

Navigating Change Together: Supporting Association Chapter Members In A Shifting Job Market



It's not a secret. Changes in the economy, technology, and expectations in the workplace are driving an evolution in the job market, as what companies need and expect from their employees continues to change. This monumental shift is most likely affecting some, or depending on your industry, many, of your members. This could happen as the job skills they need are evolving rapidly, or they've lost their jobs as their roles are eliminated. Some members may need to learn new skills to stay competitive, while others may need to make a career change.



Association chapters play a crucial role when it comes to helping members navigate this new world and remain competitive. It's a chapter's responsibility to help its members anticipate and prepare for what their jobs will look like tomorrow, which can include providing resources, connections, and opportunities that will ultimately help them succeed.

As you think about ways to help members respond to this shift, the extent of which we haven't seen before, here are a few ways to ensure you're providing what they need.

5 ways chapters can help members succeed in the new job environment

Understand their challenges. Before you can provide the right support to chapter members, you'll need to see where people are and where they may be struggling. Surveys are a great way to gather this information, especially if some members may be embarrassed about their missing skills and want

to respond anonymously. However, this situation could also benefit from a more personal approach. The engagement and openness that can happen through listening sessions, moderated roundtable discussions, and even informal feedback gathered from side discussions at chapter events — where the person asking questions can ask follow-up questions — can both help members feel more relaxed about what lies ahead and give you richer, more detailed insights.

Be clear on what you want to learn and think about the questions that can help you get the details you need. What are the outside factors affecting their jobs? Are they unsure if they'll have a job in six months? What are they basing that thought on? Is it a gap in skills caused by AI, robotics, or another new technology, or is it due to changing regulations, increased competition, or something else completely? Where possible, ask for specific examples.

Provide skill development opportunities. Once you know where members are struggling, think about the types of professional development your chapter could offer and the channels that would best engage your members. Perhaps members could benefit from:

- Workshops or webinars
- Certifications or continuing education opportunities
- Panels with industry leaders discussing future trends
- Resource sharing.

Consider offering a combination of both live and recorded events, so members can watch and learn on their own schedules. And if you hold a live event, record it and upload it to your website. (As a side note, this could be a potential non-dues revenue stream for your chapter, as these offerings could interest non-members who would be willing to purchase access to the recordings on your website.)

Strengthening networking connections. We know that relationships can lead to new opportunities, in terms of jobs and skills, so think about how good of a job your chapter is doing connecting members with each other. If your networking events are simple wine and cheese meet -ups, it's time for a change. How can you use chapter networking to foster more meaningful conversations? Some chapters and their members find small peer discussion groups, formal mentorship, member stories, etc., helpful for community building and driving useful, relevant connections between members.



Offer career resources. Many members don't need a complete career overhaul. They need access to tools to update their skills or hone their resume. By ensuring the job board or career listing section of your chapter website is up to date; offering resume building and LinkedIn workshops, career coaching or job panel discussions; and sharing relevant hiring insights and statistics for your industry, you'll make it easier for them to get what they need while further highlighting your commitment to your chapter's mission.

Encourage knowledge sharing. Earlier we mentioned mentoring as a way for members to connect and help each other. Sometimes mentorships happen informally through side conversations and other times it can be more formal, through chapter mentorship programs; programming that discusses the state of your industry and how it's changing; presentations and case studies that show members where change is happening; and member-only web forums to talk about trends and challenges. Your members have valuable insights that can help each other — think younger members who may understand technology better than some of your longer-term members — so create multiple opportunities for them to share, both on your website and when members are attending events virtually or in person.

Build resilience through your chapter community

The job market is evolving because the nature of work is changing. And this change in work is being driven by a combination of technology, globalization and a reimagining of the relationship between employees and employers.

Adaptability and continuous learning have become some of a person's most valuable career assets. The shifting job market can be challenging for your members but, and they may not immediately see it, it can also create opportunities, as they learn new skills, and meet new people who can help them fill in the gaps in their careers.

That's why it's important to continually emphasize the value of your chapter and your members as a central place for them to find the support they need to succeed. To do that, they need to remain engaged, connected and involved, and take advantage of what the chapter offers. And that's where you come in.

