

The Future Of Your Association Chapter Webmaster – Get Them Some Help!



For as long as association chapters have had websites, a single person, the association chapter webmaster, has been responsible for everything related to them. How easy has it been for your chapter to keep a qualified person in this role? Is your association chapter webmaster equally skilled at web design, development and SEO, writing, editing and project management, marketing, fundraising, membership, etc.? If you're lucky enough to have a single, talented person in this role, do they stick around or is it more of a revolving door position?



Websites used to be static; an association chapter webmaster could create a site and sort of forget about it, making changes here or there. Now, association chapter websites are living, breathing organisms that require more active management, with blogs, job boards, event registrations, and more.

That's a lot for one person to manage. With chapters continuing to expand their services, and technology continuing to expand and advance, it's only going to get busier. For some association chapter websites, there's so much going on that managing an association chapter website can be like having a second job; and it's becoming increasingly clear one person shouldn't be responsible for the entire thing.

Many chapters are shifting to having one person oversee their association chapter web program supported by a team of people spread throughout the chapter who are responsible for managing the different pages and sections.

When your webmaster is one person...

It can be nearly impossible to find one person with the skills and time to manage everything related to an association chapter website – we're not telling you something new. If you are lucky enough to find someone willing to do it all, it's not long till they are often overwhelmed and frustrated. And they leave.

Maybe they step down and give you a heads up, or maybe they just ghost you. However they choose to disappear, unless you have plans in place for handling that situation, or the webmaster has documented all he or she does for your association chapter website, you'll find yourself scrambling to pick up the pieces, with people from across the chapter frustrated because their work isn't getting done.

How can you make life better for your webmaster?

You know your association chapter web presence needs to be functional, appealing and easily used by visitors. Make it less stressful for your webmaster and improve the process for everyone, by distributing the upkeep of different areas of the site to the groups and individuals who own the content.

Groups across your chapter should be posting and managing their own content. That means committees like Education, Networking and Advocacy should be handing their event pages, like content and registration; the marketing committee should be creating general marketing content across the site and building and managing your newsletters ; and your membership committee should be creating case studies, member stories and value statements.

Here are five steps to keeping your association chapter webmaster on the job longer.

1. **Create a list of everything on your website and the owner.** Document everything currently on your association chapter website and who is responsible for it. This is also a great time to review the entire site and see what's no longer needed.



2. **Send that list for review and approval.** Ask if you've missed anything and what else they'd like to see. Since committees will have more control over what goes on their piece of the site, this is a perfect time for them to think about turning their wish list into reality, and add functions like event registration, job boards and/or a members-only section.
3. **Document the process each group should follow.** This includes how they should go about posting and editing association chapter web content, as well as requesting the addition of new types of content. Since more people will be managing your association chapter web content, it's important to have structures around what can and can't be posted and the approval process for new content. You might want to create a form for committees to use for requesting new content.
4. **Train the group.** Bring together a group that includes someone from each committee who will be involved with the site as well as a backup (remember what we said about avoiding a single point of failure?). Walk them through making updates and additions and completing any forms for work they can't do. Be sure each individual/group has the appropriate level of access, so that they can only make changes to their own content.
5. **Touch base regularly with content owners.** Reach out to see how things are going and if there are any questions or concerns. Share what you learn with all of your association chapter web content owners. Get everyone together regularly, to go over any questions and/or new things they need to be aware of. Send that information out and make it easy for them to find it, with a content owner section on your website.

Collaboration is the key to a successful association chapter website, and to keeping your webmaster in their role and happy to be there. An entire association chapter website is too much for a single webmaster volunteer to be responsible for, and your webmaster will probably be thrilled to have help. Your committees may worry about finding volunteers to execute on these new activities, but managing sections of your website can be perfect association chapter micro-volunteering opportunities.

And as the changes happen, your association chapter webmaster role may naturally transition into a true association chapter VP of Technology. Rather than overseeing day-to-day website operations, the person will shift to strategic planning and overseeing things that keep the site operating at a high level, like managing the domain, evaluating vendors, implementing new technologies and functions, etc. Shifting to a team approach to your association chapter website and the webmaster role, will make it much easier to make all the magic happen.

