

Supporting Chapter Transition to Virtual Operations

As chapters experience intermittent periods of virtual operations, it is crucial that members use video conferencing, social media, and other digital platforms to remain engaged with the Fraternity.

Virtual Platforms

- [Facetime](#) is a video chat application used on Apple devices.
- [Google Duo](#) is a video and audio calling app made by Google, like Apple's FaceTime, Facebook's Messenger, or WhatsApp.
- If you have a Gmail account, Google offers several options such as:
 - [Google Hangouts](#) - Instant messaging service.
 - [Google Keep](#) - Capture a thought or list for yourself and share it with others.
 - [Google Meet](#) - Up to ten users can meet on-demand, or schedule through your Google calendar by adding "conferencing."
- [Skype](#) offers similar features as Google, allowing ten or less users without paying for the business account.
- [Zoom](#) also offers free video conferencing for up to 100 people. Calls are limited to 40 minutes with the free version, but it may be worth it to add to your Chapter budget. If needing access to a Zoom premium account (no time limit, maximum number of participants is 300), complete the [Sigma Nu Zoom premium account request form](#).
- [FreeConferenceCall.com](#) offers free conference call solutions for meetings by phone or by web, share your screen, and chat. Up to 1,000 call participants and up to 5 web participants with the free version.
- [GoToMeeting](#) is another call service that is currently offering a 14-day free trial.
- For one-on-one communication, keep it personal and utilize FaceTime or the Android video call feature to stay connected with candidates, brothers, or potential new members. In a time when people get hundreds of text messages a day, a face-to-face call will go a long way.

Engaging Virtually

Once you have decided on a virtual platform, you might be wondering if there are best practices on doing this well. Here are some useful tips that will sharpen your virtual engagement skills and put you on the fast track to success. The information below is summarized from [Planning the Ultimate Virtual Meeting](#).

Tip #1 Set a plan - For every virtual meeting, it's important to have a plan beforehand so participants know what to expect and how they can contribute to the conversation.

- **Share your agenda ahead of time:** Send the agenda to all participants well before the meeting, so they have clear expectations of what to prepare. Provide details in

your email invite about key talking points and any relevant documents, files, or research you'll be referring to during the meeting.

- **If applicable, provide participants with the opportunity to view the document or add comments before the meeting:** Give everyone equal opportunity to contribute to the meeting. You can do so through document management tools like [Google Drive](#). Whether it's a slideshow, video, or officer report, using file-sharing tools, like [Dropbox](#), will ensure everyone is in the loop.
- **Provide expectations for how the virtual space will be managed:** Ensure all participants are on the same page about how the virtual meeting will be conducted. For example, should participants mute their videos while others are speaking? Is a discussion expected or is the meeting mainly led by a volunteer?

Tip #2: Schedule ahead of time - Coordinating times for participants who are on different schedules and time zones can be challenging. Below are some recommendations for ensuring everyone is on the same scheduling page.

- **Pick time frames that work for everyone:** [Doodle](#) is an easy to use scheduling application.
- **Schedule in advance:** The more heads up participants have ahead of meetings, the less likely they will have scheduling conflicts.

Tip #3: Establish etiquette for virtual meetings - Practicing proper etiquette sets the stage for a seamless and productive virtual meeting.

- **Test all technology prior to the meeting:** Check your meeting connections in advance. This includes your video, Wi-Fi, and screen sharing capabilities. When possible, establish the connection about ten minutes before the meeting begins.
- **Meet face-to-face on video:** Meeting face-to-face on video is much more personal than meeting with a disembodied voice on the phone, and it helps build more of a rapport too. It also allows participants to pick up on body language and cues, such as when someone has finished speaking or if they are just taking a pause.
- **Set aside all distractions:** Remind participants to give their full attention to others and reduce distractions like email and text messages during the meeting.

Tip #4: Keep participants engaged - Here are our recommendations for keeping your team present and engaged for a virtual meeting

- **Give space for casual conversation:** Don't be too quick to squash small talk that naturally happens at the start of a meeting. It gives individual a chance to connect on a personal level before getting down to business—the same as they would in person.
- **Introduce methods to drive participation:** Encourage everyone to act like they are seated together in a chapter meeting. For example, participants can be given a chance to submit questions well before the start of the virtual meeting. If necessary, you can also implement a poll or encourage more questions over live chat.

- **Ask questions frequently:** Check in constantly throughout the meeting to give participants a chance to share and make sure they're following. Instead of asking open-ended questions, be explicit in what you're asking.

Tip #5: Follow up – Ensure communication is clear and there's no confusion by doing the following:

- **At the meeting conclusion:** Ask participants if they have any further questions or concerns.
- **Summarize the meeting:** Follow up the meeting with an email that includes minutes about what was covered at the meeting, what key decisions were made, and what actions are required of each chapter officer.
- **Ask how the meeting could've been better:** Take stock yourself. What worked? What didn't? You don't have to apply all the above principles in less formal sessions, but taking the time to honestly listen, assess, and revise will ensure the most successful meetings in the future.

Additional Best Practices for Engaging in Virtual Environments

[What It Takes to Run a Great Virtual Meeting](#)
[9 Best Practices for Engagement in Virtual Meetings](#)
[20 Tips to Make Virtual Meetings More Interactive](#)
[The Ultimate Guide to Remote Meetings in 2020](#)
[Best Practices for Hosting a Digital Event](#)