

Supporting Association Members During Uncertain Times



Across industries, in for profit and nonprofit organizations, so many people are worried these days about the future of their jobs. Spend some time on LinkedIn and you'll find a slew of people you know using the LinkedIn #OpentoWork banner, and you'll read countless posts from people who've lost or are at risk of losing their jobs.



If your chapter is like many, the services you offer members include things like networking at a wine bar, monthly meetings that follow a script and large educational conferences. Those are all great offerings, but is that all your members are looking for?

How can you provide the additional level of emotional support many members may need right now, as their worlds crumble or shake significantly? Some people are over stressed, some may just want someone to listen, while others want to distract themselves with things to focus on that aren't related to work, so they can turn off their brains for a bit.

3 ways to help vulnerable chapter members

The services many of your members need right now could be significantly different from what they needed at this time last year. It's important to think about how you can expand what you offer to meet members' needs right now.

Start by adding a chapter job board and other employment resources to your website to help members find work in an increasingly competitive job market.

But don't stop there; be sure your resources also demonstrate you understand that some of what they need doesn't have anything to do with looking for work.

Incorporating coping mechanisms into meetings. Remind members how getting ample rest and sleep can help them cope better with what's going on in their lives. Ok, so maybe adding nap time to your meetings isn't necessarily the right step. Instead, try sharing how exercise and meditation can help people relax, and how rest and sleep lead to decreased stress, better sleep and an increased ability to handle life overall.

No one ever said that a networking event should always be in the "glass of wine in one hand business card in another" format. Mix things up with a hike or golf outing, or even a short "networking walk" after a speaker.

Group exercise provides a mix of physical, mental and social benefits, and walking is low impact, which means it's highly accessible (just ensure that anyone who might need assistance gets what they need). Be sure to reiterate that people don't need to be a good golfer to play golf. Laughter helps with relaxation too!

Highlight the benefits of meditation. Upload some meditations to your website and take time at an event to explain that mediation goes far beyond it's "woo woo" reputation. Guide attendees through a short meditation and after, ask them how they feel.

Just a few minutes of mindfulness, regardless of whether the person stays 100 percent focused the entire time, releases serotonin and dopamine and reduces cortisol, decreasing stress and improving overall happiness.

Adding more "pleasurable" activities. People are overwhelmed, stressed and more anxious than usual; add activities they can enjoy that have nothing to do with their jobs.

Consider members' hobbies, like reading (think book club), craft sessions and yes, even golf outings. The format can vary based on your chapter's size, budget, member demographics, and the



interests of your members. Ask them what they like to do when they're not working, or what they'd like to do if they had the time. Give them opportunities to do these things, through in person or virtual events.

You may find that they would like activities related to work, like the DEI book club one of our customers held, or something completely different, like a Paint and Sip night or a Stich and B\$%^& session, where they bring knitting and other needlework projects to work on, while talking about whatever is on their minds.

Making it easier to lean on other members for support. Some people don't want to do anything. They just want to talk about what they're going through. And because they don't want to add additional stress to their families, they may not feel comfortable having this conversation at home. Consider creating support groups that are safe spaces for members to talk through what they're going through. This includes discussing feelings of overwhelm, anger and sadness. Hold these support groups as regular chapter events or as wellness sessions that are part of a larger conference.

We want to be clear that none of these suggestions are replacements for therapy. If you see a member that is truly struggling, they may need outside help that your chapter can't provide. But the options we're suggesting here can help make your members' day-to-day worlds a little less stressful and easier to manage.

