

Turn The Format Of Your Chapter Lunch & Learns Upside Down



According to a Robert Half survey, workers take 30 minutes or less for lunch; that's down from 43 minutes in 2014. Their jobs, along with all that's required from them in their personal lives, is adding to their sense of overwhelm. And all the ways they're plugged in and can be reached — on their computers or mobile devices and seemingly around the clock — isn't helping.



Many eat at their desks while working; others skip lunch completely. If you're holding traditional lunch and learn activities – during lunchtime, for an hour, with traditional speakers – and watching your attendance numbers dip, your format could be keeping people away. Traditional chapter lunch and learn events aren't what most people need or have time for, even if they're virtual events, and attendees can log in from their desks.

What if you could help members relax while increasing their productivity and focus in the second half of their day, by giving them a quick way to disconnect in the middle of their day? Some tweaks to your lunch and learn format could provide members with a creative, relaxing space and an untaxing way to use their brains for a few minutes.

Here are four virtual activities you could try during your chapter lunch and learns to give members the break and recharge they may not know they desperately need.

4 Creative Virtual Lunch & Learns

1. **Office Hours.** Try a virtual coffee break or lunch break. Set office hours around lunch time — start them earlier and run them later than the typical 12-1pm — open the time to join at any point to talk about whatever is on their minds. Have ice breaker topics but ask them what they'd like to use the time for. If they don't want to talk, they can just listen and enjoy being part of a group where they can sit silently and not say a word.
2. **A creative activity.** What are some things that would get them thinking but more creatively and give them a chance to smile and maybe even laugh? Try some quick trivia, a mixology class or even virtual puzzle. Or ask attendees to show up with paper and markers, pencils or crayons. Give them a starting point and 15 minutes to write whatever they want that represents that idea. Then, ask people to share what they drew, even if it's just a short list.
3. **Breakout activities.** Your members are part of the same industry or industries that overlap with each other, like designers and builders or event planners and florists. Each of these groups has issues they're dealing with at work. Bring up a topic with the whole group and break them into smaller groups to brainstorm solutions. After a few minutes bring them back together and ask them to share their ideas with the larger group. When given the chance to talk freely, who knows how many people could solve problems in their own work by listening to others' problems and discussing potential solutions?
4. **A walking meeting.** Instead of sitting and listening to a speaker, find a speaker that's easy to listen to who doesn't use slides. Maybe you could even lead a meditation instead of a topic related to your industry. Attendees could take a quick walk while they listen. Or sit at their desks and close their eyes. You could also try an in-person walking networking event and ask members to learn something about each person they're walking with. If you do this in person at a track, extend the time so people can join and leave as they need to.

Share the change to your lunch and learn format in meetings, in email and on your website. Explain how the new format of your chapter Lunch and Learns will a terrific opportunity for them to take a few minutes for themselves.

Hold Lunch & Learns Members Will Attend



According to a 2022 study by Tork, global leader in workplace hygiene, taking a lunch break, even a short one, has a positive effect on employee happiness, engagement and productivity.

- 94% of employees surveyed feel happier when they can take a lunch break.
- 94% of employees agree that taking a break gives them a chance for a fresh perspective.
- 91% of employees and 93% of bosses agree or strongly agree a break is an important part of maintaining their mental focus.
- 88% of employees and 91% of bosses say they return to work refreshed and reenergized after taking a break.
- More than 9 in 10 employees say they are more likely to stay at a company where bosses encourage their employees to take a break.

Knowing that people really need and want a break during their workday, save your intense training and professional development for your evening sessions. Look for activities for your lunch and learns that don't take long, are engaging and fun and don't require people to think a lot. Give them time to shake out the cobwebs and take the breather they need before they get back into work or head to yet another meeting, and you could find them more willing to attend all of your meetings.

