

8 Ways To Make Your Virtual Meeting Breakout Rooms Successful



If your association chapter is like most, you've hosted countless virtual events these past two years. Virtual events have been critical in your ability to keep your chapter running and members engaged when you couldn't meet in person.



Now that things have opened up a bit, some of your members may want to return to in-person events, while others want to continue meeting virtually. And yet a third group will be happy with a bit of both.

Offering competing meeting types means that if you want people to continue to attend your virtual events, like educational sessions and monthly meetings, you need to make them as engaging as possible.

Up Your Virtual Game Using Breakout Rooms

Of course, picking the right speaker(s) and setting the right program have a lot to do with your virtual event success. However, speakers and panels mean that your attendees are still, for the most part, listening while people speak to them. Including time for questions and using the chat function helps, but attendees are still doing a lot of listening and doing their best to pay attention while avoiding distractions.



Breakout rooms can add the depth and interest to your virtual events that many of your members long for. They're a great option when you want to accomplish things that can't be done well in do in a large group, like:

- Discuss a topic in detail
- Network
- Make decisions.

How do breakout rooms work?

Breakout rooms allow you to move groups of participants from your big meeting into smaller meetings to allow for more intimate discussions, stronger connections and better outcomes.

Zoom, for example, lets you split your virtual meeting into up to 50 different breakout rooms. According to Zoom:

The meeting host or co-host can choose to split the participants of the meeting into these separate sessions automatically or manually, or they can allow participants to select and enter breakout sessions as they please. The host or co-host can switch between sessions at any time.

8 Tips for Successful Breakout Rooms

- **Assign a clear task.** What's the purpose of this "meeting in a meeting"? Be sure everyone in attendance knows what you want them to do when they break into the smaller groups.
- **Post instructions where attendees can see them.** Once they're in a breakout room, attendees won't see your shared screen. Post instructions in the chat or provide a shared document that each group can access.
- **Match the time and group size to the task.** Are they making decisions? They'll need more time than if they're networking. Regardless of the task, smaller groups, typically 5-8 people, provides a better chance of meeting your desired outcome. Plus, remember your introverted association chapter members? If the group is larger, there's a good chance they won't say much.
- **Have attendees turn on their cameras.** Since a breakout room is a smaller group, asking attendees to turn on their cameras will allow for more engaging, intimate conversations.
- **Assign roles.** To keep things on track and moving smoothly, have them self-select roles like timekeeper and notetaker, first-to-speak, etc., once they get into the breakout room. If you think that will take too long, assign the roles for them.



- **Don't change group composition often in a single meeting.** Keeping the same people in the same breakout rooms helps attendees get to know each other and work better together.
- **Monitor rooms as needed.** Move between rooms to check on progress. You can be an active participant or turn off your microphone and video to observe silently.
- **Let attendees know how to ask for help.** Your platform may have an “ask for help” button, Or those in the breakout room can send someone back to the main room for help. Be sure someone is monitoring the feature and can respond quickly.

Many of your recent graduate association chapter members prefer the convenience of virtual meetings, while some of your retirees may be missing attending in-person events where they talk more intimately in smaller groups. Using breakout rooms gives all your members what they want. Create a strong virtual experience using breakout rooms and you'll meet the needs of your entire audience.

