

# Starting An Association Chapter Over Again? Do These 5 Things To Get Off On The Right Foot



There are multiple reasons to start an association chapter, including adding a chapter to expand into a new geographic area and restarting a chapter after it had been closed. Whatever the reason for starting a new chapter of an association, “build it and they will come,” isn’t always going to get you the best results.



Scheduling a meeting and expecting people to show up and want to join your chapter could work and you could get enough people. You could also get lucky and sending out just a single request for volunteers could get you all the chapter volunteers you need. Or the “build it and they will come” effort could end in disaster, when no one shows up, or people show up but expect that everything will be in place, and they don’t have to do any work to get the chapter moving.

In a previous post we gave you some high-level direction for restarting an association chapter, including choosing the right chapter structure, setting goals and asking your national organization for help.

Now, it’s time to get your hands dirty with some specifics. Here are five things you need to do, and do well, to set up your new chapter for success. There’s a common thread that runs through all of these ideas: don’t try to do it on your own. There is strength in numbers, and you need help making your chapter a success.



## 5 Must Do's for New Association Chapter Success

**Gather your first group of members.** Most chapters that are part of national organizations need a certain number of members to be an “official” chapter. Instead of waiting for people to come to you, connect with individuals and groups who share your mission and goals and are well-suited to help you get the chapter off the ground. Look for new chapter members on social media, through your national organization and partner organizations, and in similar and adjacent industries. Talk up the benefits of joining and even consider providing a discount if they take the leap and join as one of the first members.

**Recruit board members.** Look for board members who can help you run the chapter much better than you could do on your own. Plus, you'll probably need to have certain roles on your board when you start, like a president, vice president, secretary and treasurer. We all know how finding board members with the right skills and abilities can be hard, so you should proactively look for people here, too. Look for people with the skills you need, as well as those you can train, in the connections of members of your association. And look outside of your association, at local businesses, corporations, other associations, etc. You might even be able to find people on social media who would be a good fit.

**Recruit volunteers.** There's no reason you should be doing everything on your own to set up your new chapter. You're starting the chapter “for your people,” so get help from those people to get it all done. You'll need help in areas like communications, membership, events, finance, technology, social media, etc.

Ask your new members and those who are considering membership how they'd be interested in helping and where they think their skills could best be used. And then put those skills to use!

**Set up your online tools.** How are people going to find your membership application, pricing, and all the benefits of membership? And how will they register for that first meeting? You'll need a website, social media, email marketing tools, etc. to make it easy for them to find what they need while simultaneously building an online brand they believe they can trust.

You may want to consider using an online association management system (AMS) like StarChapter. If you haven't heard the term, AMS are all-in-one software platforms that allow membership-based



organizations to manage their entire membership lifecycle in one place, from prospecting to association member membership, retention, and even retirement. An AMS system's core functionality is centered around staying connected to everyone, regardless of their membership or lifecycle stage.

**Hold your first meeting.** Once you have everything set in place, or even if you're still figuring out some of it, it's time for that first meeting. Don't wait till you think everything is perfect. Find a location for the meeting that will bring in the most members and member guests, invite current and potential members and set up an agenda that's going to get them engaged and interested in getting involved. Include things like the chapter's mission, vision and goals, upcoming events and how people can submit suggestions for more events, recruiting volunteers, board members, volunteers, etc., and where they can find all this information.

Setting up a new chapter for success can be stressful, but it's not an impossible task, if you have a well-thought-out plan and enough people to execute that plan correctly.

If you want to learn more about what an AMS is and how it can help you manage your association chapter smarter, let's talk.

