

These Days, Running an Association Chapter Requires Coping Skills



As a chapter leader, you may be feeling more than normal amounts of overwhelm recently; you've probably heard and seen it in your association chapter members too. The pandemic has affected almost every aspect of our lives, professionally and personally.



What kinds of changes have you seen in your members, including other chapter leaders lately? Do any of these sound familiar?

- A decrease in volunteerism and event attendance; no one seems to want to plan or attend another virtual event.
- Stories of external changes to members' lives, like job losses and blurring of the lines between home and work.

There are tools you can add to your association chapter offerings that allow them —and you — to cope better with what's going on in the world today.

Add physical and mental health programming

You may not think these types of activities are a fit in your chapter programming, but it really can be an important part of keeping your association chapter members. Think about adding some health-



related activities members can do together, in person or at home, or on their own, to get them away from these desks and thinking about other things beside work.

- Consider a step challenge or a virtual 5k. Have members compete with other members for prizes like chapter swag or free admittance to a chapter event.
- Do you have members with talents/interests in yoga or meditation? Ask them to teach virtual or outdoor yoga, tai chi and meditation classes.
- Provide links on your association chapter website to useful videos and reading materials that provide ways to reduce stress.

Make some recommendations

- A lot of today's news is negative. Remind your association chapter members how to adjust their news and social media consumption. Breaks are useful, whether a day, a weekend or even just a few hours.
- Talking to others is a wonderful way to decrease stress. Offer ways for members to talk to each other, through forums, in person, through virtual chapter events, online, or one-on-one get togethers. And remind them that there is no stigma in seeking professional help.
- Working from home has, for many, blurred the line between work time and personal time. Many members may feel like they need to work more than they would if they were in the office. Suggest getting up from their computer every hour for a few minutes, keeping "regular" work hours and setting boundaries with employers related to when they will and won't be available.

Focus on what you can control

At times, things may seem like they're spinning out of control. What are those things you know you can do for your association chapter members?

- Add a members-only forum to your association chapter website, for a safe space to talk about things concerning them.
- Post some stress-relieving tips and videos in that forum and send them out in email and through your social channels.
- Split volunteering activities into smaller chunks. Perhaps in the past you've had one person chair your association chapter membership committee or write all of your blog posts. Decrease the time commitment by adding a co-chair to what was a formerly a job for one or asking



individuals to write single posts instead of a series or all of them.

- One of the most important things you may be able to do for your members is stick to a routine. Hold events in the format that's best for your chapter and your members but at the same day and time they've been, even if these days those events are virtual. Consider adding a weekly virtual happy hour and give members a chance to talk to those who aren't family members or their pets, and something they can count on regularly.

Whatever you decide to do, do something. Know that the structures you put in place and the recommendations you make will continue to show your members how much you value them as members. And doing that will help increase how much they value your organization.

