

Running a grassroots sports club means juggling a multitude of responsibilities: managing players, communicating with parents and supporters, coordinating volunteer rosters, handling registrations, and much more. At the heart of communication is your email list — a vital link to keep everyone informed. But when your email platform starts charging you simply to *store* contacts, it can feel like you're being nickel-and-dimed for something fundamental.

In this post, I'll unpack why subscription bloat is a common pitfall in grassroots clubs, share typical costs that add up in a club's tech stack, and explore smarter alternatives that focus on seasonal sending rather than charging for contact storage. We'll also cover clever ways to use free forms and registration tools without taking out a new loan.

Why Contact Storage Fees Annoy Grassroots Clubs

Imagine this typical scenario: your club has about 500 players, parents, and supporters whose contact info you need to keep handy all year round. Your chosen email platform costs \$50/month for up to 500 contacts — great, right? But the minute you exceed that, suddenly it's \$75/month. But wait, you barely send emails outside the season, so why pay all year for contacts you only email half the time?

The Hidden Problem of Subscription Bloat

Subscription bloat happens when your tool stack grows quietly but significantly, with overlapping fees and charges for things that feel like basic features:

- Paying monthly fees just for storing contacts, regardless of sending frequency
- Extra charges for forms or integrations
- Multiple overlapping tools with redundant functionality

Over 9 years consulting grassroots clubs, I've seen monthly SaaS bills creep up to \$300 or more — just for standard admin [sports club management software](#) tasks that should be simple.

Typical Club Tool Stack Costs: The Price You May Be Paying

You know what's funny? your club's tool stack likely covers:

- **Email communications:** Newsletter and updates to 500+ contacts
- **Registration forms:** Online player and volunteer signups
- **Scheduling and rostering:** Volunteer shifts, game-day roles
- **Payments:** Membership fees, fundraising

Tool Type	Typical Monthly Cost	Annual Cost (9 Months Season)
Email Platform (contact storage fees)	\$50 - \$75	\$450 - \$675
Online Forms / Registrations	\$0 - \$20	\$0 - \$180
Scheduling / Rostering Tool	\$15 - \$30	\$135 - \$270
Payment Processing Fees	N/A (per transaction)	Varies

Notice how just the email platform fees can add up to over \$600 a season, often without the flexibility for low-usage months or off-season downtime. This is where the "contact storage fee" model starts to feel unfair.



Pay-Per-Send Messaging vs Monthly Tiers

One alternative to flat monthly fees is a pay-per-send model, where you're charged based on how many emails you *actually send* rather than how many contacts you store. This model can be a game-changer for seasonal clubs that have bursts of activity but quieter months.

Benefits of Pay-Per-Send

- **Cost Control:** No need to pay for contacts sitting idle off-season;
- **Flexibility:** Scale your spending with your volume of communication;
- **Simplicity:** Only pay for what you use, reducing wasted subscription fees;

Possible Drawbacks

- If you send emails very frequently year-round, costs per email may add up;
- Tracking usage can require some management;

For example, consider a simple pay-per-email plan charging \$0.01 per email sent:

Scenario Emails Sent Cost (@ \$0.01/email) Monthly Club Newsletter (500 recipients) 500 \$5 Weekly Updates during Season (20 weeks) $500 \times 20 = 10,000$ \$100

Compared to flat fees of \$50/month or \$450+ per season, this is often a better fit for clubs with moderate send volumes. And you're not paying to store contacts in off-season months.

Free Forms and Registrations – Smart Ways to Avoid Extra Charges

Registration forms are another area where clubs get hit with unexpected monthly fees. Many form tools charge per form or per submission, or bundle expensive extras that aren't needed. Thankfully, there are strong free alternatives:

