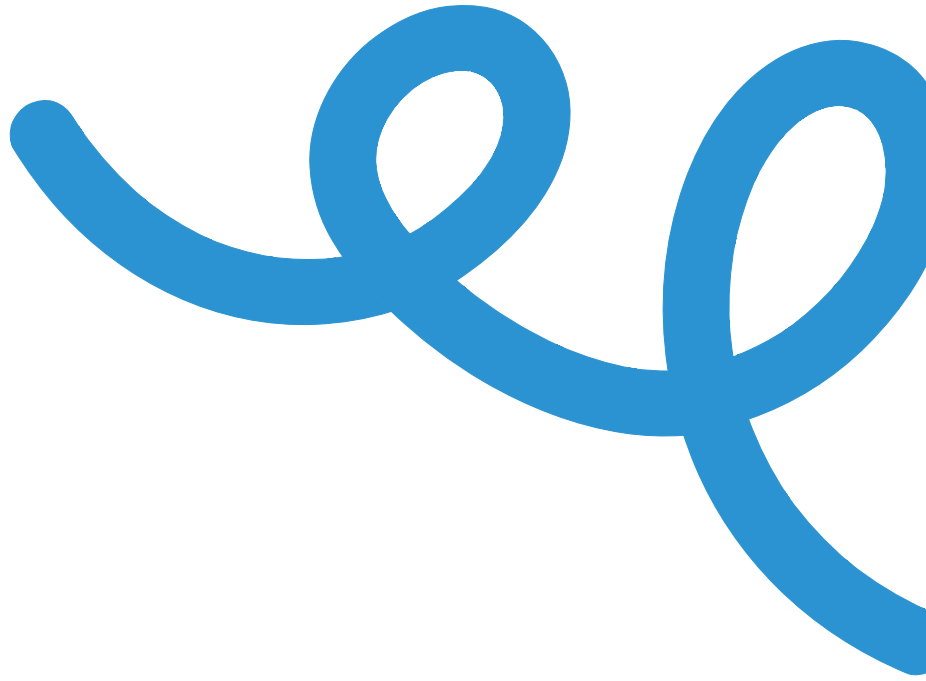




Your Association Management Toolbox: 5 Must-Haves



Associations have more choices than ever when it comes to the technology they use to manage and engage their membership, increase revenue and generally be more efficient.

As great as that is, it can be equally overwhelming. What does each tool actually help you accomplish? What do you really need in order to thrive?

We'll break it down for you!

In this guide, you'll find the 5 tech tools that are MUST-HAVES for any association, no matter its size, membership type, or mission. We'll go over what those platforms are, what challenges they're meant to help you overcome, and what to look for while you're shopping.

Every association, big or small, deserves the comfort and power of an association management system. These software solutions bring disparate systems together and are designed to automate day-to-day tasks, so you can use that saved time for more mission-minded ones.

**It's easiest to think of an AMS in two parts:
the membership database and then the website.**

1 Membership Database

The membership database is the backend - or administrative side - of your AMS. It feeds the front-end - or external-facing side - of your association. (More on that in a moment.) In most AMS solutions, admin features include:

1. Member (and prospective member) profiles
2. Dues renewal automation
3. An email marketing component
4. Accounting and financial management
5. Payment processing
6. Event registration setup and management
7. Reporting capabilities
8. Website content management
9. Education tracking

2 Website

The website is composed of the things that your external audiences (your members and prospective members, for the most part) will interact with. This is the front-end or external-facing side of your organization. It includes things like:

1. Your association's website (of course)
2. The online membership application
3. The members-only area and dues payment
4. Member engagement tools (i.e. committees and e-lists)
5. Your online member directory
6. Event calendar, registration and payment
7. Member education history

Both sides create one powerful system that houses a LOT — and the best part is it all talks to each other. That means you can send personalized emails, empower members to access information they need on demand, automate dues renewal reminders and invoices...

