

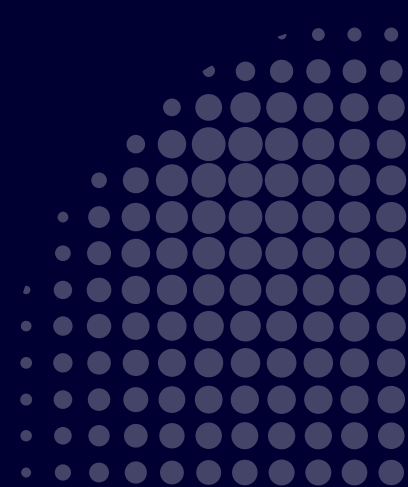


**2026**

**MEMBER  
RENEWAL**

*Playbook*

**A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR  
ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP AND  
MARKETING PROFESSIONALS**





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Most associations think of renewals as the final step in the membership cycle, but in reality, renewal decisions form throughout the entire year. Members carry impressions, frustrations, small wins, and quiet moments of connection with them right up until the moment they choose to stay or go.**

When those moments add up in a positive direction, renewal becomes the natural and expected outcome. When they pile up the other way, renewal season becomes a scramble to recover the relationship.

This playbook offers a more modern way to think about renewals. It blends behavioral insight with practical membership operations. It shows how conversational engagement and member signals can guide your work throughout the year rather than only during the final stretch. It includes checklists, scenarios, and a 30-day plan so your team can start using these ideas right away.

Associations are already doing the work. Most of what improves renewals is not new. The shift comes from doing it with more intention, from paying attention to signals earlier in the year, and from creating more opportunities for members to talk back. When members feel that you notice them, understand them, and respond at the right moments, renewals become easier.

This playbook is designed to help your team slow down, look more closely at the member journey, and build renewal practices that feel less like reminders and more like relationships.



# THE STATE OF MEMBER RENEWALS TODAY

Membership teams have always known that renewals are more complex than a few reminder emails. What is becoming clearer each year is how early renewal decisions begin to form and how much they are shaped by the day-to-day interactions members have with your association. Members interpret these interactions, often quietly, as signals of how well the organization understands them.

Two things are happening at the same time. Members expect more personalized and responsive communication, and associations are juggling growing workloads with limited time. This is why a more conversational approach to engagement is becoming essential. When members feel that the association pays attention to their interests, their questions, and their silence, their connection deepens. When they feel unseen, renewal becomes a harder choice.

**IF YOU TAKE A STEP BACK AND LOOK AT THINGS HIGH-LEVEL - SEVERAL PATTERNS SHOW UP CONSISTENTLY ACROSS ASSOCIATIONS:**



Members expect communication and information that adapts to them.



They have grown accustomed to digital experiences that respond when they show interest and guide them when they hesitate (think Amazon, Spotify, etc.). Even simple acknowledgments of their preferences help them feel recognized.

## Engagement now varies widely from member to member.

It's no longer common to see members engage with anything and everything you offer. Some people interact heavily for short bursts and then disappear for months. Others read every newsletter but never attend events. Understanding these differences helps you support members in ways that match how they naturally participate and allow you to continue to build relevant relationships with each member on an individual level. Silence is one of the most overlooked indicators.

Many members begin to drift long before they lapse, but associations don't often flag the silence that comes with it. Without a way to notice that drift, associations often discover disengagement only when it is too late to address it.

## Most renewal strategies still lean heavily on generic outreach.

This tends to land as “one-size-fits-all,” which feels impersonal to members who are seeking more relevance. Personalization does not have to be complicated, but it does need to be intentional.

Membership teams know they SHOULD be personalizing messages, but they don’t know HOW they can. There is rarely enough capacity to manually monitor behavior, send individualized messages, or react quickly to signals from hundreds or thousands of members.

This is where what we call “conversational engagement” becomes useful. Conversational engagement utilizes the Ask–Capture–Act framework, which offers a way to guide how you connect with members throughout the year without adding unnecessary complexity.

### Conversational Engagement



Ask a simple question to start a conversation



Capture unique insights



Act with automated relevance

**Ask a simple question** to start a conversation that helps you understand a member’s goals or where they might need more clarity.

**Capture unique insights** that help you spot the signals in a member’s behavior, like returning to the same topic or suddenly becoming quiet.

