

Closing Your Digital Strategy Gap

A Practical Guide for Your Membership Association Leaders



Why Digital Strategy Matters

The Digital Divide in Associations

Today's associations can't afford to operate without a clear digital strategy. Yet the data shows a significant gap:

- **63% of associations** recognize the importance of digital strategy but lack a formal plan.
- Only **25% of associations** rate their team's digital skills highly.
- Just **43% consider themselves digitally optimized.**

Without a defined strategy, associations risk falling behind peers who use technology to improve engagement, streamline operations, and deliver more value to members.

The Top 3 Obstacles to Digital Transformation

💰 **Limited budgets** - 71% cite budget constraints as their biggest barrier.

📚 **Lack of Skills** - 50% reported staff lacked confidence with digital tools and automation.

👥 **Cultural resistance** - Leadership and staff may be hesitant to adopt new systems.

Why This Matters for Your Association

Members expect modern, personalized experiences – with **65% of members saying personalization matters** and **79% saying it's very important to receive targeted, valuable content**, according to research from Momentive Software. Boards demand data-driven decisions, and staff need efficient systems to do more with less. Yet **only 24% of associations are actively investing in personalization**, showing just how wide the digital strategy gap has become.

A clear digital strategy is no longer a luxury - it's a necessity to stay relevant, resilient, and ready for growth.

Recognize & Assess Your Digital Gap

Why Self-Assessment Matters

The first step in closing your digital strategy gap is understanding where you stand today. By assessing your association's digital maturity, you can identify the gaps that hold back member experience, efficiency, and growth.

YourMembership Digital Gap Checklist

- ☐ **Do you have a formal digital strategy that includes YM?**
Or are you just “using the system” without a roadmap for how it supports your mission?
- ☐ **Are you fully using YM's automation tools?**
Are renewals, invoices, and confirmations automated, or do staff still send reminders manually?
- ☐ **Is your data clean and reliable in YM?**
Do you have duplicate member records, outdated contact info, or gaps in financial tracking that make reporting harder?
- ☐ **Do staff feel confident with YM's reporting and queries?**
Does your team rely on exports and spreadsheets instead of YM dashboards?
- ☐ **Are you using YM's engagement tools effectively?**
Does your member directory, profiles, and event features actively drive community, or do members see it as “just a database”?
- ☐ **Is YM integrated with your other systems?**
Are events, email campaigns, and finances connected, or is your staff re-entering data across multiple platforms?
- ☐ **Do you measure the right outcomes?**
Are you using YM data to track member retention, event ROI, and engagement - or just basic counts?
- ☐ **Are you aligning YM with your association's main goals?**
Is YM configured to help you actually deliver that?

Score Your Association

- **7-8 YES answers - Digital Leader**
 - You're using YM strategically, but there may still be efficiencies or integrations you're missing.
- **4-6 YES answers - At Risk**
 - You're making progress, but gaps in automation, reporting, or integration are holding your staff back.
- **0-3 YES answers Vulnerable**
 - YM is acting as a database, not a growth engine. Manual work and data silos are costing your association time and money.

Develop a Digital Roadmap

Why a Roadmap Matters

Without a plan, YourMembership is just software. With a roadmap, it becomes the engine that drives member value, efficiency, and growth. A digital roadmap aligns YM with your association mission, goals, and resources so every feature you pay for delivers a return.

Steps to Build Your YM Roadmap

Define Objectives

Ask: *What do we want YM to accomplish?* Common goals include:

- Improve renewal rates through automation
- Deliver personalized member experiences
- Simplify event registration and certifications
- Strengthen financial reporting for leadership

Create Governance Framework

Assign ownership of YM processes. Define who manages data, who runs reports, and how decisions get made about new features.

Identify & Refine Goals

Set measurable targets such as:

- Increase online renewals by 20%
- Reduce staff time spent on manual invoicing by 40%
- Achieve 95% data accuracy in member records

Map Your Roadmap

Prioritize initiatives that have the biggest impact. Examples:

- Phase 1: Automate renewals & clean member records
- Phase 2: Integrate YM with event management and finances
- Phase 3: Launch target communication using YM queries

Execute & Assess

Start small, pilot features, and track outcomes. Use YM reporting tools to measure engagement, revenue, and efficiency. Share wins with leadership to build moments.

Partnering with Starkweather

Engage your technology partner early. Starkweather helps associations get more from YM. From to workflows, train staff on reporting and queries, and design integration strategies - turning your roadmap into reality. Start turning your YM roadmap into reality with [Starkweather's support today.](#)

Overcome Barriers

The Reality of Digital Transformation

Even with a clear roadmap, associations often stumble when it comes to execution. Research shows that **71% cite limited budgets as the top barrier** and only 25% rate staff digital skills as very good. For YM clients, these challenges often show up in three ways:

Limited Budget 💰

- **The Barrier:** Associations hesitate to invest in YM training or support, thinking they can “make do.”
- **The Result:** Staff spend hours on manual tasks like invoicing, renewals, and reporting - wasting resources instead of saving them.
- **The Fix:** Prioritize quick wins that prove ROI, such as automating renewals or using YM’s finance module to cut spreadsheet time.