It does this and **SO much more**. A great AMS eliminates friction so you can focus on your members.



Here's how an AMS will help

- You'll save precious time logging in and out of separate systems when everything is housed under one "roof" and works in tandem with your data to automate tasks.
- Speaking of data, it's a whole lot easier to maintain with an AMS — and accurate data equips you with an incredibly powerful tool for making decisions that'll elevate your association.
- Being able to track information about members, from demographics to activity to preferences, means you can provide a more engaging experience, easily demonstrate membership value, and build loyal relationships.

Here's what to look for when choosing an AMS

- What tools do you currently use to manage all of the above at your association? What tools do you wish you had? If you have an AMS, does the system include everything you need? What can you integrate with that's not included? (Or, is it time for a new system all together?)
- Note the service and training that comes along with your AMS provider. Whether you experience a small hiccup or need some transformative best practice advice, you'll want to know you have a true partner on your side.
- Ask about the product development process. Choosing an AMS is (ideally) a long-term decision and knowing how it'll grow alongside your association — and what role you may play in that — is key.

As we said, most AMS solutions already come with a feature where you can process and manage event registrations. That said, associations thrive on building connections through hosting networking events, conferences, galas, fundraisers and more. In today's world, you need something that helps with virtual events just as much as in-person events.

Here's how an online event registration system helps

- You'll learn about your attendees as they register, meaning you can make informed decisions quickly as you get further in the planning process.
- It enhances the attendee experience with streamlined communications, session sign-ups and waitlists, continuing education credit tracking, etc.
- You can prep ahead of time for onsite processes — for example, printing barcodes on badges (or emailing tickets to attendees) that can quickly be scanned at check-in.

Take your event management to the next level while keeping things simple to manage with these amazing event management tools.

Standalone Online Event Registration

A system dedicated to JUST event registration means you'll have a much more powerful setup and reporting capabilities that'll serve you and your attendees in the long run.

Here's what to look for when choosing a standalone event registration tool

- Conditional logic that's intuitive and easy-to-use is great for guiding attendees down certain "paths" of registration depending on who they are and what they intend to get out of the event.
- How does your event registration form usually look? Consistent branding makes the event look professional and gives people more confidence in registering, so be sure yours will let you add a logo, control the colors, choose your font, etc.
- Move something off your unending to-do list by finding a provider that'll do the initial form setup. Chances are they'll be able to do it quickly and use their knowledge of the product to make it even stronger.

Online communities are spaces where members can learn from each other, connect with like-minded people and network with those who have similar goals and interests.

Events are great for creating connections. An AMS lets you create and manage valuable member relationships. But with a community, your members can get what they want most: to build crucial relationships with others.

Here's how an online community will help

- Empower members to get the most from your associations' network by giving them a members-only place to ask questions, share info and connect with peers.
- Share upcoming association events — both in-person and virtual — on event calendars. Allow members to ask questions, prep for events and pump themselves up.
- Improve member retention by sharing online resources, engaging and collaborating with members, and leveraging data to cater to topics that your members actually care about.

Here's what to look for in an online community management tool

- Community platforms that integrate with the rest of your system. This gives your team the power to seamlessly push out new resources and update event listings.
- A platform that is accessible only by your members to promote security, safety and value to the space. This enables your members to participate in a community made specifically for them.
- Report systems that integrate with your AMS and CRM platforms to keep track of community engagement, growth and trends. Identify super engaged members and celebrate as your community grows!

Associations, in particular, are in an incredibly unique position to connect employers with qualified candidates. Your members (and prospective members) are experts who are passionate about a career in your field — and employers don't want to wade through hundreds of resumes to find them.

Here's how having a job board on your website will help

- Create a new, tangible member benefit by allowing members to post opportunities at their organization for free or at a discount.
- Drive more traffic (members and non-members) to your association's website with something that's of value to your industry's community at large.
- Earn a steady stream of non-dues revenue that's easy to manage. (Especially if your job board can work with your AMS to intuitively handle member vs. non-member pricing.)

