



Best Practices for
Membership Renewals

For many associations and chambers of commerce, it's easy to get caught up in the marketing efforts associated with attracting new members. But as important as membership growth is, renewal is *key*.

How exactly do you get members to renew? Well there's never any guarantee, but fortunately, there are several best practices. Read on for tips to get those renewal rates UP!

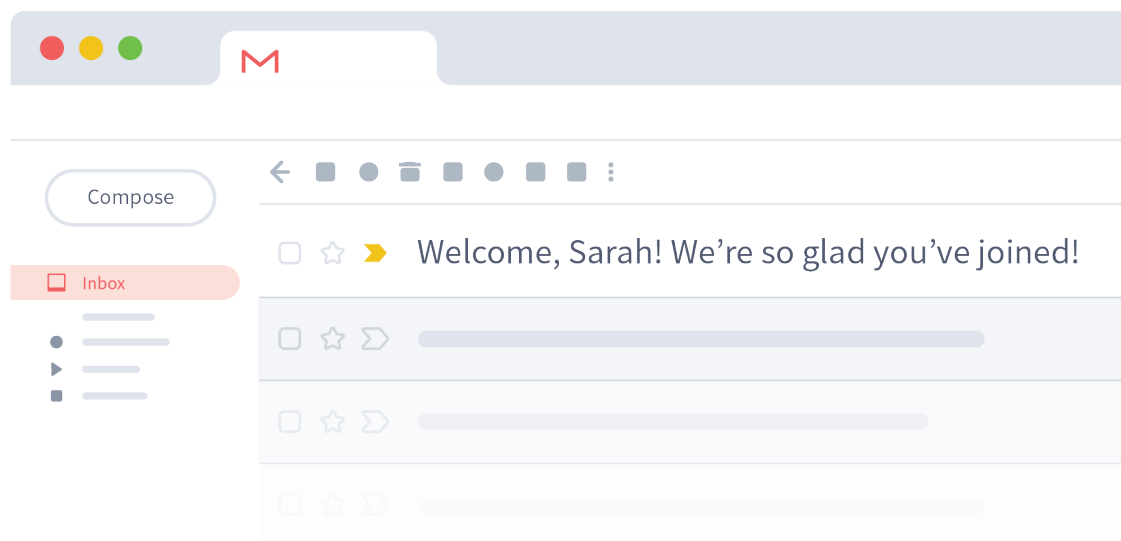


Right when a member joins

The membership renewal process begins as soon as a member joins. Trust us, first impressions last, so it's crucial to engage your members upfront.

When a new member joins your organization, send them a warm welcome email. This step might seem obvious, but you'd be surprised at how many associations and chambers of commerce get it wrong. Don't just send your new members a standard email welcoming them to your organization. Personalize it! Or better yet, have someone give them a call. New members like to be acknowledged, and they'll appreciate the extra effort.

After a new member joins your organization, you'll want to keep them engaged along the way. For a few engagement tips and tricks, download our [free engagement guide](#) here.



Leading up to the renewal date

According to Marketing General Incorporated's (MGI) 2019 Membership Marketing Benchmarking Report, a report that highlights the strategies and tactics that membership organizations find most useful in recruitment, retention, and reinstatement of members, 71 percent of associations begin their renewal efforts at least three months prior to expiration, with the three-month mark being the most popular start time.

But it's all about what you *do* in those three months that matters. What renewal efforts tend to be the most effective? Well, according to that same report, email marketing, direct mail, and staff phone calls generate more membership renewals than any other marketing channels. So, if you're looking to boost your membership renewal rates (and honestly, who isn't?!), consider launching an email marketing campaign at least three months prior to member expiration.

If you're using a membership management system, this process is easy. All you have to do is login to the system once and create a series of renewal reminder emails. Then, whenever a member gets close to expiration, the system will automatically send those emails out, without you having to do anything! Plus, because a membership management system houses both your database *and* email marketing capabilities (among many other things), your renewal reminder emails will also be personalized - with the member's name, their member expiration date, etc. And the more personalized your emails are, the more likely your members are to actually read them.



Below is an example of a personalized dues reminder email:

Hi [First Name],

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support over the past twelve months. Memberships make up the lifeblood of our organization, and we value any and all contributions to **[Association/Chamber Name]**. Please know that your involvement is extremely important to us and very much appreciated.

We know you're likely very busy, so we just wanted to take a moment to remind you that your membership with **[Association/Chamber Name]** will expire on **[Member Expiration Date]**.

If you're still deciding whether or not to renew, or just haven't gotten around to it yet, please let us remind you of what you will be missing if you do not renew:

[List of Membership Benefits]

We hope that you will take the time to renew your membership and remain part of our community. It couldn't be easier — just click here to renew.

Your financial contributions truly are vital to our existence, but so is your membership — just knowing that you support our mission and what we do keeps us going. Please renew by clicking here. Or, if you choose not to renew, please take a moment to let us know why. We're always looking for feedback so that we can continue to improve **[Association/Chamber Name]**.

