

Better Connect with Members Virtually Using a Chapter AMS



Think back to your association chapter activity before COVID. You held primarily in-person events, which were well-attended, and the feedback you got validated you were providing what members wanted. Because of that perception, you didn't pay as much attention to the virtual aspects of your chapter. Maybe you supplemented your in-person association chapter events with some good, but not great, online content, in emails, an online newsletter and a decent website. Or maybe you let it all slide, because your in-person content was strong.



If we'd asked you then, would you have said that because almost everything was in-person, you didn't need to focus on engaging members and potential members virtually? "Yes" can't be your answer today. To engage association chapter members, and potential members, you need to pay just as much attention, if not more, to ensuring you meet their needs virtually, the way your in-person focus did a few years ago.

There is so much you can do to improve the virtual aspects of your chapter. And using association management software, or AMS, is a great place to start.

Association management software improves virtual engagement

If your audiences don't know about your association chapters' upcoming online happy hour, can't find the recording of your last educational session, or don't see your latest job postings, are you really meeting their needs?

You may think first about an AMS as a web platform. Yes, using an AMS can streamline and improve your website, but it is also a highly effective, platform to gather, store, and retrieve information in one location. Association chapters use their AMS to welcome new members, send newsletters, share member stories, provide event invitations, and so much more. There are countless ways an AMS can be a significant part of your member engagement strategy, giving members the resources, they need to engage online, through event registration, forums, blogs, and members-only content.

An AMS makes it easy to brand your chapter, your events and your activities

AMS platforms use templates. You can use these templates repeatedly, editing them to meet your needs, saving time and improving your association chapter branding, using similar colors, fonts, taglines and even language.

Speaking of branding language, there is a reason #TacoTuesday and #ThirstyThursday hashtags are successful. Hashtags, especially ones that use alliteration and repetition are fun, easy ways to connect with your audience. It's easy to use the functions and features of an AMS to remind people about these sorts of activities.

Here are some virtual activities with hashtags you might want to try in your chapter:

- **Members-Only Mondays.** Hold members-only virtual events – on the same day every week or month. Are there topics your members have been asking to discuss, or are they missing the chance to connect with other members in a virtual happy hour?
- **Directory Days.** Directory Days are a wonderful way to get members to update their directory listings in your site's members-only section. To get more people to respond, choose a member who updates to be featured and share their story as a volunteer, board member, sponsor, etc.
- **Forum Fridays.** Forums get members connected to each other more regularly and discussing things important to them as well as your chapter and your industry. Consider regular



members-only forum threads with topics relevant to your local community and/or your industry that members can discuss openly and privately.

An AMS can help you manage all of your virtual activities

Did you know an AMS can:

- Segment your audience and your email lists. Connect just with the audience you need to, whether that's new members, potential members, or those new in their careers. Keep these diverse groups engaged but not overwhelmed with emails they don't need.
- Manage your registrations. If your activity requires registration, individuals can register online using a link you include in an email or on a web page.
- Hold contact information in a single place. There's no need for separate databases. An AMS allows you to segment access, if for example, you need to restrict a section of your site to members or only want certain board members see your chapter's financials.

It's more important than ever to provide your members with multiple, uncomplicated ways to connect with each other and interact with your chapter virtually. And using the many different functions of an AMS can make that interaction seamless and valuable.

What have you been doing to improve your virtual connection with members and their connections with each other? Do you use an AMS? Have you added content or entire sections to your web site? Are you holding your own version of #ThirstyThursdays? Comment below and let us know how you've been providing virtual value (see the alliteration there?). What kind of success have you had?