So, why not make those connections directly on your website? With an association-managed online job board, you can strengthen that position as a connector in your industry all while earning some non-dues revenue.

Here's what to look for in a job board

- Your success hinges on continually promoting the board to employers and job seekers, so find one that includes some extra admin features to automate that process for you.
- You'll also want one that allows a login for employers, giving them access to the features that empower them to manage their own postings. (Less maintenance on your end!)
- See if your job board will backfill opportunities from larger boards like ZipRecruiter and Indeed for when you're just getting started or running a little light — even better if you can filter them for relevancy.

Education is a top priority for associations and their members. In part, because many fields require that certifications or licenses are maintained in order to continue practicing. But even for those that don't, associations are highly credible knowledge resources for members and non-members alike.

Whether you administer a formal educational program or just need an efficient way to distribute valuable content, a Learning Management System (LMS) will do the heavy lifting.

Here's how using an LMS will help

- Maintaining a library of content — reports, guides, videos, even tests and quizzes — provides a self-service benefit for your learners.
- You and your learners can track the status of any industry-required certifications or assessments, and you can even directly send certificates upon completion.
- You'll have control over how your content is published by making it public or restricting it to specific audiences. (You might even charge a fee for non-member access.)

Here's what to look for in an LMS

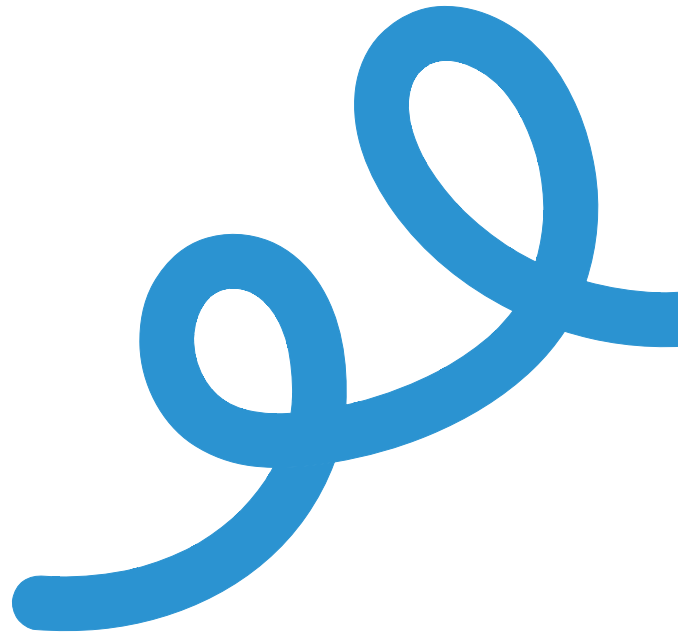
- Part of handing the reins to your learners in a self-service fashion means the system needs to be reliable, so find one that was built to quickly upload content of all types on the admin side, and load just as (if not more) quickly on the learner's side.
- If webinars are part of your educational initiatives, being able to host them directly in your LMS is key for giving learners a smooth experience.
- Reports and dashboards can be helpful for getting a high-level overview and drilling down into activity to see what learners are excelling in and what they're struggling with, and even identifying gaps in your offerings or which ones may need a refresh or discontinuation.

The 5 Must-Have Tools for Your Association

Generally speaking, these tools are built to make your jobs easier and your member experience better. (Not to mention earn non-dues revenue — talk about something paying for itself!) And when they work together — whether that's because they're all one tool or they'll integrate with each other seamlessly — **you'll be unstoppable.**

Now, the very first system you should consider on this list is an association management system, and we're *not* just saying that because we're an AMS provider — it's the lifeblood of everything else we mentioned!

If you are on the hunt for one or think it may be time to make a switch, check out our buyer's guide for selecting the one that'll work best for your association.



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.



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