Kind regards,
[Sender's Name]



EMAIL TEMPLATE

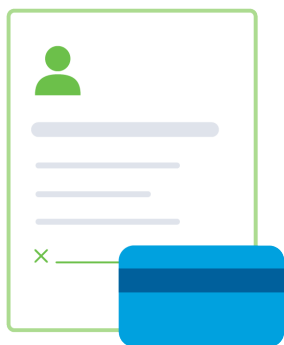
When and how often should you be sending these types of emails? Well, it all depends on your association or chamber (every organization is different), but typically three months out, two months out, one month out, and one week out are pretty good time frames.

Right before it's renewal time

As your members get closer to expiration, you'll want to send them an automated invoice for dues payment.

Again, you can do this with the help of a membership management system. All you have to do is login to the system once and create an invoice template. Then, whenever a member gets close to expiration, the membership management system will automatically send that invoice out for you. And, just like your renewal reminder emails, a membership management system can personalize your invoices with names, dates, prices, etc.

Quick note: When sending out automated invoices, be sure to include suggested PAC or foundation amounts, as well as any add-ons, such as a journal subscription. This is a great way for your association or chamber to generate non-dues revenue without your members having to complete any extra steps.



- Show dues renewal cost
- Suggest foundation amounts
- Advertise journal subscription
- List other add-on options

Time to renew

The more complicated your renewal process, the less likely members are to complete it.

Make it easy on your members by allowing for one-click renewals via email, your website, and/or the member profile. If you're using a membership management system, you can even pre-populate online renewal fields with information from the year before, simplifying the renewal process even more.

Now when it comes to membership renewals, it's important to consider one-time payments versus automated payments. When we talk about automated payments, we're talking about routine payments that are made every year from a bank to your organization. As with anything, there are pros and cons to each method, so consider both options carefully. Think about your price point and your member demographic. Take credit card fees into consideration as well. Credit card fees will likely eat into monthly installment plans, so if you do decide to take the automated payment route, it's better to do it on a yearly basis.

If you're already offering automated payments, take a look at how many members are actually signing up and what the installment plans are costing your organization. If you're interested in offering an automated payment option, try testing it out using a membership management system.

Our platform allows for one-click renewals, so all your members have to do is enter their payment information and go.

Right after the renewal date

Members don't pay dues for a variety of reasons, but sometimes it's because they're just plain busy. So before you revoke their benefits altogether, consider offering a grace period of some sort.

According to MGI's 2019 Membership Marketing Benchmarking Report, the most common grace period for associations is two to three months. This time frame is a fairly good balance between trying to bring back graced members and ensuring paying members aren't being short-changed.

In order for grace periods to be effective, it's important to remain in contact with your graced members. Consider using a membership management system to send out automated emails reminding your graced members that they need to renew. Or better yet, try creating customized messages for your graced members and displaying them on the member landing page, the first page they see upon login. That way, whenever a graced member interacts with your site, they'll be reminded that they've passed their expiration date and need to renew.

In order for grace periods to be effective, it's important to remain in contact with your graced members.

If you need help putting together an automated renewal reminder email reminder for graced members, below is an example:

Hi **[First Name]**,

This is a reminder that your membership with **[Association/Chamber Name]**, expired on **[Expiration Date]**, and you are now within your membership grace period.

If you are still deciding whether to renew, or just haven't gotten around to it yet, please let us remind you of what you will be missing should you choose not to renew:

[List of Membership Benefits]

We hope that you will take the time to renew your membership and remain part of our community. It couldn't be easier - just click here to renew.

Your financial contributions truly are vital to our existence, but so is your membership; just knowing that you support our mission and what we do keeps us going. Please renew by clicking here. Or, if you choose not to renew, please take a moment to let us know why. We're always looking for feedback so that we can continue to improve **[Association/Chamber Name]**.

If you have any questions about your membership or renewing, please contact **[Point of Contact Name]**.

Kind regards,
[Your Name]
[Your Title]



EMAIL TEMPLATE

Right after a renewal date

Remember, at some point you'll need to decide if and when your graced members should be treated as prospects. When this time comes, you should stop sending them reminder emails and consider sending them more recruitment-focused emails instead.

If your members don't renew, they'll eventually become lapsed. But if and when that happens, don't give up hope. There are still several things you can do to try and re-engage them. For example, you could (and *should*):

- **Continue to send them information about your organization's events**
- **Continue to send them your organization's newsletter**
- **Send them promotional content highlighting various member benefits**
- **Offer them a special discount to rejoin**

By continuing to engage with your lapsed members, you're increasing the likelihood that they'll one day rejoin.

If you need help implementing any these renewal best practices (for example, the automated, personalized renewal reminder emails), perhaps it's time to consider a membership management system.

What exactly does a membership management system do?

Download our free guide to learn all the primary features!



More about MemberClicks

MemberClicks offers all the tools that membership organizations need to make the most of the web. From online databases and event registrations to custom-designed websites and member communities, our products are tailor-made for professional associations, trade associations, and chambers of all sizes.

For more information:

- ▶ Visit us at memberclicks.com
- ▶ Call us at [800.914.2441](tel:800.914.2441)