**Act with automated relevance** by following up in a way that moves the member forward, whether that’s a resource, a clarification, or an invitation (think: things that feel supportive rather than transactional)

The mindset behind Ask–Capture–Act creates stronger renewal readiness. It encourages teams to look earlier, listen more closely, and respond with intention.

The state of renewals today calls for a shift from broad messaging to meaningful moments.

When associations build more two-way interactions and pay attention to the signals members send, renewal becomes less of a deadline and more of an expected next step in an ongoing relationship.

# TODAY'S RENEWAL FRAMEWORK

Most renewal conversations begin at the end of the membership year, but the real story starts much earlier. Think of a member who joins with genuine excitement. In the first month, they browse your site several times, attend an orientation session, and download a few resources. Then work (and life) gets busy. They open your emails less often. They read your newsletters, but only quickly. They visit the website once in a while, never quite sure where to go next.

When renewal season arrives, they hesitate. It's not that they didn't find value, and it's not that the membership wasn't relevant. It's that the experience became harder to connect with as the year went on. What began as momentum slowly turned into uncertainty, and uncertainty rarely leads someone toward a confident yes.

This is the pattern many associations see every year. Renewals are influenced by dozens of small interactions that unfold long before the invoice goes out. Today's renewal framework helps make sense of those interactions by breaking the membership experience into five stages. Each stage offers a chance to strengthen a member's connection, understand what they need, and support them in the moments that matter most.

## Here is the high-level view:

- **Onboarding** The start of the relationship. First impressions, expectations, and early momentum form here.
- **Ongoing Engagement** The long stretch of the year when habits develop, interests shift, and connection can deepen or fade.
- **Pre-Renewal Warming** The period when members begin reflecting on their experience and assessing whether it aligned with their goals.
- **The Renewal Window** The operational moment when clarity and simplicity matter most.
- **Post-Renewal Feedback Loop** The stage where you learn why members stayed, why some did not, and how to improve the next cycle.

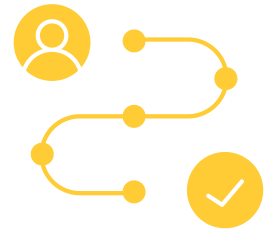
Taken together, these stages create a more accurate picture of how renewal decisions actually form. They also reveal opportunities to support members earlier and more intentionally, especially when using a conversational approach that encourages questions, notices member signals, and responds with timely, relevant guidance. Let's take a closer look at each stage and what it means for your renewal strategy.

## ONBOARDING

Onboarding sets the tone for the entire year. Members arrive with energy and expectations, but they may also feel unsure about where to start or what will matter most. Many renewal challenges begin here when expectations are unclear or when momentum never takes hold.

### Effective onboarding answers three questions:

1. What does this member hope to accomplish?
2. What should they do first?
3. How can you help them build early momentum?



A series of short questions early in the journey can reveal the member's priorities. Platforms like PropFuel make it easy to ask this question automatically, but even a manual check-in can uncover valuable context. The key is to ask them a question, capture what they share, and help them take action as soon as possible.

## ON GOING ENGAGEMENT

Ongoing engagement is the long stretch of the membership year when habits form. Members either develop a pattern with you or they drift without much notice. This is when you can learn the most about what each member needs.

### Here, it helps to pay attention to patterns such as:

- Which topics they browse
- When engagement drops
- Where they get stuck
- What they click but do not complete
- Which channels they prefer



Small touchpoints through multiple channels (email, website, SMS) help maintain connection. This includes check-in questions, personalized content recommendations, and simple follow-ups like "Would you like help finding this resource?" These moments show members that you are paying attention.

## PRE-RENEWAL WARMING

Pre-renewal warming begins well before the invoice. This is the period when members begin to reflect on their experience. They may ask themselves whether the association supported their goals or whether they stayed connected to the community.

Associations often focus this period on benefit reminders, but members respond more strongly to reflections of what they actually did. A message that says "Here is what you accomplished this year" often feels more meaningful than "Here is everything you could be using."

This is also an ideal time to ask a short diagnostic question. A single prompt such as "Is there anything you hoped we would help you with this year that we have not covered yet?" or "When you first joined, you said you were interested in X goal. Are you still focused on this?" can reveal support needs that would otherwise go unnoticed.



## THE RENEWAL WINDOW

During the renewal window, members should feel confident in their experience. By this point, the goal is clarity and simplicity. Members should know how to renew, what the process involves, and where to go for help if they have questions.

This is a practical stage rather than an emotional one. A transactional stage rather than an informational one (this means we're not using this as an opportunity to remind members of ALLLLL the benefits, because they already know what benefits are relevant to them based on steps 1-3, remember?).



