

# 20 Things You Can Do For Your Chapters



20 things that you can do to help your chapters – and your volunteers – succeed!

**1. Focus on outcomes rather than checklists.** Are we counting what counts? To put another way, are we so focused on how many chapter meetings or events a chapter has that we don't pay attention to what comes out of those meetings/events, i.e., member engagement, increased membership, etc. ([read about one association](#) that focused first on the mission than on the organizational metrics).

**2. Give your chapters tools to alleviate the administrative burden.** Give chapters access to tech tools that can help them move from worrying about the administration of the chapter to the real reason they are there ... to move the mission.

**3. Add micro/ad-hoc roles to your volunteer plan.** Don't use the "it's only a few hours a week" myth to entice your volunteers. No one believes it anyway. Instead, offer roles that are more focused, short term and quick (one and done).

**4. Elevate your volunteer appreciation program beyond the basic TY.** Recognizing your awesome volunteers is essential but there is more than just one way to truly show how much you appreciate their hard work. From personal thank yous to public recognition in print and at events to giving them support, volunteers will reward you when you reward them.

**5. Communicate, communicate, communicate.** Don't leave your chapter leaders guessing what you expect of them; find out what your chapter leaders need. Give them the support and tools they need to succeed. [Listen here](#) as 3 communicators share what's worked for them (read a brief recap [here](#)).

**6. Help chapters embrace change.** Resistance to change is natural and anytime you introduce a new process or technology, you have to think about change management from the very start. One sure-fire way is to tap into your regular leadership training where you teach your leaders to seek new solutions and new ways of approaching their role.

**7. Drive chapter behavior with the right data.** Of course, knowing what to measure is one part of the equation. The other is knowing how to collect, store and share that data, in addition to recognizing and tracking data trends.

**8. Think about modernizing your chapters vs fixing your chapters.** When you embrace change as opposed to merely "fixing" a system that clearly hasn't been working, you revitalize the system which in turn can lead to more involvement by members.

**9. Find those bright spots.** Some chapters rock it while others struggle to find traction. Find out what's working in those top chapters and find ways to spread those successes. Be sure to also [check out this series](#) and [webinar](#) from [Billhighway](#) on how to find those bright spots!

**10. Develop a self-assessment.** Don't overlook the power of chapter self-assessments in helping you – and your volunteer leaders – assess what's working and not working. Its power is two-fold: to provide a focus on what's important and to provide a ready incentive.

**11. Rethink your volunteer training program.** So, you got someone to say yes to volunteering. Now what? Unfortunately, many associations simply drop the volunteer into the job expecting them to relish the chance to contribute to the mission. What if we started with the person, not the position?

**12. Provide guidelines rather than deadlines.** Create a robust resource portal accessible 24/7 that is a collaboration of volunteers and staff, refreshing content and shifting focus as priorities change. Check out these tips on building a portal [here](#) and [here](#).

**13. Coach volunteer leaders rather than lecture.** What if we approached our volunteers with a coaching mindset thus helping them discover their strengths/weaknesses and find their own paths using resources we provide? In the process, we may also find that the resources we thought were needed may not be what is truly needed.

**14. Make your leadership/volunteer training more accessible.** Meet your volunteers in their moment of need. Offer multi-channel, asynchronous, and live delivery of virtual and face-to-face training programs and resources.

**15. Ask, don't tell (a volunteer truth).** Being "voluntold" is a big turn-off for any budding volunteer. Match their motivations to the position (see Volunteer Learning Journey.) Here's a [brief example](#) of what happened when one young volunteer found herself in a job she didn't sign up for!

**16. Recognize and set out to conquer three "deserts" that are derailing your program.** We know about these deserts for a long time, but to what extent they affect our programs is becoming clearer.

**17. Make the case for chapters.** Does your CEO question the value of chapters? (Hint: survey says yes). One way to show the relevance of chapters is to tap into chapter successes thus making them a part of our overall membership strategy.

**18. Get it in writing.** The power of an effective affiliation agreement is in how it creates a culture of mutual respect and mutual understanding.

**19. Download the 2022 Chapter Performance & Benchmarking Report.** This updated report on chapter programs expanded our traditional survey by adding focus groups, interviews and two new surveys (CEOs and chapter leaders). Check out this [3-part webinar series](#) introducing the newest report and how you can incorporate it into your strategy.

**20. Invest in a multi-chapter management program.** Invest in a multi-chapter management program like [Billhighway](#) (shameless plug!) that can meet all your needs by providing technology tools to help individual chapters perform better.