

# The Checklist To Improve Association Chapter Events And Member Engagement



“Hold it and they will come.”

That can work, if your association chapter event happens to be in the right location, at the right time, is in the right format and covers the right topic. Strong, engaged attendance isn't always a guarantee, especially if you plan an event on the assumption, you know what potential attendees want.



Did your recent association chapter events have the attendance you expected? If not, was your planning, execution and follow through strategic and focused or was it more haphazard and fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants?

Association chapter events always turn out better when they follow a prescribed format. An association chapter event checklist can give you that format and help ensure people know about it and they attend.

We're not talking about a tactical association chapter event checklist that covers ordering food, printing handouts, sending registration emails, etc., though those should be part of this checklist. We're suggesting the need for a much more comprehensive checklist that covers everything from before the event to after.



Association chapter checklists will probably differ by chapter and may even differ by the kind of association chapter event you hold, but there are a few critical activities to include.

### **Top Three Association Chapter Checklist Activities**

**Ask members for input, before and after.** Holding an event just because your board members may find it interesting isn't enough. Build in time before an event to survey potential attendees to learn what they're looking for. Then after, ask attendees for feedback as well as those who didn't attend that event and/or have never attended one of your events. Ask some specific questions.

Is/was the location best for the majority? Or would someplace else have been better? (Just because you've always used the same place doesn't mean it's the right one, especially now that so many people work remotely.) Ask the same sorts of questions about dates, time of day, and even potential topics and event flow.

Consider a mix of open ended, yes/no and multiple-choice questions, to collect detailed feedback that allows you to plan your upcoming association chapter event correctly and gives you guidance for future ones.

**Add incentives that drive people to sign up and attend.** People are attracted to your association chapter events for different reasons. Some may be interested in the topic or the chance to network, but others may need an extra push to go online, register, pay and actually show up.

What else can you offer to increase the chances they'll be there?

How about a discount to those who register by a certain date (to help you meet your minimum attendance goals)? Or giving the first 15 people to register a signed copy of the speaker's book or a chance to meet with the speaker in a VIP small group event.

Since many people join association chapters to learn and/or get ahead in their careers, there are probably more than a few members who want to connect with a specific person in your chapter, your sibling chapter if you have one, or with one of your member companies. Give those who register early, or maybe even people who register for themselves and at least one other person at the same time, access to the event registration list. They'll be excited to know that registering early will help them plan to make the best use of their time at the event.



Make sure your marketing does what you need it to. You could set up the perfect event, but if the right people don't know they need to be there, was it really that good? Lack of awareness and promotion can be an event killer.

Segment your event email marketing and be sure to send the right information to the right groups. Those who are new in their careers might need a different summary/benefit of attending than those who have been in their careers for a while.

Your association chapter online event description plays a big role in your event marketing. All those emails and social media about the event will most likely point to a page on your website for recipients to get more information. That page needs to have a proper event description with all the details that engage the different audiences. It's also a great place for testimonials from members who have attended similar events. Have them talk about all the great things they got out of attending, so that those who may be teetering about coming to the next event will hear just what they need to register.

### **Follow a Plan and They Will Come**

It's not enough to schedule an association chapter event, send out a bunch of emails and expect the right people will know about it, want to attend, register and show up. With an association chapter event checklist, you have a repeatable process that will make your event the right one. Set your association chapter events up for success, and all those people who think they might want to attend will see how and why they have to. And they'll register and be there.