Lack of Skills 🧑🏫

- **The Barrier:** Staff don’t know how to use YM’s advanced features - queries, dashboards, or integrations.
- **The Result:** YM is treated like a statistic database, underused, and undervalued.
- **The Fix:** Invest in training and ongoing support so your team builds confidence and competence with YM’s tools.

Cultural Resistance 🧑🏫

- **The Barrier:** Leadership and staff may be skeptical about changing how they’ve always done things.
- **The Result:** Manual workflows persist even when YM can handle them, slowing down transformation.
- **The Fix:** Share early wins (like faster renewals or cleaner data) to build trust and momentum across your team and board.



💡 From Barriers to Breakthroughs with Starkweather

Starkweather provides the extra capacity associations need to get unstuck. Whether it’s training staff, configuring YM features, or building phased projects, we help associations overcome barriers without overwhelming their teams. Take the next step - let Starkweather help your team move forward with confidence.

Case Study Highlight: DIGIN Midwest

Here's how one mid-sized association reduced manual work, improved data, and freed staff focus on advocacy.

The kind of wins your board wants to see!



About the Association

The Minnesota Utility Contractors Association (MUCA) - now DIGIN Midwest - was founded in the 1970s to represent underground utility contractors and advocate for the industry. A 501(c)(6) business league, MUCA reported \$525k in revenue and \$484k in expenses in 2023. In July 2025, it rebranded as DIGIN Midwest to reflect its expanded mission of serving and promoting the underground utility industry.

Challenges

Like many mid-sized associations, DIGIN struggled with:

- **Fragmented support & expertise:** Multiple AMCs with inconsistent processes and limited YM knowledge.
- **Manual workflows & rising costs:** Membership applications, certifications, and event registrations were processed by hand. Financial tracking was labor-intensive, creating a cost-value gap.
- **Mission expansion:** Preparing to rebrand and broaden advocacy beyond Minnesota required better systems and data.

Results & Impact

The partnership produced measurable improvements:

- **Improved efficiency:** Automating renewals, certifications, and event payments freed staff to focus on advocacy.
- **Better financial management:** Clear visibility into revenue and expenses (\$525k / \$484k).
- **Stronger member engagement:** Over 140 members now register and pay online for pipelaying and erosion-control courses.
- **Support for expansion:** DIGIN Midwest is now positioned to expand advocacy at both state and federal levels.

Partnering with Starkweather

To address these challenges, DIGIN Midwest engaged Starkweather Association Services for advanced YM support. Starkweather delivered:

- An **operational audit and roadmap** to reduce duplicate entry and manual invoicing.
- **Hands-on staff training** on queries, renewals, and reporting.
- **Data clean-up and YM configuration**, improving accuracy and reporting.
- **Change-management guidance** to prepare staff and the board for the 2025 rebrand.

Testimonial

"Thanks to Starkweather's training, I can now assist members, create content, manage accounting, run reports, and track activities with ease - it's been immeasurable."

Stephanie Menning, Executive Director of DIGIN Midwest

Quick-Start Checklist

10 Steps to Close Your Digital Strategy Gap with YourMembership

Use this checklist as a starting point to align YourMembership with your mission and free staff from manual work:

- **Audit your tech stack** – Document all systems in use and where YM overlaps.
- **Clean your YM data** – Remove duplicate or outdated records for more accurate reporting.
- **Automate renewals & invoicing** – Setup YM workflows to eliminate manual billing.
- **Train your staff** – Build confidence with queries, reports, and dashboard tools.
- **Configure finance module** – Use YM’s finance module to track \$ revenue and expenses.
- **Set measurable goals** – Define targets (renewals, retention, time savings).
- **Integrate with other systems** – Connect YM to events, email, and finance tools.
- **Leverage YM for events & certifications** – Streamline registration, payments, and course tracking.
- **Share quick wins** – Highlight early improvements (like automated renewals) to gain buy-in.
- **Draft your roadmap** – Outline short- and long-term YM priorities and share them with leadership.

Next Steps with Starkweather

This workbook is the first step. Implementing change is the next. Starkweather partners with associations to:

- Conduct operational audits tailored to YourMembership.
- Provide training that builds staff confidence.
- Clean and integrate your data for better decision-making.
- Support long-term digital roadmaps so YM drives growth instead of creating bottlenecks.

👉 **Contact Starkweather to schedule a consultation & start turning your YM checklist into action.**

Citations: The data and insights in this guide are drawn from multiple sources including .orgSource, [2024 Digital Trends Survey](#), [Association Sector Digital Trends Report, 2024](#), NetForum AMS, [Create a Personalized Member Experience](#), and case study notes from [MUCA \(DIGIN Midwest\) case study](#), Starkweather Association Services.