It is where you answer questions, reduce confusion, and make the next step easy. Personalized reminders and a friendly tone go a long way here.

If you have been collecting member signals throughout the year, your renewal messaging should reflect those signals instead of relying on generic statements. Even a small amount of personalization can increase renewal rates.

## POST RENEWAL FEEDBACK LOOP

After a renewal period ends, the most valuable information often comes from the members themselves. Understanding why people renewed or lapsed gives you clarity about what your association is doing well and where improvements are needed.

Asking a few simple questions during this stage can reveal patterns:

- What was the primary reason you renewed?
- What would have made this year even better?
- If you chose not to renew, what was missing?



You can use this insight to strengthen onboarding, refine messaging, or adjust programs. The feedback loop ensures that each renewal cycle becomes easier and more predictable.

Understanding the five stages is an important first step, but the real impact comes from **how you operate within them.**

Each stage contains moments where a small change can influence a member's relationship with your association and their readiness to renew.

The next section highlights five strategies that consistently improve renewal outcomes. These strategies translate the framework into practical, repeatable actions that your team can start using right away.



# FIVE PROVEN RENEWAL STRATEGIES

Once you understand how renewal decisions form across the membership year, the next step is putting that understanding into practice. Members respond best to consistent, relevant interactions that help them stay connected to the association and confident in the value they receive. The strategies in this section focus on practical, repeatable steps that strengthen those interactions. Each one reflects a pattern that shows up across high-performing renewal programs and can be adapted to fit associations of any size or structure.

These strategies are not meant to be overwhelming. Most teams start with one or two and build from there. What matters is developing a rhythm that feels steady and intentional, so members experience support at the moments when support has the most impact.

## 1 Start the Renewal Conversation Early

When engagement stays healthy throughout the year, renewal becomes a simple step instead of a difficult decision. Many teams wait until renewal season to begin the conversation, but members have already formed impressions long before that point.

Starting early does not mean talking about payment. It means reinforcing value in small, steady ways. A check-in question halfway through the membership year, a short highlight of the member's activity, or a meaningful follow-up after an event helps keep the relationship warm.

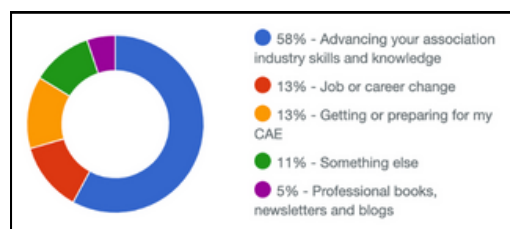
What this looks like in practice: A mid-year message that says, "How is your membership supporting your goals right now?" can surface needs that would otherwise become obstacles at renewal time.

**asae**  
The Center for Association Leadership

We value our members and want to make sure that you have had the opportunity to give us your feedback as we try to serve you better. Would you mind answering a quick question for me?

**What is most important to you as you manage your career this year?**

- Advancing your association industry skills and knowledge
- Professional books, newsletters and blogs
- Getting or preparing for my CAE
- Job or career change
- Something else



### 3 months later...

Earlier in the year you mentioned you were interested in pursuing your CAE. I wanted to check-in to ask if you've made any progress and how we can help!

**Have you had a chance to begin the pursuit of your CAE?**

Yes No

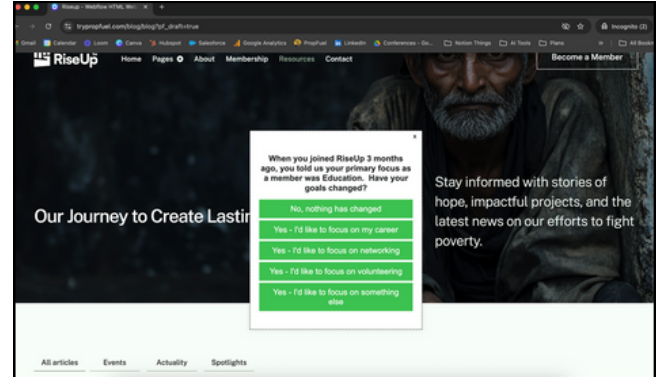
# 2

## Use Member Signals to Personalize Outreach

Member signals are small pieces of information that show what someone cares about or where they may need help. These signals show up in clicks, site searches, event registrations, or moments of silence. When you respond to these signals, you show members that the association notices them. Even simple personalization can increase the likelihood that they renew.