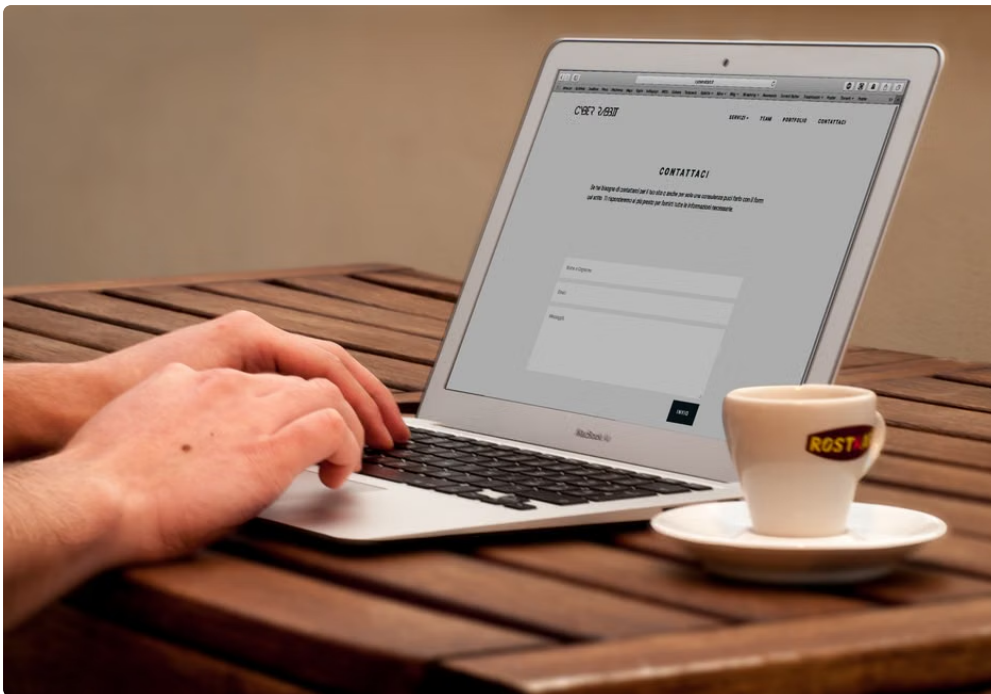
- **Google Forms:** Unlimited forms with no fees, easy to share, excellent for player registrations and volunteer signups;

- **Microsoft Forms:** Similar to Google Forms, great for clubs already on Microsoft 365;
- **Free tiers of platforms like Jotform, Cognito Forms:** Have generous limits to get started;

With a little planning, these can be integrated back into your email lists or spreadsheets, avoiding extra costs.

Pro Tip: Avoid Overlap Between Tools

Make sure your email platform and registration forms aren't duplicating efforts. For example, many large email marketing tools charge extra to store contacts collected from web forms or require premium plans to use form builders. Instead, use a dedicated, free forms tool and export contact lists to your email platform periodically.



How to Choose the Right Email Platform Without Getting Ripped Off

1. **Count active contacts, not total contacts:** Many tools include old or inactive contacts in their storage limits. Clean your list to avoid paying for outdated info.
2. **Check for contact storage fees:** Avoid platforms charging you just to sit on data. Look for usage-based or pay-per-send models.
3. **Consider seasonality:** Choose plans that let you pause or downgrade in off-season months, or pay per email sent.
4. **Look for free form integrations:** Use free form tools that can export data without extra fees.
5. **Test ease of use and handover:** Your committee will change yearly; tools that require multiple logins or are hard to document create headaches.

Summary: Fighting Subscription Bloat with Smarter Choices

Last month, I was working with a client who learned this lesson the hard way.. Grassroots clubs face enough challenges without paying inflated SaaS fees for email contacts they barely send messages to off-season. Charging just to store contacts feels wrong, and in my experience, there are better options out there.

Here's the takeaway:

- **Be wary of contact storage fees;** measure your cost per season, not just per month;

- **Explore pay-per-send platforms;** they often suit seasonal clubs more closely;
- **Use free forms for registrations;** avoid paying double for integrated features you don't need;
- **Keep your tool stack lean** to reduce admin overhead and don't get tripped up by hidden fees;
- **Keep documentation handy** for easy committee handovers.

Choosing smarter email platforms is key to reducing recurring costs without sacrificing communication quality. The right approach saves your club money and keeps you focused on what matters: the game day.

Further Reading & Resources

- [Google Forms Help Center](#)
- [Cognito Forms – Free Tier](#)
- [MailerLite – Pay As You Grow Pricing](#)
- [Comprehensive Email Marketing Pricing Breakdown](#)