as stressed as they were at the end of last year.



Using this down time for some reflection, clarity and planning, you can start the new year with energy and purpose that goes beyond the first quarter. We've compiled potential activities that can help you set the tone, energize boards, committees and membership and build positive momentum for the year ahead.

Reflect on all you accomplished. Look back at all you accomplished this past year. It's a great time to understand and learn from what went wrong, as well as what went right, and the why behind both.

1. **Conduct a review.** Get input from your board, volunteers, members and even sponsors. Use short survey or hold discussions to discover valuable insights.
2. **Identify wins, challenges and missed opportunities.** Where did you have an impact? Look for record event attendance, successful sponsorship and improved communication, etc. Get bad feedback on a speaker or event location? Use that to improve what you do going forward.



3. **Celebrate successes publicly.** Share stories and results in your chapter newsletter or on social media. Or hold a “Welcome to the New Year” January event. To help build loyalty and enthusiasm, recognize volunteers, sponsors and committees.
4. **Document lessons learned.** Capture outcomes in a shared document or folder and ask the relevant groups to review. Notes like these can help leaders improve and keep you from reinventing the wheel.

Reset chapter vision & goals. Revisit your chapter “why.” Are you still on track or should you make changes to your goals?

1. **Revisit or refine the chapter mission and values.** Do they still resonate with members and reflect chapter culture? A board discussion, and a larger membership discussion if there’s time, can spark ideas to keep your mission relevant.
2. **Set 3-5 strategic goals. Include short-term and longer-term objectives.** Maybe it’s time to focus on growing membership, improving event attendance or strengthening your volunteer pipeline.
3. **Make chapter goals SMART.** To keep everyone focused and accountable, goals should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.
4. **Break goals into actionable steps.** Assign owners, deadlines and metrics. Map out the first 90 days to help your chapter secure early wins, build confidence and keep everything on track.

Reboot your teams. The new year often brings chapter transitions—new board and committee members and a reshuffling of responsibilities. Ensuring these handoffs go smoothly can prevent confusion later.

1. **Ensure seamless transitions.** Confirm who’s stepping into roles and provide orientation for new officers and volunteers. Hold short onboarding sessions to help ensure the continued commitment of those new in their roles.
2. **Clarify expectations and accountability.** Even seasoned leaders benefit from written job descriptions and documented expectations. Create regular check-ins to keep everyone aligned.
3. **Recruit and re-engage volunteers.** Identify gaps early, especially if some roles remain open or volunteers show signs of burnout. Promote volunteering as meaningful and flexible and highlight the personal and professional benefits.

Reinvigorate member & supporter relationships. Members and sponsors are the heart of your chapter’s success and this is a great time to reconnect. Are there trends you expect to affect some of



your members? Use what you learn to expand your programming and offerings.

1. **Launch a member survey or pulse check.** Uncover what members want from the chapter this year—events, professional development, networking, business support, etc.
2. **Plan engagement touchpoints.** Create a rhythm of communication through quarterly events, newsletters and networking. Include opportunities for feedback that allow you to adapt as the needs of your audiences change.
3. **Refresh your sponsor and partner strategy.** Review sponsorship packages and benefits to ensure they still deliver value. Reach out early to renew existing sponsors and start conversations with new ones.

Update your tools, processes & systems. Administrative cleanup may not be glamorous, but it saves countless headaches.

1. **Audit your digital and communication assets.** Check website, social media and email templates. Remove outdated content, refresh chapter branding and ensure all dates and references reflect the new year. Have your board and committee members check their email signatures.
2. **Review your technology stack and automations.** Look for ways to streamline and make peoples jobs easier—automate event registrations and reminders, renewal notices and thank you emails. Even small efficiencies free up volunteer time.
3. **Set up your yearly calendar.** Block out board meetings, scheduled events, communication campaigns and deadlines. Don't forget to include buffer time for unplanned needs; rarely does everything run on schedule.

Start with an inspiring chapter year launch. Start the year with a burst of shared excitement and vision to get everyone excited for what's coming.

1. **Host a "State of the Chapter" or "Vision for the Year" event.** Whether virtual or in person, get members connected and inspired. Share chapter goals, major dates and events and opportunities to get involved.
2. **Send a motivational email or video message.** Hearing from the chapter president or board chair reinforces commitment and sets a positive tone. Use this as a chance to spotlight volunteer contributions and encourage participation.



Maintain momentum. Build in habits and checkpoints to keep board and members engaged throughout the year.

1. **Hold monthly or quarterly progress reviews.** Check your metrics, evaluate what's on track and adjust as needed.
2. **Celebrate small wins publicly.** Recognizing incremental progress keeps morale high and reminds members that their involvement matters.
3. **Conduct a mid-year reassessment.** Halfway through, review your goals and priorities. Be flexible and pivot when necessary. Pivoting is a sign of strong leadership, not failure.
4. **Keep communication open and consistent.** Share updates, recognize volunteers and maintain transparency. Members and sponsors appreciate seeing where their dues and efforts have an impact.

Plan now to make the best use of your pause

We've given you a lot to think about and a lot of ideas. Pick what's right for your chapter's specific situation. The first few steps you take will set the tone for the rest of the year.

A new chapter year isn't just a calendar reset—it's a chance to renew your purpose, strengthen your community and lead with intention. What do you have planned for your January "pause"? Share some of your ideas below. We'd love to feature you and your chapter in a future post.