### Examples of actionable signals:

- Visiting a certification page several times
- Registering for an event in a specific topic area
- Opening emails but not clicking
- Engaging heavily early in the year, then dropping off



Tools like PropFuel make it easier to collect these signals across channels and trigger timely messages. Teams without automation can still use reports and analytics to identify high-value signals manually.

# 3

## Remind Members of the Value they Actually Received

Members often forget what they accomplished with your association, especially when value is spread throughout the year. A recap of their activity helps them recognize what they gained. This is far more effective than a long list of benefits. What matters most is what the member experienced personally.

### Examples of value reflection:

- Credits earned
- Programs completed
- Events attended
- Resources downloaded
- Community discussions joined
- Volunteer contributions

A recap does not need to be complex. Even a simple message that highlights a few actions helps members feel more confident about renewing.



# 4

## Ask a Question Before the Invoice

Quiet hesitation often goes unnoticed. Asking a question before renewal season gives members a chance to share concerns or unmet needs. These questions do not need to be long surveys. In fact - it's probably better off they are not long surveys. One single, thoughtful prompt can reveal important context.

### Questions that work well:

- Are you planning to renew this year?
- What were you hoping to get from your membership this year?
- Is there anything you expected to use but could not find?

When members reply, you gain insight into what might prevent them from renewing. You also have a chance to address confusion or help them find something they missed.

The screenshot shows an email from the Water Quality Association. The email body contains the following text: "Hi, We noticed that your company's membership with the Water Quality Association for 2025 has not yet been renewed. We value your involvement in our community and don't want you to miss out on the many benefits of being a WQA member." Below the text is a survey question: "Will you be renewing your membership this year?". There are four blue buttons with white text: "Yes, we'd like to renew now.", "I'm no longer the primary contact.", "We are undecided or need more time.", and "No, we won't be renewing this year."

# 5

## Close the Loop after Renewal

The renewal period is one of the few times when members think consciously about the value of their membership. Capturing that insight right away provides clarity for the entire organization. After renewal, ask a few short questions and look for themes. The patterns you see will guide your improvements in onboarding, programming, and future communication.

### Some questions that could be helpful include:

- What are you looking to get out of your membership over the next year?
- Was there a particular program or event that stood out to you over the last year?
- What can we do for you in the year ahead to make your membership more valuable?

Closing the loop also strengthens trust. Members appreciate being asked about their experiences, and their feedback helps them feel more connected.

Strategies become stronger when they are grounded in data that shows what truly influences renewal decisions. The next section outlines the metrics that help you understand member behavior, identify early signs of risk, and measure the impact of your renewal efforts. These metrics are practical, accessible, and designed to guide your team toward clearer insights and more confident decisions throughout the membership year.

# METRICS THAT MATTER

Renewal work becomes easier when you focus on a small set of metrics that reliably reflect member behavior and decision-making. These metrics help you understand not only how members responded during renewal season but also what shaped those decisions throughout the year. You do not need a complicated dashboard. If your team pays attention to the six metrics below, you will have a clear picture of renewal health and the information you need to take action earlier and with more confidence.

## 1. Renewal Rate

The percentage of members who renewed out of those who were eligible.

**WHAT IS IT:**  $\text{Renewal Rate} = (\text{Number of Members Who Renewed} \div \text{Number of Members Up for Renewal}) \times 100$

**EXAMPLE:** Example: 1,000 members were eligible to renew. 820 renewed.  $\text{Renewal Rate} = (820 \div 1,000) \times 100 = 82\%$

**WHY IT MATTERS:** This is your primary measure of success each cycle. Renewal rate helps you understand the overall health of your membership program and whether your strategy is moving in the right direction.

**HOW TO USE IT:** Break it down by:  
MEMBER TYPE | TENURE (ESPECIALLY FIRST-YEAR MEMBERS) | ENGAGEMENT LEVEL  
These segments reveal where you have strong alignment and where additional support may be needed.

## 2. Churn

The percentage of members who did not renew.

**WHAT IS IT:**  $\text{Churn Rate} = 100\% - \text{Renewal Rate}$

**EXAMPLE:** If your renewal rate is 82%, your churn rate is 18%.

**WHY IT MATTERS:** Churn helps you see which groups are losing momentum or experiencing barriers that might not be obvious. When you look at churn over time, you can also see whether your improvement efforts are working.

