

For many grassroots sports clubs—football, netball, cricket—the need to communicate regularly with players, parents, volunteers, and supporters has long been met by popular email marketing platforms, with **Mailchimp** often being the default choice. But as your club's contact list grows—in our example, around **500 players, parents, and supporters**—and your season progresses, you might find yourself facing growing subscription costs and a tool stack bloated with overlapping features.

In this post, we'll explore why many grassroots clubs end up overpaying for email tools, the hidden costs often buried in those subscription tiers, and—most importantly—how to **export contacts** and complete an **email list migration** without losing data or sanity. We'll also look at alternatives that give your club more control over its **member database**, often for less than what Mailchimp charges on an annual basis.

Why are Grassroots Clubs Facing Subscription Bloat?

Grassroots clubs typically accumulate several software subscriptions over time, each promising to solve a specific administrative pain point:

- Email marketing (e.g., Mailchimp) for newsletters and announcements
- Registration and form tools (e.g., Google Forms, JotForm) for sign-ups
- Scheduling and rostering apps for volunteers and games
- Payment apps for fees and donations

Many of these tools charge based on the number of contacts, emails you send, or monthly active users. Because clubs have recurring seasons and ongoing communication needs, monthly fees add up fast.

Examining Typical Club Tool Stack Costs

Tool Type	Example	Typical Cost (per season)	Pricing Quirk
Email Marketing	Mailchimp	~\$300–\$600	Many charge per contact + monthly tiers with caps on sends
Form/Registration	JotForm, Typeform	\$50–\$150	Paid forms for more submissions or branding removal
Volunteer Scheduling	Signup.com, TeamSnap	\$100–\$300+	Monthly subscriptions, sometimes charged per user
Payment Processing	Square, Stripe	Transaction fees usually (2.6–3% + 30¢)	Costs rise with higher volume, some have monthly fees

Keep in mind these costs are cumulative and often recurring year after year.

The Case Against Monthly Subscription Tiers for Email Marketing

Many clubs start with free tiers on Mailchimp or similar, which usually allow a fixed number of free contacts (e.g., 500), limited sends per month, and basic features. When the number of contacts or sends grows, upgrading becomes necessary. Here's what bugs me most:

- **Paying to store contacts, not just to send:** Fees normally include charges for every contact in the system—even if you email them only occasionally, this inflates pricing.
- **Hidden per-email or per-ticket fees:** Some tools, especially those with event ticketing, mask these extra costs.
- **Locked into monthly payments:** You pay regardless of how active your club is in the off-season.

Because club committees can churn yearly, there's often no documentation or cost review—just an automatic renewal and frustration at an unexpectedly large bill.

Pay-Per-Send Messaging: A More Cost-Effective Alternative

Rather than paying a monthly subscription for keeping a large list, pay-per-send or credit-based [thetechleaders](#) email services help clubs keep costs low and perfectly in line with actual usage.

What is Pay-Per-Send? Instead of a flat monthly fee, you purchase a bundle of email credits or pay per message sent. This model works exceptionally well for seasonal clubs sending newsletters, match day updates, or event reminders.

- Sends are charged only when they happen — no idle costs in the off-season.
- Often cheaper at scale since contact storage isn't billed monthly.
- Simple pricing with no hidden fees.

Examples of providers with pay-per-send options include Amazon SES, Mailjet, and Sendinblue (credits model).

Getting Your Contacts Out: How to Export Contacts from Mailchimp

Exporting your club's member database from Mailchimp is straightforward. Follow these steps carefully to avoid losing data:

1. **Log into Mailchimp.**
2. Navigate to the *Audience* dashboard (your main email list).
3. Select the audience you want to export.
4. Click *All contacts* or a specific segment if you use one.
5. Click *Export Audience* — Mailchimp will generate a ZIP file containing CSV files with all your contact info.
6. Download and unzip the file locally. Review the CSV to confirm all player, parent, and supporter data is present.

TIP: Mailchimp often splits the fields into columns like email, first name, last name, tags, subscription status, and custom fields you may have set. Keep these consistent if you plan to import into a new system.

Email List Migration: Importing to a New Platform

Once you have exported your contacts, the next step is moving them to your new platform or member database system.



Popular alternatives for grassroots clubs seeking low-cost or free email and communication capabilities include:



- **Google Contacts combined with Gmail:** Unlimited storage, free with Google Workspace or personal accounts, but limited email marketing features.
- **Sendinblue:** Free tier with up to 300 emails per day, pay-per-send options available.
- **MailerLite:** Free up to 1,000 subscribers, simple interface.
- **Simpler CRM tools like CiviCRM or Airtable:** Combine contact management with mail merges or integrated email sending on usage basis.

Most platforms allow CSV import through import wizards that map your source columns to their database fields. Confirm fields match—especially email and name columns—to avoid mix-ups.

Step-by-Step Import Checklist

1. Backup your Mailchimp export CSV before any changes.
2. Ensure the CSV columns and formatting meet the new platform's requirements.

3. Import a small subset first as a test (e.g., 50 contacts).
4. Confirm data (like tags, if used) have transferred correctly.
5. Complete the full import once satisfied.
6. Test sending campaigns or emails to confirm contact statuses.

Using Free Forms and Registrations to Build Your Member Database

An important tool in your arsenal moving forward is free or low-cost online forms for collecting registrations, membership renewals, or volunteer signups without extra subscriptions.

Thanks to Google Forms, Microsoft Forms, or free tiers of tools like JotForm, clubs can gather contacts directly and export to CSV, linking with the main *member database* easily.

- Google Forms: completely free, unlimited responses, connects well to Google Sheets for tracking.
- JotForm Free: good for 5 forms and 100 submissions/month, branding present.
- Typeform Basic: nice UX, 3 forms, 100 responses/month free tier.

Integrate these forms with email sending options via Zapier or Integromat for basic automation or use exported lists to stay on top of communications.

Final Thoughts: Keep it Lean and Focused

Grassroots clubs don't need expensive software stacks charging monthly fees for every stored contact—especially if many only receive a handful of emails per season. By migrating your **member database** and **email list** out of Mailchimp and into pay-per-send or free/low-cost tools, most clubs can save hundreds of dollars per season.

Remember:

- Export your contacts carefully, back up your data.
- Choose tools that charge by actual use, not storage.
- Use free forms and tools to grow your database efficiently.
- Keep workflows simple so committee handovers don't cause chaos.

Feel free to reach out or comment below if you'd like personalized advice on specific tool setups or migrating your club's contacts and communications!