

# Back to Basics: Hold the In-Person Events that Bring in Diverse Audiences



You decided to restart your association chapter's in-person events, and you've held a few. Turnout, however, hasn't been stellar, and the same small group attends. Are you starting to worry that you won't be able to get back to the well-attended meetings you held pre-pandemic, where you had a larger, more diverse audience?



If you see the same faces at your in-person events these days, think about what you did when your association chapter was first starting to get people to come to your meetings and other programs. It could be time to incorporate some of those ideas back into your association chapter meeting planning.

## 5 ways to bring more people to your in-person association chapter meetings

1. **Plan and plan early.** Don't leave anything to chance. Start planning, as much as you can, in advance. From confirming your speaker, to checking the technology you'll be using, and deciding how you'll market the event. Create a to do list and check off items as you complete them. Even if you think everything is ready, review it all once more. When a meeting goes well, you may not get any feedback. But when things go wrong, people definitely share, with other members, and sometimes even on social media. If they believe your meeting wasn't what worth their time, even if you thought you had the most engaging topic with the right speaker, what they share with others could keep people from attending future events.



2. **Ask the right people to help.** With all the details involved in planning and executing a strong association chapter event, one person can't be expected to do everything. Pull together a group of people to help with things like choosing the topic, managing the space, food, registration and/or marketing. Define roles and responsibilities so that everyone involved understands what they're tasked with and what others are doing (and add that to the to do list we just talked about). Be sure those you've asked to help are best suited for the job you've given them. You may need help setting up the AV technology, for example, but if the person helping doesn't really understand technology, unless you have the time to get them up to speed, the end result probably won't be what you needed.

3. **Choose the right topic.** Set aside time with your association chapter leadership and your members to brainstorm topics and ideas. What have members mentioned they'd like to hear about or do? Is there a speaker that's been mentioned multiple times? Or is it time for a networking event, or a refresher on changing regulations in your industry? You may think you know what members want, but unless you ask, you could be way off. Once you settle on the topic, be sure to find the right speaker, or person to emcee. Perhaps you have a member that would be great, or maybe you know a subject matter expert out of state whose presentation you could stream live.

4. **Ask for feedback.** It's important to learn what attendees thought of your event. There are a few ways to do this. Some chapters find it helpful to leave a few minutes at the end of an event to talk about what attendees thought went well and what they would have liked to have seen done differently. However, sometimes people won't be as open as you need them to be when they're asked questions on the spot. To gather the widest amount of information, you might consider sending out a survey in the days after the event.

5. **Keep the conversation going.** Within a few days of the event, send an email thanking attendees for coming and letting them know about future association chapter happenings. Summarize any takeaways and link to a recording if you have one. Consider linking to a page in your members only forum and ask a question about something from the meeting and ask members to give their input.

These are all basic reminders. But sometimes, all you need are a few small changes for a meeting your association chapters members will remember, and talk about for all the right reasons.



