

Membership Communications During Gym Closures

March 24, 2020

Posted By: **Staff** in [CWA Blog](#)



As climbing gyms across the country and the world shut their doors to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus, questions have emerged about how to communicate with members and customers. Here are a few tips and considerations...

Be Transparent

Develop a plan for your closure and clearly communicate it to your members. Things are changing rapidly, but you can avoid confusion by letting them know why you're closing, how you made the decision, and how you'll continue to evaluate the situation. Your plans will likely have to change as this situation unfolds, but people like to know that you have their best interests at heart.

Also, don't be afraid to ask for what you need. Everyone's financial situation is different, but many of your members will be happy to have an opportunity to support you. They want you to continue to exist after this crisis is over and many of them will be willing to put their money where their mouth is.

Opt-In vs. Opt-Out

The opt-in vs. opt-out debate is tricky. Do you put your revenue on the line by asking members to opt-in if they'd like to continue their membership during the closure, or do you put your gym first and opt members into paying by default?

"One thing I considered in making our decision is our membership demographic as a whole and how our decision plays into a broader picture of income inequality. For example, by utilizing opt-

out are we shifting the burden to those who most need the money? Those who may be more stressed during this time and aren't paying attention to Facebook or the hundreds of emails we're all getting everyday about the virus," explains Dana Caracciolo, General Manager of Doylestown Rock Gym & Adventure Center.

Though income inequality is an important consideration, a downside to the opt-in approach is that you're relying on your member's bandwidth to respond to your request. This will inevitably have a negative impact on the proportion of members who keep their membership in place.

One way to address these competing priorities is to use your staff's time - those that you're able to keep on payroll - to call every member and ask for their support directly. You'll get the opportunity to connect with your membership in a new way, as well as the peace of mind knowing that the members who are still contributing are in a financial position to do so.

Stay Positive

This may be a tall order in such an uncertain time, but try to keep a positive tone in all of your communications right now. Use an [active voice instead of a passive voice](#), avoid overly negative phraseology, and don't dwell on the circumstances for your closure.

"Nobody needs to hear the world is falling right now," says Kristin Horowitz of Ascent Ventures/The Pad Climbing. "Give them a reason to believe and they'll keep supporting you because you're giving them that."

Be Authentic

"Communications need to match/mirror the relationship the owner actually has with their members, and the owner themselves," advises Wes Shih of Sender One. Authenticity is key with all communications, so keep that in mind to avoid a scenario where your messaging comes across as disingenuous and backfires.

Communication Examples

Here are just a few examples of membership communications put out by climbing gyms from across the country:

CLOSURE ANNOUNCEMENT 5.LIFE

Dear 5.life Community,
Based on what we know, and on the directives by Governor Mike DeWine and Dr. Amy Acton of the Ohio Department of Health, we have made the decision to close all 5.life facilities as of March 15, end of business. We don't know how long these closures will last—we will look to health officials in Franklin County and the Ohio Department of Health for guidance.

A primary concern in all of these discussions has been the welfare of the staff at 5.life. They, too have families and kids and mortgages. For that reason, we ask that for those of you who can afford to keep your memberships in place, please do so. For those who can't, we fully understand and support you. We will be waiving all membership freeze fees for the duration of the closures.

Right now, no one knows what lies ahead. What we do know is that these 25 years of sharing the rope with climbers in Central Ohio have created more joy and fond memories than even a pandemic can erase. We look forward to when this crisis passes so we can start creating climbing memories anew.

Stay safe and climb on,

The 5.life team.

ROCKGYM - CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) INFORMATION

THURSDAY, March 20, 2020

By order of the state of Pennsylvania, we are currently closed until further notice. We had hoped this would not be the case but the situation continues to unfold day by day.

FOR CURRENT MEMBERS...

PRE-PAID MEMBERSHIPS: If you have purchased a prepaid membership, we will extend the expiration of your membership by the length of time we are closed.

AUTO-PAY MEMBERSHIPS: We had hoped to be open by March 30 but that is looking less and less likely as the situation continues to unfold as well as mandates from officials. If that is the case then we will NOT run any auto-pays for April 1st. We want to earn your money, not take it!

