

# 5 Ways to Make Your Association Chapter Virtual Meetings Introvert Friendly



You feel like you have an effective strategy for engaging members virtually. And then, one day you decide to pay a little more attention, and you realize that for the most part, the same people come to each event. When you look a little more closely, you see that there's an even smaller group of people who actively participate.



Have you thought about the reasons behind what's keeping people away or why you have attendees who aren't participating? It might be that you have introverted association chapter members who just don't feel your virtual meetings are set up to meet their needs. You've heard it before – introverts and extroverts do things pretty differently; your extroverted members (and guests) could be taking over your meetings while your introverts sit uncomfortably on the sidelines or decide not to attend at all.

What can you do to better engage members virtually and ensure your more introverted meeting attendees feel connected to the meetings and comfortable contributing? Here are five ways to make your association chapter virtual meetings more introvert friendly.

**Send agendas in advance and stick to them.** It's often difficult for introverts to respond "in the moment." Provide all attendees with the topics ahead of time, so they can be better prepared to participate. At the start of the meeting, review the agenda and set expectations, and during the meeting, stick to the agenda as much as possible.



**Include breaks for longer meetings.** Virtual meetings can be mentally and physically exhausting for everyone; the need to focus more on what's being said is much higher, as it's harder to see those non-verbal cues that give an idea of the meaning behind what a person is saying. Virtual meetings can also be overstimulating, especially for introverts. Keep your meetings shorter, and if you can't, work in breaks. Even giving attendees a few minutes to turn away from the screen helps them decompress and refocus.

**Don't ask anyone for an "on the spot" response.** Introverts only want to respond when they're ready. Randomly calling on people can cause them to disengage and lose interest. Consider giving a head's up that you'll be asking for input "in a few minutes" or "in the next session." You can even say, "in a few minutes, I'd love to talk more about Y," to give everyone a chance to prepare a response. Another option is to structure your virtual association chapter meeting in a way that gives everyone an equal chance to be heard, like a round-robin discussion, where you give each attendee a set amount of time to share something about the topic being discussed.

**Ask for opinions from as many as possible.** Doing this successfully can often depend on the size of your audience. With a larger group, sometimes it's easier to call on those who respond rather than looking for new people. When possible, scan attendees and look for people who may be trying to speak. Call on them, as well as those who may have mentioned in the chat they have a question or something to add or those who have used the Raised Hand function in Zoom. This is where asking people to remain muted until asked to unmute can be helpful. If you see the same people unmuting and responding, look for those who've been waiting patiently.

**Recommend attendees use the chat – and keep checking it.** Those who aren't comfortable speaking to a group over Zoom may find it easier to type in the chat. But the chat often gets missed, especially when you're focused on the discussion. Check the chat throughout the event – it can be helpful to assign someone to this task – to be sure you're not overlooking comments and questions.

Being heard can sometimes be one of the most difficult things for an introvert, whether it's happening in a conference room or in a Zoom call. And often, it's not easy for anyone if it's a large group. It's important to keep everyone engaged in virtual meetings, including those who might be sitting quietly waiting for their turn. Be sure you have the right plan for engaging members virtually, so you can give everyone in attendance the chance to participate.

