

# People Join Associations For More Than Continuing Education And Networking



Yes, people join association chapters to get the continuing education they need. They also join because they want to network with people they want to get to know better. But if you're pushing attending continuing education and networking events as the best (and maybe even the only) reasons to become members of your association chapter, you could actually be keeping people away.



The real reason people look to join an association chapter is much broader and deeper. They need to solve a problem, find a better, easier, faster way to do something, make their work life easier – what you'll also hear called resolution. Often, they may not have the skills, or the time, or the confidence, they need to resolve these things without help.

Or perhaps they are missing the feeling of belonging to a community, also known as "inclusion." Cigna's 2020 Loneliness Index revealed that 61 percent of Americans consider themselves lonely. That's seven percent increase over the numbers in their 2018 study. There are a lot of people missing the feeling of a community and looking for meaningful connections.

Your educational activities and events, of course, can provide the resolution and inclusion they're looking for. But when you're highlighting and marketing these events, it's important for people to easily see just how you'll provide what they're searching for.

### **Providing resolution and inclusion across your association chapter**

***Make time for unstructured, “hallway conversations.”*** These are those casual, watercooler conversations that happen outside of an association chapter’s event structure. Even just 10 or 15 minutes before or after an educational session or a lunch break with open seating is long enough for people to connect with each other, to share ideas and network.

**Create smaller groups.** Start niche and special interest groups, young professional groups, related to your chapter, or consider random connections like cooking or bird watching. Smaller meet ups remove the stress that comes with walking alone into a room full of people and provide smaller opportunities to connect and learn.

**Add member stories to your website.** In addition to giving people the opportunity to learn all your organization offers from those who’ve participated in it, association chapter member stories are a great way to better understand people before meeting them. Make your association chapter member stories easy to find on your website or in your email newsletter. People can watch and listen on their terms. Then they’ll be more prepared to connect with them when they’re ready.

**Keep your photo gallery up to date.** Some members and member guests may get turned off at the idea of networking in a room with a bunch of people holding wine glasses in one hand and business cards in the other (think about all those different personalities you need to engage, including your more introverted members). To see your chapter as something they want to belong to, members and member guests want or need to “see themselves in your rooms” to see a diversity of membership and community worth belonging to. In addition to photos on the website, highlight them in your newsletter and your social media.

**Turn your meeting archives into robust chapter resources.** Highlight information on your association chapter website that shows your chapter as strong, relevant, and present. Content from your previous events – recordings, transcripts, FAQs, etc. is a great way to do that. And, by highlighting this information prominently on your website, non-members will see the value of membership in your chapter.

Your chapter can positively impact member engagement and even the engagement of member guests by providing the resolution and inclusion they’re looking for. Give them a greater sense of community, and they’ll get the inspiration they need to get involved and attend your continuing education and networking.

