

Up Your Website Game And Increase Local Member Value



It is surprisingly common to have association chapters board members that do not pay enough attention to their websites. It probably hasn't had a serious update in more than a few years. Posting when you finally find the time and not on any sort of regular cadence, you use the site to deliver basic updates, announce new association chapter board members, remove ones who'd stepped down, note future meetings, etc.



This minimal association chapter website management may have been (barely) enough before, but it's definitely not enough today. When things shut down during the COVID-19 pandemic, your members began accessing more things virtually. And the more they access virtually, the more they expect to access that way, even now that things have opened back up. Unfortunately, it's unlikely that you chapter members, member guests, sponsors and other audiences spend much time on your website as part of their virtual plan. If they do, they've gotten used to hunting around to find what they're looking for.

You may not realize it but if you're watching your association chapter membership stagnate or even drop, the quality of your chapter website could be part of the problem. Here are five things to add to your association chapter website to improve the value it delivers, to better engage everyone who touches it and get more people to spend more time on it.

Useful resources. There's a good chance part of your chapter mission is to make your members lives less stressful and more productive. Put some of the resources they're looking for on your association chapter website. Upload templates, guides, processes, etc., and provide access to training through on demand webinars, training materials, and event recordings they'll find useful. In addition to uploading materials from your parent organization and subject matter experts, engage association chapter members by asking what they would find helpful and if they have things they'd like to share.

A safe place for discussions. Your members want to be able to engage and talk with each other outside of your events, and they may not have the time (or in the case of your more introverted members, the interest) to do that in person. A members' only forum can give them the space they need to connect with other members, learn from each other and exchange views on everything from salaries to job and career changes. We were able to connect with the Ohio Municipal Clerks Association (OMCA) to learn more about how they utilize the forum. "The forum is a major selling point for our membership. Members utilize it daily to crowdsource information, exchange ideas and connect. It is so important to our organization that we make a concerted effort to send out new threads through the email manager to encourage engagement." Mollie Phrasher president of OMCA shared.

Your association chapter newsletter. Yes, you can still email your association chapter newsletter to members; But for those of us who are inundated by countless emails in a day, think about how difficult it can be to find a specific email after you see it the first time. Housing your newsletters in chronological order on your website and pointing to them from your email can make it easier for everyone to keep up to date on all the great things your chapter is doing.

A career center. In addition to job openings, what other resources can you provide that would be useful and relevant for members looking for jobs as well as those who need to fill open positions? Think about the value your members would get from being able to find things like job descriptions, interview prep guides and new employee onboarding materials. You might even add an online job fair to your repertoire.

An online association chapter directory. An online directory can make it easier for your members to find each other, whether or not they have already met at an association chapter networking event, and have no idea what they did with a person's business card. Or even what the person looked like. A chapter directory can help make connections easier and longer lasting, when you optimize it for your



organization, by providing what members are looking for, from headshots and contact information to bios and even areas of expertise.

Keep this all in a members' only section.

We know what you're thinking. This all sounds great, but there's no way I'd put all this valuable information on my website where everyone can see it. We agree completely and recommend keeping most, or all, of it in a section of your website that requires a login. Plus separating this type of content from general chapter content is critical to showing how much value there is to a membership in your organization.

A few updates to your association chapter website can go a long way toward better connecting your members to your chapter, improving engagement and ultimately adding new members. When was the last time you took a close look at your website and thought about how updating and expanding it could help solve your membership problem?