As members, you are not "once and done" customers. You are invested in DRG and are what bring life to the gym. We are currently sitting here looking at empty walls, which are colorful, but also lifeless. That being said, some folks have reached out and asked us to continue running their auto-pay memberships as a way of showing their support for the gym. However, just as this time is trying for us as a business we also know that it is trying for some individuals as well as families. Therefore, if continuing your membership because you are in the fortunate position to be able to do so is something you want to do, then use the link below to notify us. Please know there is no judgment or expectation regarding your decision. We wanted to make it just that... your decision.

[Continue My Membership Link](#)

We will send out a similar announcement as we approach May if we are not already open by then. We will also send out any other relevant updates as they become available.

Lastly, please take care of yourself, your family, friends and communities. Heed the warnings of officials so that we can all get out of this sooner rather than later. Continue to practice social distancing and good hygiene if you are at a local crog. Reach out if you are feeling stir crazy or need assistance. Just because we are not at the gym does not mean we have stopped being a community.



COVID-19 Update: Sender One is temporarily closing all locations.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have tried to balance as best we can the benefits of remaining open to our staff, families, members, and guests with the responsibility we have to the greater communities of which Sender One is part of. At this point, we believe the duty to everyone's long-term health and future outweighs the benefits of remaining open. To provide a place for climbing and our community to flourish into the future, we are choosing to temporarily close. All we can promise is that we are doing the best we can.

Effective Monday, March 16th, Sender One locations will temporarily close in response to the global pandemic of COVID-19. We will remain closed through Tuesday, March 31st.

However, this could change. We will continue to assess the situation and will keep you updated on any changes.

Here's what to expect:

- **Members**, you will be prorated for the remainder of the month with credit placed on your account, which we will apply to your future dues. If we remain closed going into April, all members will be put on a no-cost freeze. This will be done automatically and will not require a billing request. Prepaid memberships will have end dates extended accordingly.
- **Members**, some of you have expressed that you want to support Sender One and our staff even if our doors are closed, for example, by continuing to pay your dues. The best way to do this is to reach out to us directly by email. For Sender One SNA & LAX contact billing@senderoneclimbing.com
- **Members**, you will have until today, 3/15, 8pm to collect items from your lockers. After today, there will be availability on Monday, 3/16 between 10a - 12p and Tuesday, 3/17 between 12p - 4p to collect your items. You are totally welcome to leave your items in your lockers if you do not wish to pick them up!
- **Guests and Members**, if you have an open booking for a class, climbing camp, party, or youth program class in March, you will be notified about credit, possibility of refund, and/or rescheduling options.
- **5-Punch Pass Holders**, we will offer an extension to unfinished punch passes if you bought one during February or March.
- We will send updates regarding our temporary closure via social media, email, and our website.
- We are doing everything we can to support our employees as best we can.
- We will conduct a thorough cleaning of all Sender One facilities before we reopen.

Lastly, we want to emphasize the importance of social distancing at this time. By temporarily closing, we ask that to the extent you are able, please limit your contact with others. With the situation evolving quickly, we must all do our part in slowing the spread of COVID-19.

We will get through this together because the strength and support in our community is undeniable. We cannot wait to climb together again soon.

Due to the increased amount of requests at this time, we would like to let you know that we have a team of awesome people working on fulfilling these requests. Please be patient as it may take a little longer than normal. Thank you.

Stay up to date through our social media channels ([Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#)) and website.

To view an earlier announcement about the health & safety within our community, [click here](#).



The Pad Climbing SLO

March 17 at 8:38 PM · 🌐

We fought the good fight – we know what this space means to you and what the paychecks mean to our staff.

But, Governor Newsom requested closure of gyms in CA as of 3/18.

We want to be able to pay our staff through this. The only way to do that is if you do not suspend or cancel with us during the closure. We understand if that is not doable, but we do want to make it very clear that if you opt in, you're keeping everyone's livelihood stable for a little bit longer.

Please go to this link: <https://thepadclimbing.org/were-closed-indefinitely-whats-.../> to read more about what we will be doing in the meantime.



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About the Author

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been hooked ever since.



THE CWA REQUESTS THAT CONGRESS PROVIDE STIMULUS TO CLIMBING GYMS

March 25, 2020

MY GYM IS CLOSED, NOW WHAT?



March 20, 2020