

Managing communications for a grassroots sports club with around 500 players, parents, and supporters is no small task. Many clubs rely on Mailchimp as their go-to email marketing tool, but subscription bloat and rising costs have many looking for better alternatives. If your club email list is growing and the monthly Mailchimp bill is creeping up, it's time to evaluate more cost-effective, flexible options — especially those offering pay-per-send email and free registration forms.

Why Do Grassroots Clubs Need to Rethink Their Email Tools?

Grassroots clubs often start small, using free email solutions like Mailchimp's free tier to manage newsletters and membership communications. But once a club hits 500 contacts, the cost can escalate quickly, with fees charged for storing contacts and monthly tiers locking you into paying whether you send one email or dozens.

Furthermore, typical clubs use a **stack of tools**—such as registration forms, ticketing platforms, volunteer management apps, and social media—to keep operations running. Each new tool typically adds a monthly fee, and with limited admin bandwidth, the accumulated cost and complexity build up fast.

What Does Subscription Bloat Look Like? (Example)

Your thetechleaders.com club might have...





- An email tool charging \$60+/month for 500 contacts
- A registration platform billing \$30/month
- A ticketing system adding \$50/month
- Volunteer management app costing \$20/month

Seven or eight tools later, your club could be spending \$150 to \$300 a month — often without true insight into your actual usage or value.

Common Pain Points with Mailchimp for Clubs

- **Contact storage fees:** Mailchimp charges based on the total list size, not just active recipients, inflating bills when you store inactive or unsubscribed contacts.
- **Fixed monthly tiers:** You pay a flat rate regardless of how many emails you send that month — which can be wasteful outside of the busy registration and season start months.
- **Feature overload:** Mailchimp includes many marketing features clubs do not need, like abandoned cart emails or advanced segmentation, adding unnecessary complexity.
- **Branding limitations:** The free and cheaper tiers often include Mailchimp branding on emails, which looks unprofessional.

Key Considerations When Choosing a Mailchimp Alternative for Your Club Email List

Any alternative should focus on what grassroots sports clubs need most:

- **Affordable pricing based on active usage:** Pay-per-send or pay-only-for-contacts-you-email.
- **Free and easy-to-use forms:** Clubs run registrations, surveys, and signups regularly — no extra charges for building or embedding forms.
- **Simple subscriber management:** Easily import/export contacts, segment fairly, and handle unsubscribes per club guidelines.
- **Single login access:** Avoid juggling multiple accounts or SaaS platforms just to send one email blast.

- **Clear pricing and no hidden fees:** Transparency is crucial so clubs can budget per season, not guess monthly.

Pricing Example: Mailchimp vs. Pay-Per-Send for ~500 Contacts

Service Pricing Model Monthly Cost Season (9 months) Cost Notes Mailchimp Standard Plan Monthly tier by contacts \$75* \$675 Charged for 500 contacts whether you send 1 or 20 emails MailerSend (Pay-per-send) Price per 1,000 emails sent approx. \$10 \$90 Assuming 10 emails per contact over the season, about 5,000 emails total Sendinblue (Free tier + pay as you send) Monthly credits + pay per extra emails \$25 \$225 Includes free contact storage for unlimited contacts

*Mailchimp pricing varies, but typically their standard plan starts around \$75 per month for 500 contacts.

Switching to Pay-Per-Send Messaging: The Smart Move?

Pay-per-send email platforms (such as MailerSend, Amazon SES, or Postmark) charge only for the emails you send, not to store contacts. This means you can keep your full list of 500 contacts without watching your bill balloon just because some parents or supporters don't hear from you every month.

This pricing model aligns perfectly with grassroots club workflows where emails are seasonal, campaign-driven, or event-based—not daily marketing.

Benefits for Grassroots Clubs

- **Cost efficiency:** Pay for what you use rather than shelling out a flat fee.
- **Scalability:** If your club grows to 700 contacts next season, you only pay for emails sent.
- **Freedom to pause or reduce usage:** No locked-in minimum monthly fees during off-seasons.
- **Better control over messaging costs:** Makes it easier to budget communications right alongside registrations, merchandise sales, and fundraising campaigns.

Using Free Forms and Registrations Instead of Paid SaaS

Another major recurring cost in your typical club tech stack is paid registration platforms and form builders (like Typeform Pro, Wufoo, or premium tools). Some Mailchimp alternatives integrate free, embedded form builders, or you can leverage Google Forms or Microsoft Forms—both free and easy tools.

For clubs:

- **Free embedded forms:** Gather registrations, player signups, and volunteer lists without paying extra.
- **Easy export/import:** Download form responses to CSV and import them into your email platform for bulk messaging.
- **No extra SaaS bills:** No lock-in required beyond your email tool.

Tips for a Smooth Mailchimp Migration

1. **Export your full contact list from Mailchimp:** Include all segments, tags, and unsubscribe statuses.
2. **Choose your new email provider carefully:** Assess pricing, support, and ease of use for your committee members who will manage club communications.

3. **Rebuild essential segments and tags:** You'll want your email groups intact for targeted messaging (e.g., juniors, seniors, coaching team, volunteers).
4. **Test your new setup:** Send a test email ahead of a real communication to check formatting and deliverability.
5. **Communicate the change to your club members:** Explain how the club is saving money on administration to reinvest in facilities and gear.
6. **Consider ongoing training:** Document processes so future committees can pick up the tools without headaches.

Final Thoughts: Your Club's Email List Deserves Better Than Subscription Bloat

Grassroots sports clubs thrive on community and clear communication—yet far too many are shackled by costly, oversized SaaS tools. Switching from Mailchimp's subscription tiers to a pay-per-send mail platform, combined with free registration forms, can slash your annual admin bill from hundreds of dollars to under \$100.

That saved money can fund new equipment, facility upgrades, or subsidized coaching clinics—not just months of unnecessary software fees.

Remember, the best email tool for your club isn't the one with the flashiest marketing features; it's the one that understands your seasonal patterns, respects your budget, and keeps messaging simple for busy volunteer admins.

Ready to take the next step? Evaluate your current annual expenses on email and registrations. Then try a pay-per-send mail platform alongside free form tools to cut costs and simplify your admin load this season.