

Grassroots sports clubs thrive on strong communication. From match updates and training schedule changes to fundraising events and volunteer rosters, keeping everyone informed is essential. But <https://thetechleaders.com/how-sports-clubs-are-saving-thousands-by-replacing-paid-software-with-one-free-platform/> with hundreds of players, parents, and supporters—usually around 500 or so—managing contact preferences efficiently is a recurring headache for many clubs.

In this post, we'll explore the **best way to store member contact preferences** in one place, balancing the needs of a diverse community against the challenges of subscription bloat and tool costs. We'll also dissect typical **club tool stack costs**, compare **pay-per-send messaging** vs monthly tiered plans, and highlight the value of free forms and registrations for collecting **communications consent**. By the end, you'll have a clear roadmap for simplifying your **member database** and respecting everyone's preferences—without breaking the bank.



Why Contact Preferences Matter in Grassroots Clubs

Before diving into solutions, let's define what we mean by contact preferences and why they're critical:

- **Contact Preferences:** These are the specific channels (email, SMS, phone call, app notification, etc.) and content types (alerts, newsletters, event invites) a member wants to receive, and how often.
- **Member Database:** The central repository where you store member information, including names, roles, contact details, and yes—contact preferences.
- **Communications Consent:** Legal and ethical permissions members give you to contact them via chosen methods, especially important under regulations like GDPR.

You know what's funny? ignoring contact preferences leads to annoyed members, low engagement, and potential compliance issues. Clubs often face complaints about "too many spammy emails" or "messages during inconvenient times." Worse, consent can sometimes be overlooked during quick registrations or volunteer sign-ups, leading to legal risks and damage to your club's reputation.

Typical Club Tool Stack Costs and Subscription Bloat

Grassroots clubs rarely rely on just one tool. A typical tech stack includes:

- Membership & Database Management (e.g., TeamApp, TeamSnap, ClubExpress)
- Email Marketing (e.g., Mailchimp, Constant Contact)
- SMS/Text Messaging Platforms (e.g., Twilio-based tools, SimpleTexting)
- Event Registration & Forms (e.g., Google Forms, JotForm, Typeform)
- Volunteer Rostering & Scheduling (e.g., Signup.com, WhenIWork)

Each tool often comes with its own database or contact list storage—which multiplies admin burdens and drives up costs unnecessarily. This leads to what I call “subscription bloat,” where clubs pay multiple monthly fees, many with overlapping features, just to manage one member base and their communication preferences.

Example: Cost Breakdown for ~500 Members and Supporters

Tool Category	Common Service	Typical Monthly Cost	Season Cost (9 months)	Notes
Membership & Database	TeamApp Basic	\$50/month	\$450	Supports up to 500 contacts; limited custom fields for contact preferences
Email Marketing	Mailchimp Standard	\$75/month	\$675	Includes 500 contacts, but charges for additional; additional pay-per-email fees can apply
SMS/Text Messaging	SimpleTexting	Pay-per-send	Varies (~\$0.03 per message)	Approx. \$300* *Assuming 10 messages per member per season
Event Registrations & Forms	Google Forms	Free	\$0	No cost, but no built-in database

Totals: \$1,425+ per season just to maintain subscriptions and send messages. Costs can skyrocket as contact lists grow and messaging volume increases.

Pay-Per-Send Messaging vs Monthly Tiers: Which Works Better?

Many clubs wrestle with choosing between flat monthly tiers and pay-per-send models for messaging:

- **Monthly Tiers:** Fixed monthly fees offer predictability but often require paying for a minimum number of messages or contacts you might not fully use. Hidden per-email or per-SMS fees can add up.
- **Pay-Per-Send:** Fees linked directly to message volume. Great for clubs with seasonal spikes but unpredictable costs and no flat rate can make budgeting tricky.

From my experience, clubs with around 500 contacts sending varied message types benefit from a mixed approach, with centralized member contact preferences stored in a tool supporting both modes. This reduces duplication of storage and allows sending only to those who want specific types of communication, saving a lot of “wasted” sends and costs.

Using Free Forms & Registrations to Collect & Update Contact Preferences

Collecting contact preferences up-front and updating them regularly is essential. Here’s why free forms shine:

- **Accessibility:** Most free form builders like Google Forms, JotForm, or Typeform allow you to create customizable questions around preferred communication channels and consent statements.
- **No Additional Cost:** Free tools integrate easily with spreadsheets, making them ideal for clubs that want to avoid fees for storing contacts.
- **Easy Updates:** You can regularly ask members or parents to update preferences via short forms before the season or major events.
- **Consent Tracking:** You can embed clear consent language for GDPR or other regional laws, capturing timestamped permissions right within the form.

However, these forms don't themselves consolidate preferences in one unified system—they generate lists, not databases. The key is to import and maintain form responses in your **member database** with clear mapping of preference fields.

How to Store Contact Preferences in One Place: Step-by-Step

1. **Choose a Single Source of Truth:** Select one platform to hold all contact information with custom fields for preferred channels, frequency, and content type preferences.
2. **Import Data from Free Forms:** Regularly import responses from your free preference update forms into your database, cleaning duplicates and honoring opt-outs.
3. **Segment Your Contacts:** Use tags or groups that mirror preferences—e.g., Parents - Email Only, Players - SMS + Email, Volunteers - Phone Calls, etc.
4. **Integrate Messaging Tools:** Connect your database to communication apps (via API or CSV) to ensure messages send only according to stored preferences.
5. **Regularly Audit & Update:** Schedule periodic checks (pre-season and mid-season) to keep preferences current and consent valid.

Tools That Help Centralize Contact Preferences

Here are some practical suggestions tailored for grassroots clubs, considering both cost and usability:



- **Airtable:** Free and paid plans allow custom fields and rich views, perfect for a member database and contact preferences. Can integrate with email/SMS tools via Zapier.
- **Google Sheets + Add-ons:** A zero-cost, highly flexible option. Use add-ons like FormMule or Yet Another Mail Merge (YAMM) to automate segmented email sends.
- **Club Management Platforms:** Look for those offering contact fields customizations and built-in preference centers. Avoid platforms charging just for storing contacts.
- **Mailchimp Audience with Segments & Tags:** Only if your list is actively maintained with consent. Beware of per-contact retention costs and hidden sends.

Summary: Best Practices for Managing Contact Preferences

- Centralize member contact info and preferences in one place — avoid multiple tool databases running in parallel.
- Use free forms to collect and update preferences and consent frequently without increasing storage costs.
- Choose communication tools offering transparent pay-per-send pricing or flexible monthly tiers aligned with your messaging volume.
- Segment your members based on their preferences to avoid over-communication and reduce wasted message sends.
- Document the process clearly for smooth committee handovers and less admin load season after season.

Final Thoughts

For ~500 members, parents, and supporters, managing a robust, consent-compliant, and cost-effective contact preference system is achievable without subscribing to a dozen platforms or enduring confusing pricing. The secret lies in simplicity: centralize your contacts, collect consent regularly via free forms, and carefully pick your messaging approach based on your club's communication habits.

Remember, a healthy communication strategy respects member preferences, controls costs, and makes game days smoother—not more complicated. Keep your systems documented and adaptable for the next committee, and watch your club's engagement soar.