



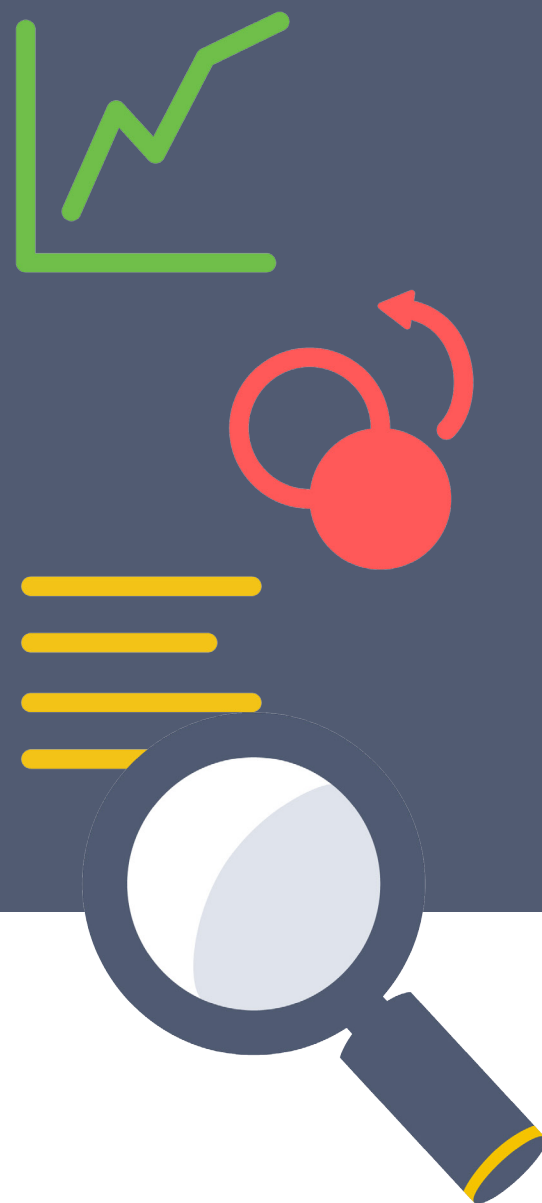
# Best Practices for **Membership Renewals**

**For many associations, 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. The membership renewal process requires a bit more effort though than just sending out emails. By following a few best practices, you can actually increase the likelihood that members will rejoin.

That's why today, in our new Membership Renewal Guide, we'll be walking through the renewal process and going over best practices for every step of the way.

**Ready? Let's get started!**



# 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 get it wrong. Don't just send 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.

**Welcome,  
Sarah!**

We're so glad  
you've joined!

# Leading up to a renewal date

**According to Marketing General Incorporated's (MGI) 2015 Membership Marketing Benchmarking Report, associations that start their renewal efforts three or more months prior to expiration are significantly more likely to have an 80 percent or higher renewal rate. That alone is reason enough to start your renewal efforts early.**

But what exactly should you be doing in those 3+ months leading up to expiration? Well, according to MGI, 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 who isn't?), consider launching an email marketing campaign one to three months prior to membership expiration.

If you're using an association management system (AMS), this process is easy. All you have to do is log in to the system once and create a series of reminder emails. Then, whenever a member gets close to expiration, the AMS will automatically send those emails out for you, without you having to do any extra work. Not to mention, an AMS can integrate with your organization's database, allowing you to personalize your email reminders. Names, dates, prices, etc. You name it, an AMS can pull it. And remember — the more personalized your email is, the more likely your members are to read it.



## Leading up to a renewal date

Below is an example of a personalized dues reminder email:

**##First Name##,**

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support over the past twelve months. We value all contributions to [Association Name], and memberships make up the lifeblood of our organization. Your involvement is extremely important to us and very much appreciated.

We know people have busy lives, so we just wanted to take this opportunity to remind you that your membership with **[Association Name]** will expire on **##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 what we are doing keeps us going. Please renew by clicking here, or take a moment to let us know why you have chosen not to renew. We really want to know so that we can be better.

Kind regards,  
**[Sender's Name]**

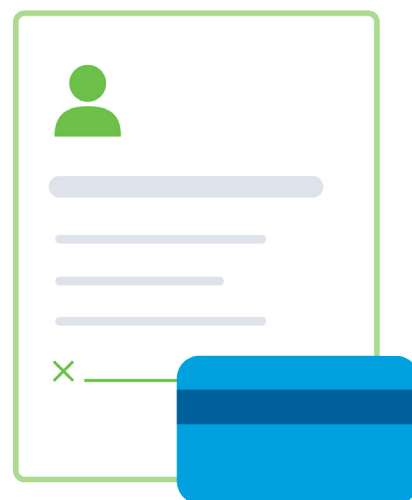
**So when and how often should you be sending these emails out? Well, it all depends on your organization, but typically three months out, one month out, and one week out are pretty good time frames.**

# 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 an AMS. All you have to do is log in to the system once and create an invoice template. Then, whenever a member gets close to expiration, the AMS will automatically send that invoice out for you. And just like your reminder emails, an AMS 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 organization to generate non-dues revenue without your members having to complete any extra steps.**



# 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, or member profiles. If you're using an AMS, you can pre-populate online renewal fields with information from the year before, making it even easier for members to complete all of the forms they need. MemberClicks is a good example of this. Our platform allows for one-click renewals, so all your members have to do is enter their payment information and go.

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, 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 association. If you're interested in offering an automated payment option, try testing it out using an AMS.

**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 deny them their benefits altogether, consider offering a grace period of some sort.**

According to MGI's 2015 Marketing Benchmark 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 an AMS to send out automated emails reminding your members that they need to renew. Or better yet, try creating customized messages for your graced members and displaying them on their profiles and throughout their online communities. That way, whenever users interact with your site, they'll be reminded that they need to renew.

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



## Right after a renewal date

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

**##First Name##,**

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

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 what we are doing keeps us going. Please renew by clicking here, or take a moment to let us know why you have chosen not to renew. We really want to know so that we can be better.

Kind regards,  
**[Sender's Name]**

**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 engage them again. For example, you should:

- **Continue to send them information about your organization's events**
- **Continue to send them your organization's newsletter**
- **Send them promotional content highlighting 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 of these renewal best practices, perhaps it's time to consider an AMS.

## What is an AMS, you ask?

See for yourself in our **What Is an AMS? guide** here!



**Click here to check it out!**

## 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 small-staff organizations.

## For more information:

- ▶ **Visit us at**  
[www.memberclicks.com](http://www.memberclicks.com)
- ▶ **or call us at**  
**800.914.2441**

