

5 Association Chapter COVID-19 Trends Staying and Going



The COVID-19 pandemic changed association chapter operations forever. There seems to be two extremes: chapters that adjusted how they meet their association chapter members' needs virtually and those who did nothing, stopping all events and updates until things return to "normal."



Many of those who adjusted their programming are reviewing them to see if these adjustments still give members what they need. This includes evaluating their programming and thinking about what they will continue and what they may not.

Here are three program trends we believe will continue, and two that may not stick around.

3 COVID-19 association chapter trends that will stay

Virtual events. Association chapters will continue to deliver events virtually, including continuing education and some monthly meetings. The convenience and cost effectiveness of association chapter virtual events makes them easy to hold, but more importantly, virtual makes it easier to bring in new members, expand topics and provide different speakers. Your association chapter members who don't want to sit in a classroom can meet their continuing education requirements without

leaving home, and your potential speaker pool expands significantly, since there's no constraint around where a speaker is located.

Chapter websites. Pre-COVID, association chapter websites were surprisingly a lower priority than in-person events, email and social media. As a result of the increased need to provide strong association chapter online engagement, members will no longer accept outdated info, tired designs, lack of usability or websites that don't render well on mobile devices. As you move into the fourth quarter of 2021, review your website and some of the website trends that became important this year. Where could you improve? It's not too late to update your design and add some members-only content, like a job board, webinar recordings, member directory, forums, and so much more to provide local chapter member value.

Ability to pivot. The events of the recent past have increased association chapters' need to be nimble and shift operations in reaction to what's going on in the moment. Long-term planning is still critical to an association chapter's ability to survive, but just as important is a chapter's ability to change quickly, to meet what members are dealing with, like adding job related content to a website during an economic downturn and virtual events, when meeting in person isn't an option.

No longer is it acceptable to wait till things seem unsettled before looking at what needs to change. To make these sorts of changes quickly, association chapters need to have:

- An understanding of what members need and want as their environment changes
- Plans for dealing with sudden shifts

Association chapter programming that may disappear

Hybrid events. We don't believe many association chapters will continue to hold hybrid events. These events can be difficult to coordinate as there is much to organize and keep track of related to locations and technology. Now that association chapters have tried hybrid events, they'll probably decide they aren't the most effective way to operate.

Virtual networking. Networking virtually with a group of people can be difficult, especially because some association chapter members have to work harder to be heard in larger virtual events. Some association chapter leaders we've spoken to don't feel their virtual networking events have been completely successful and their members have expressed a desire to return to safely networking in



person. This is a great time of year for chapters to hold events outdoors, to allow members to start to connect again in person.

We believe the first three trends are part of the “new normal” for association chapters. Members appreciate the benefits and chapters have found good ways to deliver them. The last two take a little more effort and planning and the results haven’t provided significant benefit. As chapters move away from those, they need to find new ways to engage with members and remember that their members’ needs may continue to shift.