**HOW TO USE IT:** Review churned members to identify common patterns. Look for quieting behavior, missing onboarding steps, or areas of confusion that could be addressed earlier in the year.

# 3. First-Year Retention

The percentage of first-year members who choose to stay for a second year.

**WHAT IS IT:** First-Year Renewal Rate =  $(\text{First-Year Renewals} \div \text{First-Year Members Up for Renewal}) \times 100$

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**EXAMPLE:** If 195 out of 300 first-year members renewed:  
Churn Rate =  $(195 \div 300) \times 100 = 65\%$

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**WHY IT MATTERS:** This is one of the most important indicators in association membership. First-year members often struggle the most to understand your offerings, build habits, and connect with your value. A lower rate usually points to gaps in onboarding or early engagement rather than issues with benefits or pricing.

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**HOW TO USE IT:** Compare first-year renewal rates with multi-year members. If the gap is large, strengthen your onboarding flow and add earlier, more personal touchpoints.

# 4. Engagement Level (NPS)

The view of how active a member is.

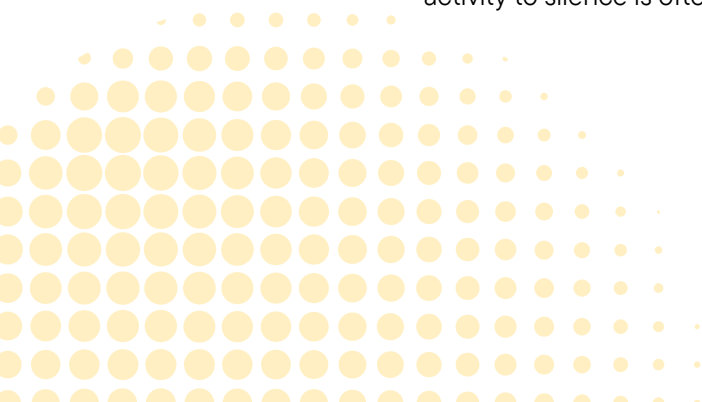
**WHAT IS IT:** This does not require a complicated scoring system. Many associations classify members into broad categories like light, moderate, and heavy engagement.

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**WHY IT MATTERS:** Members who stay connected to the association in steady ways—reading content, attending programs, or responding to questions—tend to renew at higher rates. Tracking engagement helps you understand who may need extra support.

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**HOW TO USE IT:** Monitor engagement drops rather than total activity. A member who shifts from steady activity to silence is often showing early signs of churn.



# 5. Key Interest Signals

Any behavior that shows what a member cares about or is trying to explore.

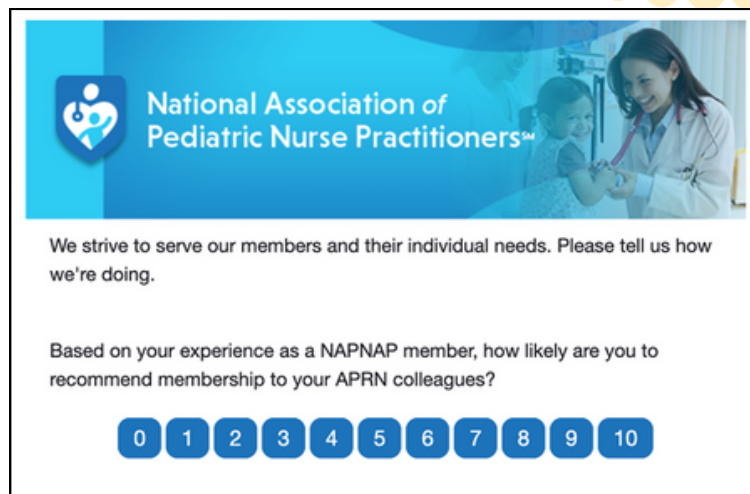
**EXAMPLE:** visiting a certification or credentialing page, browsing advocacy updates, reading job board content, exploring specific learning topics and clicking on certain newsletter items multiple times


**WHY IT MATTERS:** Interest signals help you understand what members are working on right now. When you acknowledge or support those interests, you help members feel seen, which strengthens their connection and increases renewal likelihood.

**HOW TO USE IT:** Reach out with relevant information when someone shows repeated interest in a topic. This can be automated through platforms like PropFuel or managed manually for key segments.

These five metrics give you both a rearview mirror and a windshield. Renewal rate and churn help you understand outcomes. First-year retention, engagement levels, and interest signals, show you the moments and patterns that shape those outcomes throughout the year.

