

Tips for optimizing your dues renewal communication strategy

According to Marketing General's 2017 Membership Marketing Benchmarking Report, 53 percent of associations base their membership renewal on anniversary dates, while 44 percent choose a fixed calendar date, where all members renew on the same date, regardless of their joining date.



Whatever the renewal process you use, for it to be successful, it must be supported by an organized, defined communications program that makes it as easy as possible for members to renew. Many chapters have a haphazard, undefined process, which means that unless a member is heavily invested in the chapter, they're renewing when—and if—they remember. This means, a member could renew:

- early,
- on their renewal date,
- a few weeks late, or
- not at all.

Your renewal process could be working fine as it is. But is fine what you need? Will fine keep your chapter successful for the long term?

Probably not.

A passive renewal process doesn't engage members or make them feel valued. It also doesn't keep them well-connected to your organization, which could mean, if they're in the group that doesn't renew, your chapter could start down a dark path; you won't bring in the revenue you need to provide the programs to keep members coming back, so more and more members leave. Where does that leave you?

It's not too late to make some changes to keep you away from that dark path. Here are a few areas where adjusting can strengthen the outcomes of your membership renewal program.



The timing of your reminders. When do you start sending reminders? If you're sending them to members 15 or 30 days before their membership expiration date, you're missing out. Notice we said "reminders," not "reminder." We're all busy, often pulled in different directions simultaneously. Most likely, a single reminder won't resonate with members nor will it have the necessary impact. Consider sending multiple reminders 30, 60, and 90 days prior to the renewal date.

How you remind members to renew. Just as members join your chapter for different reasons, reminders resonate differently with each person. For the biggest return, reach out using a variety of mediums. A combination of email and direct mail communications and even phone calls, are often more successful than a campaign that just uses a single method.

Regardless of the communication vehicle you choose, consider including the following in your reminders:

- The benefits of renewing, as well as what they'll miss out on if they don't renew
- An increasing sense of urgency, and
- Clear instructions for renewal, even with phone calls (Give the person making the calls the ability to take payment by phone).

You could also segment your messages by group and reach out to different types of members—millennials, new members, experienced members, etc.—in the way that works best for them.

And, if you have a single renewal date for all of your members, reach your entire chapter

simultaneously by posting reminders with information, a renewal link, and a link for questions, on your website and in your newsletters, and via your social media channels.

How your members renew. Do your members complete paper applications and send paper checks? Make it easy to renew in a few clicks by allowing them to renew and pay online. Chapters save time and money, while members save time and aggravation.

How up-to-date is your membership database?

You could have the most organized renewal process, but if communications go to incorrect email addresses and phone calls are made to out-of-service numbers, your program won't deliver the results you planned for. Strengthen your membership list by moving it online and asking members to periodically review their information to ensure it's correct.

How easy is your database to use?

To follow up more easily as deadlines approach and keep a closer eye on the number of members you have, your membership database needs to be easy-to-navigate and provide, in an easy-to-read format, the data they need, like overall membership numbers and renewal/payment status by member, in addition to individual member information.

A few decisions and changes might be all that's standing between you and successfully increasing your membership for the long-term.

