

CHAPTER LEADER MEETUP | RECAP

Top Five Tips for Effective Virtual Programming | 1/19/2021

HQ SHARE

1. Determine Your Goals & Objectives

- Not everything needs to be a special event (*important to be clear and true to yourself*)
- Think about your true purpose (*time is the most valuable thing we currently have*).
 - You're taking people away from their work, families etc.
- Be clear on what your intent is (*what should attendees do right away*)?
 - Emotional state (*state of mind*)
 - What action do you want them to implement right away?
 - Do you want to bring them back again, or is it a one-off experience?
 - Is there an ongoing environment that you want to create for them?

2. Create a Strategic Agenda Design

- Virtual experiences need more thought since engagement is key and the most challenging aspect when you're not in-person
- Challenges: your attendees are distracted (so are you), how will you keep their attention?
 - This must be the focus when planning virtual programming
- Attendee styles to consider:
 - Sit & watch (*passive*)
 - Active learning (*answer questions in real time or have a handout item to work on during the session*)
 - Mixed bag (*variety of both passive and active*)
 - Are attendee webcams needed? Should they be off for most of program?
- Engagement strategy
 - What activities are included? (e.g.: *musical performance, DJ, Yoga*)
 - On a smaller scale: music as they arrive to meeting, stretch break, etc.
- Schedule regular breaks (*more than you would in person*)
- New roles to consider: Do you have the full support you need?
 - Production team (*pre-production and live streaming*)
 - Chat Greeters (*keep the chats going and address questions in real time typing*)
 - Chat Moderators (*skimming the entire virtual environment for inappropriate behavior to remove party crashers virtually*)
 - Platform MC/ Host (*to keep the cohesive discussions and engagement going on stage in front of all attendees so they know how to determine what's up next*)

3. Send Out Pre-Event Surveys

- Take out the guessing from what your potential attendees are looking for & ask them
 - This can also be done at the start of the year to plan multiple programs
- You will be able to use the data and help you gain the best content and programming overall, including speaker topics most are waiting to hear
 - Examples:
 - What topics or speakers are you most interested in?
 - What are you aiming to gain from attending this event?
- SMPS HQ is currently working on streamlining the SurveyMonkey login process.
 - Due to this restructuring, the surveys are currently unavailable.
 - We will make it available as soon as possible and notify chapters of the new login format once it is live.
 - Please reach out to julio@smps.org if you have any questions.

4. Consider Timing of Sessions

- Keep your sessions short (*20 - 30 mins max*)
- Variety of programming lengths (*e.g.: 15 mins, 10 mins, 5 mins*)
- Time zones, is this within your region only? Do you intend to invite members in other time zones? Be mindful of starting too early or too late.
- One-day programming is preferred versus programs over multiple days, if it's multi-day, take only 4 hours per day total.
- Record everything you can to make everything accessible to watch after its broadcast (*expectations of virtual conferences are that everything is accessible after the conference concludes*).
- Create more breaks for people to step away from their screens (*15-30 min breaks*)
- Include a form of engagement in all your programming (*speakers should be responsible for this, including you and your team*)

5. Determine Session Delivery Mechanisms

- **Live** – allow you to actively interact with the speaker in real time for them to respond in real time. This comes with a risk of technology failing, and anything can happen.
- **Simulive** – a combination of pre-recorded with a live feature (*e.g.: Q&A with speaker at the end*).
- **Pre-recorded** – allows attendees to watch at their own leisure but lacks engagement opportunities (*i.e.: on-demand content to watch whenever they'd like to*).

BONUS TIPS:

- Put yourself in their shoes (*when in doubt, what would you want?*).
- Always make it simple for attendees to access, 2-3 click rule. Anything beyond 3 clicks will make people abandon and leave.
- Always include someone to float and help in multiple places virtually.
- Think of your program as a production, some people will expect it to work just as easily and will not read any instructions.

GREAT IDEAS SHARED FROM CHAPTERS DURING BREAKOUTS

- A chapter uses a live closed captioner for their virtual events
 - The cost of having a live captioner is less than the cost of a microphone at a live event
 - Makes the program more inclusive!
- Start considering hybrid event planning and pricing
 - **HQ NOTE:** SMPS HQ will schedule a meetup soon to share considerations for hybrid events and easing into in-person events – more to come!