



Chapter Survival Guide

*During this economically challenging time, ASTD chapters are looking for ways to remain relevant, cut costs, and attract and retain their members. Here are some tips to help chapters to not only **survive**, but **thrive** in the current economic climate.*



Table of Contents

Membership	Page 3
Programming	Page 3-4
Marketing and Communications	Page 4
Financial	Page 5
Chapter Relevance	Page 5

Membership

- ✓ Show **value for the money** spent on membership so that members believe they can't afford *not* to be part of your chapter.
- ✓ Modify **membership rates**, if possible, to help members who may have been laid off, whose companies have made budget cuts, or who don't have much extra spending money.
- ✓ Host a **free networking** event and offer a reduced membership fee if a person joins the chapter at the event and a reduced fee to renew chapter membership. Consider finding a sponsor for this event to keep costs even lower.
- ✓ Post a "**guest pass**" on your website for prospective members to attend a free meeting.
- ✓ Create a reward or recognition program, or incentive to members who invite others to join.
- ✓ Offer **multiple year chapter memberships** instead of only a single year membership. Offer two- and three-year chapter memberships at a discount.
- ✓ Convey the **value of membership** on your chapter's website and newsletters, spotlighting your chapter's programs and offerings. Click [here](#) for "The Value of ASTD Membership: Messages for Members and Potential Members" document.
- ✓ Ask your current members to **spread the word** about what a worthwhile investment it is to join your chapter. Current chapter members who believe in the chapter and its value can be the best "evangelists" for the chapter.
- ✓ Send quarterly emails touting the **benefits of belonging to BOTH national and the local chapter** to anyone on the national member list who is not also a local chapter member. Contact your [chapter coach](#) for the list.
- ✓ Offer a **free trial chapter membership** to all national members who are not local chapter members.
- ✓ Follow up with chapter visitors to ask them to join. Sometimes, all it takes is ASKING!

Programming

- ✓ Be sure your program/event descriptions are **relevant to your audience's current needs**, such as topical programming related to the economy and job hunting.
- ✓ Bring in **expert panelists** to talk about how people can reposition themselves in a challenging job market.
- ✓ Consider **affordable options** such as lunch gatherings at affordable restaurants, brown bag lunches, sponsorships, or free locations (office space).
- ✓ Conduct an **evaluation** at the conclusion of every chapter program to find out what topics participants would like covered in future programs.
- ✓ Leverage **Certified Professional in Learning and Performance™ (CPLP™)** programming. Supporting the CPLP will help members seeking career advancement and professional development opportunities see added value in joining your chapter, assuming chapter leadership roles, and attending your chapter's educational programming.
- ✓ Offer members a **season pass** to attend chapter programs at a reduced rate. Program packages might include more programs for bigger discounts.

- ✓ Form a **partnership with related organizations** such as nearby ASTD chapters, SHRM, OD Network, ISPI, AHRD, ASQ, chamber of commerce, local publications/publishers, and universities/colleges/vocational technical schools. Get partners to help you advertise your events and the chapter. Share speakers or other resources.
- ✓ Distribute **\$5 off certificates** that can be redeemed for another event. Include an expiration date on the certificate to encourage use.
- ✓ Offer **free webcasts and podcasts** on relevant topics for members.
- ✓ Take advantage of **free professional development webcasts for chapter members hosted by national ASTD**. Visit the [Chapter Leader Community website homepage](#) for the Conference Call/Webcast Calendar.
- ✓ Offer a **free virtual program** introducing potential members to your chapter.
- ✓ Donate part of your program fees to **charity**. Members will feel good about attending your event if part of the proceeds is given to a good cause.
- ✓ Engage **special interest groups (SIGs)** to provide one program throughout the year to save money on speaker fees.
- ✓ Offer some programs during **lunch time** to draw people who cannot attend in the evening.
- ✓ Offer variety in **format and scale**.
- ✓ **Request a speaker** from national ASTD for a webinar. Click [here](#) for the speaker request form.

Marketing and Communications

- ✓ **Increase outreach** to members and acknowledge their concerns and fears. Some members may feel awkward and alone if laid off, and very stressed about their situation. A warm call from another member can help keep the emotional connection to the chapter.
- ✓ Clearly remind members of the **value of membership**. Chapters should use persuasive techniques such as testimonials to quantify value when they can.
- ✓ Craft and lead with a **message of hope**, such as how the members will get through this together.
- ✓ Construct your **marketing messages** to emphasize that:
 - there is “no better investment” than to be part of an organization with like-minded individuals for networking, career advancement, and visibility in the workplace learning and performance community
 - chapter membership gives members access to professionals they might not have connected with otherwise and
 - chapter programming helps industry professionals to sharpen their skills.
- ✓ Beef up your member communications to **keep your chapter visible** to its members and offer tips about specialized trends, statistics, and news of interest to members.
- ✓ Develop a communication that encourages members to consider that their chapter membership is **more important now than ever**, for example, a message from the chapter president.

- ✓ Make available a **letter to employers** that members can download to demonstrate the value to employers.
- ✓ Sponsor local Excellence Awards to increase chapter visibility in community and by key leaders.
- ✓ Form media partnerships for **promotion** through stories and articles to get visibility for the chapter. Issue regular press releases.
- ✓ Have the VP of Marketing **target the top 10 employers in the area**. Devise a specific set of questions to determine how the chapter can meet their needs.
- ✓ Communicate the **value of professional development** now more than ever.
- ✓ Take advantage of every opportunity to **get the word out** such as through press releases and networking with other association, business, and community leaders.
- ✓ Send your [chapter coach](#) your **chapter event** to be posted on the national astd.org site.

Financial

- ✓ Budget conservatively. Now is the time to conduct an internal financial review to maintain a financially sound chapter. Be conscientious about revenue and expenses, and be mindful about not overextending your chapter's resources. Explore new ways to earn revenue and/or cut costs.
- ✓ Save money by soliciting **sponsorships** to support chapter and program efforts, including the use of audiovisual at chapter programs, vendor discounts for newsletter printing, resources for web development, program gifts, food and beverage, and facilities.
- ✓ Consider partnering with higher education institutions to find **student interns**. Offer them an internship in exchange for credit hours.

Chapter Relevance

- ✓ To attract industry professionals seeking employment, **position your chapter** as the professional network for "trainers in transition." Ask members who are experts in resume writing, job hunting, and networking to provide pro bono services to members in transition. Members who take advantage of the pro bono services will feel a loyalty to the chapter and feel compelled to spread the word about the chapter to future colleagues.
- ✓ **Form special interest groups (SIGs)** to attract/help members in transition.
- ✓ **Re-evaluate the chapter's priorities**. For example, the priorities for members may be helping them find jobs, showing their value to their stakeholders, and taking on more responsibility at work. Chapter priorities may be offering just-in-time resources instead of big programs or membership retention versus membership growth.

Does your chapter have a best practice for addressing the economic downturn? Submit your best practice to the [Sharing Our Success](#) program so other chapters can benefit too! **Need help?** Contact your [chapter coach](#) or the [National Advisor for Chapters](#) supporting your chapter.