

Share Your Association Chapter's Strategic Plan, And Make Members A More Considered Part Of That Plan



Who sees your association chapter's strategic plan? Your association chapter board, of course. As a team, you've worked hard to put it together and make unified decisions regarding the future of your association chapter, around things like improving your program offerings, expanding your chapter's reach, and decreasing (or increasing) the number of chapter committees.



Sharing your association chapter's strategic plan with your chapter board is essential. They're doing most of the work and you need their approval to make these changes happen. But just sharing it with them isn't enough; you're leaving out a key group of stakeholders -- your association chapter members. Including your association chapter membership in the review of your strategic plan will help ensure the decisions your board makes related to the future of your chapter really are the right ones, while at the same time, it will get your membership more committed to your vision.

Many association chapter boards don't think to do this. Your members will live with the outcomes of your strategic plan and not sharing it with them till after it's finalized and approved can make it harder for them to buy in to what you want to do. And doing that most likely won't get you the help you need to turn those association chapter strategic priorities to reality. Setting (and resetting) your association chapter priorities every few years in your summer board strategic planning sessions and just talking about them with your board can limit your chapter's ability to grow and develop.

But if you manifest your association chapter vision and share your strategic plan with those it will directly affect, there is a better chance your stakeholders will be more on board with helping you make that vision reality.

Getting valid feedback

Asking for input and feedback from members can highlight areas of concern you may not have thought of. Maybe your members agree 100 percent with what you want to do. Or perhaps you could learn that they take issue with some of the things you're thinking of changing.

Has transitioning to an association management system been on your To Do list for years, but it keeps getting pushed to the bottom because you think there are other things that take priority? Ask your association chapter membership and you may learn that things your board thinks are small nuisances, like not being able to register online for events, not easily finding meeting presentations or not having an association chapter job board are major limitations for your membership.

To ensure you get input when you need it, and before you've gone too far down the wrong path, consider sharing your association chapter strategic plan with your membership —

1. Before you consider it complete
2. When you're transitioning your board
3. If you're considering significant changes.

Involving the right people

You may think that sending your strategic plan to your entire membership base is a waste of time. And perhaps asking for input from people who never attend an event, never respond to emails, etc., may not be worth it. But is there a smaller group within your association chapter whose input you value and trust? Maybe that's your committee chairs and members of those committees, or members who attend every single one of your events. Or maybe you want to include members who complain after every event. Whomever you choose, consider holding smaller focus groups with these individuals to get feedback on your potential strategic priorities.

At the same time, you may still want to put out a request for review and input from the entire chapter, in your newsletter, on your website and at your events. Don't ignore them completely, as you never know who will want to provide feedback on the strategic plan, and maybe even get involved with the chapter in other ways.



Sharing your association chapter's strategic plan with your members can help ensure members agree the priorities you've chosen are important to the entire chapter, not just to the board. And if you find you've chosen the wrong priorities, including your membership in your process makes it easier to reset and get everyone back on the right path.

