

Association Chapter Follow Up Calls That Work



Guests come to an event, maybe a chapter networking event or speaker series. They seem excited and engaged when they speak to your board or committee members that night. But then they disappear, never to be heard from again.



Sound familiar?

You could blame their disappearance on a myriad of things, like the food, the event venue or the fact that they enjoyed the topic but felt left out of the environment. Or there could be another explanation for their disappearance. Whatever the cause, you won't know unless you ask.

Email surveys are helpful, but often the people who respond are those you already hear from regularly – predominantly existing association chapter members. You should be connecting with member guests to understand what they took from the event, and begin to build a relationship, which could ultimately drive them to join your association chapter.

Phone calls can be highly useful with this kind of follow-up. We're not talking about long, drawn-out conversations. A short, personalized, directed call is a great way to understand what member guests thought of the event and understand what they want from your association chapter. A call also gives you a chance to share chapter benefits related to what they're looking for.

Asking volunteers to make these calls can be tough. They already have so many things to do in a day. And some may be nervous – how will they know what to ask, what to listen for and how to respond? Those are all bottlenecks that can be easily overcome, when they have the right direction and guidance.

Building Rapport in Association Chapter Phone Calls is Key

Your volunteers are smart; they don't need scripts that cover every detail of these calls, including what to say and when to say it. They could use your help, however, to understand the goal of the call and ideas for establishing and maintaining rapport with the person they're speaking with.

Rapport is the positive relationship between individuals that includes understanding, trust and empathy. Rapport in a phone conversation can lead to a call that goes smoothly and increases the chance you'll meet the goals you've set for these calls.

Here are five ways your callers can better build rapport on the phone with member guests.

5 Ways to Build Phone Rapport

Listening actively. Many of us want to respond as soon as we hear something we can relate to and/or feel we have an answer to. People feel more comfortable though, when they feel they're being heard before the person they're talking to responds. Ideas to help callers listen more actively include:

- Waiting till the other person has finished speaking, or taking advantage of a break in the conversation to respond
- Restating what someone says. This could be something like: "I hear you say you didn't care for the food. What could we have done differently?"
- Reflecting on what someone is feeling. An example would be "I'm excited that you learned a lot from the speaker." Or "I'm sorry you didn't like the food."
- Asking open-ended follow up questions like, asking "What happened? How did you feel about that?"
- Smiling with your voice. Ask your callers to smile while they're talking. Body language can positively impact a person's tone and how they're perceived.

Breaking the ice. Icebreakers are a way to give both parties a chance to warm up before jumping into the meat of the call. People who are relaxed are often more trusting of others. Icebreakers can be



questions as simple as “how is your day going so far?” (It would be helpful to provide ideas for responding if they hear something like “not great.”) “I won’t take up most of your time” and “this should be the easiest part of your day” can be good follow ups.

Setting expectations. Is this just a quick “it was great to meet you” conversation or are you looking for a specific outcome? If one of your goals is to share the benefits of membership in your association chapter, your caller should know that. If it’s just to answer any questions and start to build a relationship, share that as well.

Overcoming objections. Callers should be prepared to respond to objections. If the person they’re speaking with says, for example, membership is too expensive, the caller can reiterate the benefits that make that cost worth what they get in return. To make the reasoning resonate more strongly, try to match the benefit to things the person mentioned. If they talked about wanting to do more networking or find volunteer opportunities for example, they can talk about your last few networking events or where to find current volunteer opportunities on your website.

Reviewing the conversation. At the end of the call, both participants should have the same understanding of what was discussed and any next steps. The caller should reiterate what will happen next and ask the person they’re speaking with if they agree. If they are going to follow up with an email and a link to the membership page of your chapter website, let the person know when they’ll receive them. Or better yet, do this while on the phone to be sure the person receives the email.

Things to Remember

You may want to listen to a few of these calls to ensure they are going as you expect them to. Review what you learn with the people making the calls so that everyone can improve.

These calls should happen soon after an event. If too much time passes, the person may not want to take the call. If they do answer, they may not remember the details they wanted to share in the days after the event.

Few chapters take advantage of quick follow up calls with member guests. But when they are set up correctly, these calls can provide benefits that far surpass any surveys.