When you review these metrics regularly, you can spot member needs earlier, personalize support more easily, and approach renewal season with much more clarity about which members are ready to renew and which may need additional attention.



 National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners™

We strive to serve our members and their individual needs. Please tell us how we're doing.

Based on your experience as a NAPNAP member, how likely are you to recommend membership to your APRN colleagues?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

# 30-DAY QUICK START PLAN

The goal of this plan is to help your team take small, manageable steps that build momentum. You do not need to overhaul your entire renewal process at once. Start with a few actions that help you see your members more clearly and respond more intentionally.

## WEEK ONE

### Understand Your Current Signals

- Identify which member signals you already have access to
- Pull a list of members with long periods of silence
- Review your onboarding for clarity and momentum
- Draft the pre-renewal question you plan to ask this year
- Meet with your team to discuss what the data suggests about renewal readiness

## WEEK TWO

### Start Two Conversations

- Send a check-in question to quiet members
- Add a “What are you working on right now?” prompt to your next newsletter
- Review the responses and share patterns with your team
- Build a simple follow-up approach for members who express needs

## WEEK THREE

### Personalize the Renewal Experience

- Prepare a “Your Year in Review” message for mid-cycle members
- Identify three groups of members who tend to need different support
- Draft personalized recommendations for each group
- Review your renewal landing page to ensure it is clear and easy to navigate

## WEEK FOUR

### Debrief and Adjust

- Review the responses you received this month
- Note where members are getting stuck or confused
- Decide which improvements to make to onboarding and early engagement
- Prepare a plan for the next 90 days of conversational touchpoints

# CONCLUSION + NEXT STEPS



Renewals feel most challenging when they are treated as the final step in the membership year. This playbook encourages a different approach. When you focus on conversations, signals, and small moments of value throughout the year, renewal becomes something members choose naturally.

You do not need dramatic changes to see improvement. You need a steady rhythm of awareness. You need to notice when a member gets stuck, or when they lean into a topic, or when they go quiet. You need to ask questions that allow members to tell you what they need. And you need to follow up when those needs become clear.

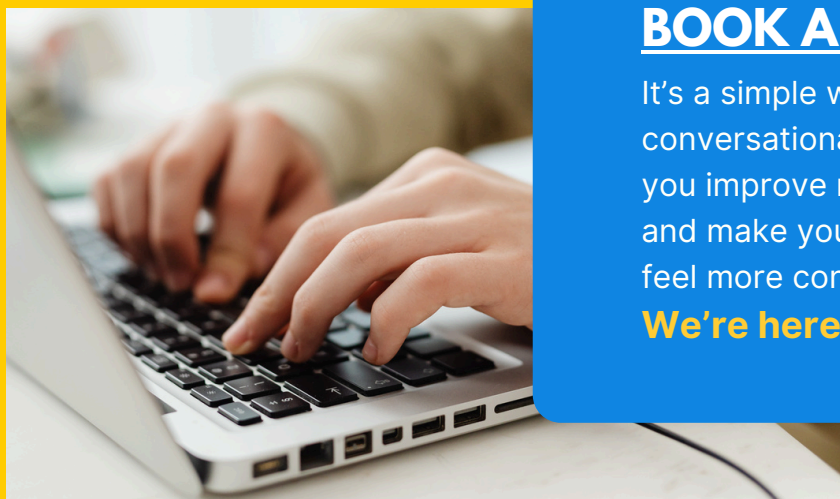
Tools like PropFuel help automate this process, but the mindset itself is what makes the difference. Start with one question. Start with one segment. Start with one signal. Renewal gets easier from there. When your communication feels more like a conversation and less like a broadcast, members feel it. And when they feel it, they stay.

## IF YOU WANT HELP PUTTING THIS INTO PRACTICE

Every association knows renewals are important. The challenge is finding the time, tools, and processes to make personalized engagement possible at scale. If you're looking for support in building a more conversational, signal-driven renewal strategy, our team would be happy to walk through what this could look like for your organization.

A short demo is the easiest way to see how other associations use PropFuel to:

- Ask members timely questions throughout the year
- Capture the signals hidden in their behavior
- Act on those signals with meaningful, relevant follow-ups
- And bring more clarity and predictability to renewal season



## BOOK A DEMO



It's a simple way to see whether conversational engagement could help you improve renewals, reduce quiet churn, and make your member communication feel more connected and responsive.

**We're here if you need us.**