

How To Structure Your Virtual Meetings To Engage



For many introverts, your face-to-face association chapter meetings can be exhausting. All the interaction and the feeling of being forced to be social. Virtual meetings provide the introverted members of your association chapter with a platform they most likely feel comfortable participating on.



But for them to get to that level of comfort, it's important for you to structure your association chapter virtual meetings to make them feel included and engaged.

What does it mean to be an introvert?

Introverts tend to focus more on their inner thoughts and feelings rather than looking for external stimulation. They typically feel more energized by spending time alone or in small groups, versus large social gatherings, which they can find exhausting. Introverts still enjoy socializing and may even excel in certain in-person social situations, but they usually approach social interactions differently than extroverts.

Additionally, you may not realize that introversion can be a spectrum. People who are introverts tend to fluctuate in their level of introversion and display varying introverted traits at different times, depending on where they are and how they feel.

Why do introverts like virtual meetings?

Since they're not physically in a room with people, virtual meetings can provide introverts with a sense of control they don't often have with in-person meetings. And they often feel less social pressure in virtual meetings than they do in a room full of people.

As a result, they're more at ease speaking up and participating. In virtual meetings, they can choose when they want to engage, take breaks when they need to, even if they just turn off their camera, and control their environment to minimize distractions.

Making virtual meetings introvert friendly

Just because you make an association chapter meeting virtual doesn't mean it'll automatically have the impact you expect. But there are some things you can do that will help increase the chances they'll feel more engaged and want to participate.

- 1. Send your agendas beforehand.** Many introverts appreciate having the time to prepare their thoughts, rather than speaking in the moment. When they have a chance to understand the topic of a meeting before the meeting, they have the chance to think about what they might want to say and how they could contribute. As a result, their contributions are often more thoughtful and come from a place of confidence.
- 2. Take advantage of the technology.** Introverted virtual meeting attendees may want to take advantage of the interactive features available on a virtual platform, like chat, raising virtual hands, muting and unmuting, turning off their camera, breakout rooms, etc. Include reminders of what's available for them to use, both in your pre-meeting communications and at the start of the meeting.
- 3. Bring out the ice breakers to start things off.** Discussion starters can be a great way to get a virtual meeting started at a more relaxing pace. Ask a question (unrelated to the meeting topic) that everyone, even your extroverts, will feel confident answering because it's easy/fun/personal, like "What's your favorite kitchen utensil and why?" This not only gets people talking, but helps members learn things about each other that don't have to do with work.



4. Take advantage of one-on-ones and small groups. Introverts prefer smaller groups. At some point during your meeting, break the larger group into smaller ones. Use breakout rooms and pair people for deeper, easier conversations; this gives introverts a chance to speak and feel they're making real contributions. Then ask each group to report back to the larger group so those points are heard by the larger group.

5. Collect feedback. Shortly after the meeting – again so your introverts have time to process what they experienced – ask how you did. Understand what people learned, what you did well and what they felt was lacking. Was the meeting set up to engage introverts or did you miss something? Asking regularly can help you better understand any issues that people, introverted or not, may be having with your meetings and give you a chance to fix things and create a more inclusive meeting culture overall.

Why are inclusive meetings important?

Whether your association chapter meeting is virtual or in person, making that meeting inclusive is crucial to its success. Inclusivity creates an environment where everyone feels comfortable that they're adding value and not just responding in the way that they think people want to hear.

Inclusive meetings let you hear from more people, so you hear more diverse opinions and ways of thinking. This idea of ensuring everyone feels included and has an equal chance to participate can ultimately lead to increased member engagement. Overall, designing inclusive meetings is about creating environments where everyone feels respected, valued, and able to contribute their best.

