14-Point Checklist:
Optimize your Listserv

golightly™

While other technologies come and go, dynamic listservs are still the cornerstone of an active online community. Nothing is easier for your members than being able to connect with each other within the same email program they already use every day at home, work or on their smart phones.

Support Your Champions

1 Identify, vet and train your top contributors (champions) and reward them consistently for the important role they play. Rewards can include public acknowledgement, discounts on membership fees, or gift cards.

2 Create guidelines about what is and isn't acceptable in advance and a protocol to escalate and resolve disputes.

Keep Great Content Coming

3 Create a list of hot topics or questions to spark conversation during lulls in discussion.

4 Cover timely topics that interest your members so that people see your listserv as fresh and up-to-date.

5 Summarize and reiterate great listserv conversations in other channels, such as your organization's blog, website or newsletter.

Protect Your Members and Build Trust

6 Redirect heated or contentious conversations to separate listservs so that you don't dilute the knowledge-sharing benefit of your main listserv.

7 Moderate new listservs for the first two weeks to handle any administrative questions.

8 Automate moderation with listserv software that auto-detects unusual activity.

9 Integrate your listserv with your member database so that participating in your listserv is a benefit of membership in your organization, and restricted to current members.

Don't Forget The Basics

10 Engage your members with an informative subject line that is shorter than 40 characters.

11 Position your unsubscribe button so that it is easy to find and doesn't require the user to sign in.

12 Test your hyperlinks to check that they are active and working.

13 Proofread and copy-edit your content for readability and clarity, including spell-check.

14 Include an attachment, if applicable.