

Your Parent Chapter Is Changing The Association Name – Now What?



Things are going great in your chapter. Members are engaged and happy, your board is working well together and you've even knocked some things off your to do list – that new website looks great. And then you learn the news: the name of your national organization is going to change. Which means your chapter name is going to have to change, as are a bunch of other things. As a result, you're going to have a lot of work to re(do).



Why would an association chapter change their name?

Before we talk about all you'll need to do, it's important to understand the reasons why your parent organization may be changing their name. There could be all sorts of reasons the name they chose at the beginning may no longer be a good fit for the organization.

Maybe the:

- Mission of the organization has changed, and the name of the organization doesn't reflect the updated mission.
- People the organization serves has expanded.
- Industry has changed, and the name no longer reflects current industry standards and language.

Whatever the reason, to remain relevant and for people to continue to see the connection from your organization to the industry, the name has to change.

Make the change easy for your members to understand and accept

First and most importantly, you'll need to clearly explain the change to members while reassuring them that nothing else will change – you'll continue to support them and maybe even be able to do more with the improvements that will accompany the name change.

For this to resonate as you need it to, an “our name is changing on Tuesday” announcement won't be nearly enough for members to understand the reasons for the change, how it will affect them and why the change is a good thing. To give the change more sticking power with your membership, consider creating a communications plan that includes enough time to tell them about the change and answer all their questions.

It's likely your board members will have minimal insight into the reasons for the name change. To ensure each is sharing the same message, and you're sharing a message like the ones that other chapters are telling, ask your parent organization for guidance. They may even be able to provide talking points to make it easier for you to share the story.

Your national organization will have chosen a day for the change to go into effect. By that point you should have already messaged your members several times about it. To answer any questions that members may still have, consider holding a town hall meeting on the day of the change. Bring in a national staff member to speak to help members understand the reasons an organization might change their name and have someone there who can answer any of their questions.

5 administrative changes that come with a name change

In addition to helping members understand the change, there will be all sorts of administrative updates you'll have to make to ensure your chapter represents the new association name correctly.

We recommend creating a list of what you think the name change will affect and asking your board and committees for insight to make sure you haven't missed anything. Here are a few things that should be high on that list. (An association chapter checklist can help ensure you don't miss anything significant.)



1. **Update your logo.** National should have some guidelines around what needs to change, which could include using different colors and taglines, in addition to the chapter name.
2. **Secure a new domain.** The URL you've been using for your website won't reflect the name change, so you'll need to purchase a new one.
3. **Review your website.** You'll need to update any instances of the old name and use of the old URL.
4. **Change your email templates.** Your stationery will need to be updated, as will your board and committee email signatures.
5. **Review event templates.** Event templates save your volunteers time and effort, by letting them repeat logos, taglines, event details, etc. If the name of your organization and/or your tagline, your mission, etc. have changed, your event templates will also need to be updated.

Don't try to change everything at once

Think of this like a chapter audit. What are all the things that'll need to be done before the name change and what can wait till after? Trying to have everything ready for the day the name of the association changes can be a tremendous undertaking, and you'll most certainly miss something.

Instead, split the checklist into phases. Start with those things that are most critical, like telling the right story to your chapter membership, purchasing a new domain name and updating the logo. Then in phase two, you can update your email templates and signatures and event templates. In phase three, tackle the website content and make the announcement to anyone else who could benefit from an explanation of the name change, like any chapter vendors and sponsors.

When your parent association changes its name, there are a lot of details you'll need to think about, plan for and execute appropriately and in a certain timeframe. And like many of the things you already do for your chapter, if you take your time and plan, there's a much better chance everything will get done as it needs to.

