

Hosting Virtual Lunch & Learns Everyone Will Love



Association chapter Lunch and Learns have always been great ways to help members and potential members stay engaged, learn new skills, connect with each other and learn more about all your chapter offers. But what happens when you can't meet in person? Can virtual Lunch and Learn provide the same value as in-person ones?



Like the in-person version, virtual association chapter Lunch and Learns get people together in a focused, informative session to share a chapter-provided meal. When done right, you can hold association chapter virtual Lunch and Learns that are educational and enjoyable and that people actually want to attend.

We've connected with chapter leaders who struggled with creating association chapter virtual Lunch and Learns. Here are a few ideas for turning an average virtual Lunch and Learn into one participants will remember.

Make the food as important as the topic

If you ask members, would they say that one of the most important aspects of an in-person Lunch and Learn is the food? More people attend with the hook of having good food to eat while they're also having good conversation.



What's the best way to provide food for a virtual Lunch and Learn? You could reimburse attendees for their meals, but there are some other options that could be much more interesting for attendees.

Think like your local parent teacher association. Remember all those flyers you see for “buy lunch at Acme Pizza Company and Acme City High School gets 10% of sales”? The same works for an association chapter. Contact a local restaurant and ask about partnering on a fundraiser. Guests purchase their meals from that restaurant, and in return the restaurant donates a percentage of the food sales from anyone mentioning your event to the chapter. Just like PTAs use food fundraisers to bring in revenue, association chapters can also use this as a non-dues revenue generator.

Use a food delivery service. Virtual Lunch and Learns can expand your chapter's reach, bringing in people from outside your local area who can't order from the restaurants in your area. Or perhaps some of your attendees would rather have a meal from a restaurant they choose. Connect with a delivery service like Grub Hub or Postmates; you'll get a code they can use when they pay for their food, and the chapter will be charged instead of the attendees.

Choose a strong topic

The topic is just as important as the food. And with a virtual event, it's even more important to find a topic attendees will be really interested in.

Combine a Lunch and Learn with a continuing education session. You'll have a better chance of bringing in a larger audience, because you'll be covering a topic members need to learn about.

Ask members what they want to learn. Do you know what your members want to learn about? Is there a topic that members have repeatedly asked to focus on, but you haven't been able to find a local expert to cover it? With a virtual session, you can bring on a speaker from almost anywhere.

Make effective use of technology

Unlike an in-person Lunch and Learn, a virtual event requires you to choose a platform – Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc. – and ensure that attendees are able to use it. What do you know about potential attendees? What systems are they familiar with? Will they need training on the system you choose?



You'll also want to keep people interacting by utilizing the functionalities of the platform, like:

- Chat
- Screen sharing
- Hand raising
- Breakout rooms

Don't forget to email, in advance, materials attendees will need, and send a follow up after the event with a link to a recording (which you can keep in the members-only section of your website) that summarizes the event and reiterates key points. A post-event survey is also helpful, to understand what attendees thought about the session, and it allows you to adjust future events based on what you learn.

Virtual lunch and learns can provide a terrific way for you to connect with members and potential members, both professionally and personally, as long as you give them a few great reasons to be there.

