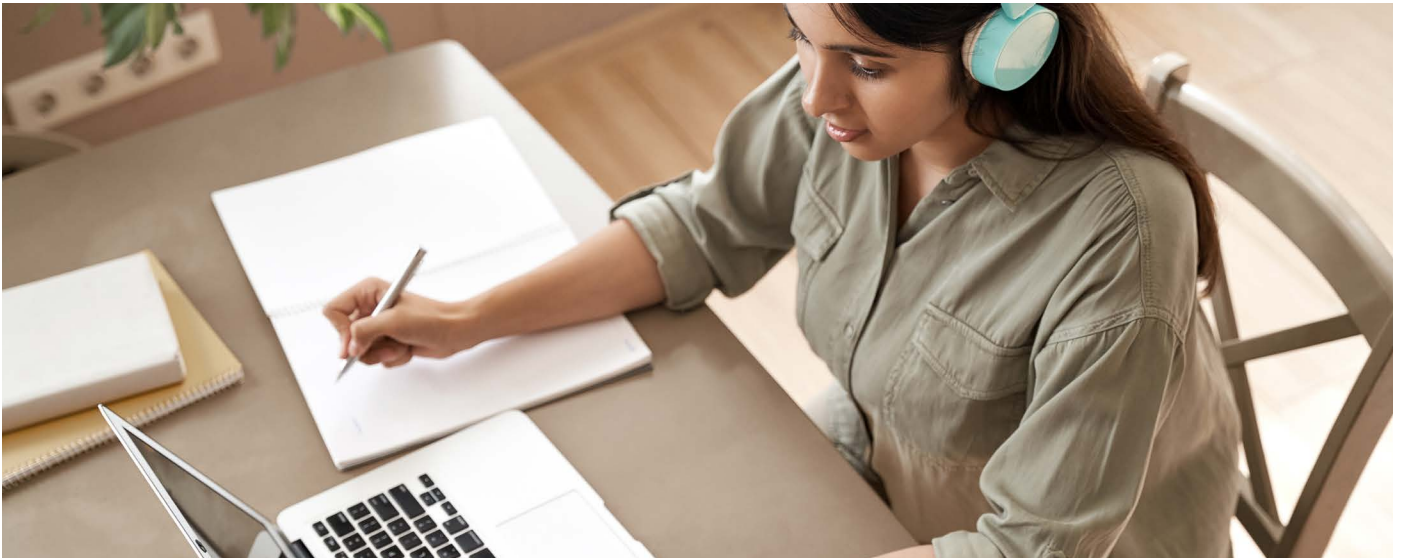


Include Virtual Continuing Education in Your Membership Engagement Best Practices



As we head into the heat of summer, association chapters are looking at their fall schedules, exploring the best ways to engage with members as things start to “open back up.” Some association chapters are choosing to return to all face-to-face programming, while others plan to remain 100 percent virtual. There is a third group: association chapters keeping some of their programming virtual and moving to in-person for other parts.



Continuing education is one piece of programming that some association chapters are planning to keep providing virtually. Here are some of the reasons why.

1. **Convenience.** You’ve always known that many of your association chapter members would rather not drive and then have to sit in a classroom. Virtual continuing education means they can attend the sessions from wherever they are, with less disruptions to their schedules.
2. **Decreased costs.** When you offer your continuing education sessions virtually, you’re not spending money to pay for a location or food. With those savings, you can instead spend on those things that are important to many of your members, like expanding the curriculum, offering a wider variety of educational programming and bringing in more interesting and relevant speakers and panels.

3. **Expanded source for presenters.** Virtual continuing education means your speakers and trainers can present from anywhere. You're no longer constrained to finding speakers locally or paying for a travel and accommodations. And you can expand your search outside of your local area to find the exact person for your specific needs. You may even be able to partner with other chapters to put together more resources for a stronger training program.
4. **Improved comprehension.** Your association chapter members can focus more easily when they're not in a room with others who may be talking to each other, typing on their computer or phone or providing other distractions that make it more difficult for attendees to listen and participate actively. With functions like chat and polling, those in the training can get their questions heard and responded to more easily. And you can record your continuing education sessions to make them available to attendees who want to listen again or get clarification on a topic after the course. You can also upload these sessions to your website, to be available to attendees or those who registered but couldn't attend.

This shift to predominantly virtual programming that occurred in the past year and a half has allowed association chapters to continue to meet their missions by doing what they do best – engaging members and providing what they need in the moment. Now, as member needs shift, many chapters are planning to keep providing some of their programming, including continuing education, virtual, as they hear from members it's a change they really appreciate and would like to see continue.

Do you know what your association chapter members want?

Are they ready to meet in-person or do some still have some concerns? If you're not sure, ask, so you can be sure to deliver your programming in the format that they're most comfortable with.

Some chapters have found their virtual education programming to be even more successful than their in-person education sessions as attendees can learn in more focused, but at the same time, more relaxed, environments. Association chapters that combine virtual continuing education with in-person events can meet the desire of those members' who aren't ready to come back full-time in person while providing stronger learning opportunities and giving members the chance to meet in-person for networking and monthly meetings, for that face-to-face connection they've been craving.

