

Spring Strategies For Nurturing And Growing Chapter Membership



Chapters are always looking for ways to cultivate membership renewals and continued growth, by transforming the organization to continue to provide what members and member guests want. With spring on the brain, we've been thinking more about these themes, also happen to be some of the central themes of Spring.



Many chapters hold end-of-year events and then go dormant till Spring. But leading up to Spring is a perfect time to work on chapter membership and engagement. Here, we break down some of the best practices chapters can use to improve in those areas. And we speak with Morgan Frideres, PRSA Iowa Chapter - Newsletter & Social Media Chair, about how they work to better engage members.

Lay the foundation for growth

Start with getting an understanding of where your chapter is currently, against where your different audiences would like you to be, while making it easier for members to interact with the chapter and each other.

- Review chapter data, like retention rates, event attendance, engagement trends, like the number of people opening and reading newsletters and blogs, social posts, etc.
- Survey members to understand what they need and want from the chapter
- Clarify your offerings and benefits and identify gaps between these and what members want

- Align leadership around chapter goals.

Strengthening your foundation includes continuing to make things easier for members. This is the perfect time for some spring cleaning, like fixing outdated registration processes, updating communication channels and cleaning member data.

Schedule spring initiatives that excite

Don't wait till your annual conference to connect with members. While they're praying for winter's end, schedule events and activities that help set the tone for the rest of the chapter year.

Host a kickoff event. Consider a spring-themed State of the Chapter meeting or a unique networking event, where you introduce initiatives and goals you'll be focusing on. Include intentional connection time, through small group networking and roundtables that let members reconnect with each other and board members. Explain why you chose to hold a certain event, especially if it was a result of member feedback. Highlight in pre-event announcements and event descriptions how attendees will benefit from and share where members can help make the programming, and the chapter, successful.

Refresh your chapter onboarding program. Update your program to better connect members from the start. Instead of a "firehose" of information in one long email, send personalized welcome emails at 30-, 60- and 90-day intervals, with short guides to the different chapter areas, like your website, volunteer program and board, and where to get answers to questions new members often have around updating contact information, posting a job, volunteering, etc. (or include an FAQ email!). Schedule new member orientation sessions that include longer-term members, so new members can see why people join and why they stay. New member mentorship programs can also help them feel more engaged once they join.

Launch a membership growth campaign. Try a "member get a member" program, with referral incentives to members who bring in new members; a contest with prizes to drive members to bring in new members; or reduced pricing for those who register to attend an event and simultaneously join the chapter.



Continue to engage and remove barriers to engagement

Engagement isn't something you set and forget; it requires thought and cultivation and consistent communication with members. Let people see how other members benefit, with member testimonials and success stories on your website, in your social media and at your meetings. Recognize and celebrate member milestones, including new members, chapter anniversaries, "movers and shakers," etc. Share upcoming events and opportunities and ask members for feedback through polls and surveys. And act on that feedback.

This is also a good time to become aware of and remove potential barriers to engagement. Low attendance? Maybe your registration process is complex. Or maybe your event descriptions don't appropriately set expectations. Or maybe it's something else, like the building had too many steps, the space was too loud or bright or your introverted guests felt overwhelmed and uncomfortable participating.

To prevent boredom, burnout or frustration, consider adding new types of programming, like outdoor meetings as the weather warms or monthly meetings with a volunteer component. Collaborate with partners and sponsors on content, spaces and in-kind donations and consider seasonal themes. And be sure to add the necessary structures that allow everyone to be comfortable attending.

PRSA Iowa engages with a member spotlight program

Morgan Frideres, PRSA Iowa Chapter - Newsletter & Social Media Chair, explained their member spotlight program, where they regularly post Q&As with members on their blog and in their newsletter.

What inspired you to highlight members? How has that initiative impacted the organization?

While ongoing education and professional development are a big focus for us, networking is just as important to why many people join. Featuring members on our website is one way we bring those two things together.

Member spotlights give us the chance to celebrate each other's work and share more about who we are. They put faces to names and make it easier to start conversations, whether that's following up with someone you briefly met at an event or reaching out to the "right" person about a specific topic.



When you've already learned a little about someone's background or interests, approaching them feels much more natural.

They also create space for members to share parts of their professional journey that might not come up during a quick networking chat. Overall, it's been a really positive way for us to learn more about one another, strengthen connections, and build a more engaged community.

What have you learned about your members that has surprised or inspired you?

Through our "get to know you" questions, we always ask how someone first got involved with PRSA. It's honestly one of my favorite parts to read. Everyone's path is a little different — some started out in PRSSA during college and naturally made their way to PRSA, others were encouraged by a colleague or friend, and some simply joined because they were looking for ways to keep growing professionally.

How have member spotlights strengthened your sense of community or deepened relationships?

Member spotlights have really strengthened our sense of community by helping us get to know one another by giving members a way to share about things that might not come up naturally in conversation. By sharing each person's background, interests, and how they found their way to PRSA, we get a fuller picture of who they are and what they care about. That insight makes it easier to start conversations, follow up after meeting in person, or reach out to the right member for advice on a specific topic.

What are you most excited about in the coming months?

Our chapter recently partnered with our local AMA (American Marketing Association) chapter, allowing members of either organization to attend the other's events at member pricing. It's an exciting opportunity to collaborate, expand our networks, and bring fresh perspectives into the room. I'm really looking forward to seeing new faces at our upcoming programs.

Our member spotlights will play an important role in making that partnership feel more personal. As AMA members check out PRSA, the spotlights will help them get a sense of who we are, what our members do, and the strengths within our chapter — making it easier to spark conversations and build meaningful connections from the start.



Turn spring momentum into long-term success

As you look for ways to keep members engaged, it's important to evaluate how well things are working, tracking attendance and other metrics against clear, measurable goals. Adjust as needed based on what you learn, recognize people who step up to help and plan future programming that continues to support chapter growth and engagement.

Membership growth isn't accidental — it requires cultivation and tending, just like a spring garden. Start planting the seeds today, to help ensure thriving chapter membership and engagement for tomorrow.

