

8 Do's and Don'ts of Successful Virtual Meetings



As organizations continue to bring people together virtually, they're seeing some of these events produce stronger outcomes than others. What is it that makes some people completely engage with association chapter virtual events, while others tune out?



Here are a few “do’s and don’ts” for association chapters to consider as they plan future virtual events. Some of these are just as important for attendees to keep in mind as they are for association chapters.

1. **Test your technology before the meeting.** Be sure those running the meeting, as well as those who will be attending, understand how to use the technology and that it will work as expected. Consider how presentations will be seen on the different devices attendees will be participating from, like smart phones versus laptops and desktops.
2. **Send out an agenda.** Since you’re asking people to take time to attend your event, let them know ahead of time how things will flow. Once in the meeting, follow the agenda you’ve set. To keep everything on track, select someone, not the speaker or the emcee, as the “agenda keeper.”
3. **Remind attendees how things work in a virtual meeting.** Provide cheat sheets ahead of time or reminders at the start of the meeting, for accessing and using different functions in the platform you’re using, whether Zoom, Microsoft Teams, WebEx, or another service. Point out some



of the useful functions, like the chat and the hand raise, and provide helpful suggestions, like keeping microphone muted unless speaking, refraining from interrupting, etc.

4. **Have speakers introduce themselves before talking.** Even though most platforms allow people to type their names, not everyone will see those names. Ask anyone speaking to give their names before they begin. For smaller groups, first names may be enough but larger groups may benefit from people giving their first and last names.

5. **Include activities to keep attendees focused.** When people aren't in the same room, it's even more important to provide ways for them to connect. For larger meetings, consider breaking into smaller groups so members can chat more intimately with each other. (Smaller meetings can often do the same without breaking into groups.) Have the groups answer questions you've put in the chat, and when everyone comes back together have teams present to the entire group.

6. **Avoid multi-tasking and eliminate distractions.** It's easy for people to find other things to do while half-heartedly participating in your association chapter virtual meetings. Remind attendees that others can often easily tell when they're not paying attention. There's no reason to answer email, work on a project, or do something else that will keep them from giving their full attention.

7. **Clean up the area the camera can see.** It's human nature for people to be a little nosy and try to look at what's in the background of others. Remind presenters and attendees to keep everything in view appropriate for a workspace. In today's work from home environments that might not be possible, so you can also suggest, if the platform offers it, choosing a virtual background or blurring their existing background.

8. **Find a quiet place to participate.** If you have to leave the area where you're participating, don't take the device you're watching/listening on with you. Phones and laptops shake and move around when people carry them, which is distracting. Plus, the last thing attendees need to hear is attendees in the bathroom or having conversations with others.

Does it even need to be a meeting?

Many of your attendees could be attending multiple virtual meetings in a day. If you're just sharing information, could it be an email or video instead? Use the members only section of your association



website to host a video, provide updates and take/respond to questions in a chat and allow people to engage at a time and in a manner that is easiest for them.

To make your virtual meetings and events as engaging as they can be, you may just need to reimplement some basics like these in place. Send these ideas out to attendees once they register, give them as reminders at the beginning of the meeting and/or post them on your association website. The more engaged individual attendees are, the better the meeting will be for everyone in your virtual room.

