



**HOSTING A VIRTUAL CONFERENCE:
ONE CHAPTER'S EXPERIENCE**

**COLORADO NENA/APCO EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
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PREPARATION

- Much of the work was already done in preparation for in-person
 - Call for papers format for presentations, selections had been made
 - Keynote had been selected
 - Conference theme was chosen
 - Contacted all participants and asked if they would be willing to record their presentations

CONFERENCE PLATFORM

- We were approached early by Moetivations, Inc., as they are based in CO and knew of our plans to move to virtual
 - Moetivations, Inc. offered us a great price per attendee
 - Had the ability to host both recorded and live sessions
 - Live sessions were via GoToMeeting, integrated with the Moetivations platform
 - Sessions could be as long as we wanted...we determined to have 50 minute sessions
 - Chose a three-day schedule because that was what was originally planned

SPONSORSHIPS

- Wanted to keep sponsorship costs low because of the cost-savings we had in going virtual, and to be respectful of our commercial partners.
 - We ended up with eleven sponsors: 2 at Tier II, 2 at Tier I, 6 for Live presentations, and 1 for recorded presentation
 - Limited commercial partner access to their session only, to protect proprietary information from other vendor presentations
 - Provided our sponsors with attendee names and email addresses
 - Those who did presentations were provided with a list of attendees and their email addresses
 - Commercial partners also contributed items to the conference bags, which were sent to the first 200 registrants.
- **Recorded Presentation = \$50.00**
 - 45 min pre-recorded video presentation listed in the Vendor Library section of the Virtual Conference Platform.
 - **Live Presentation = \$100.00**
 - 45 min Live Presentation incorporated in the Virtual Conference Schedule.
 - Live Chat ability with attendees to ask and receive questions/feedback
 - **Tier I Sponsorship = \$500.00**
 - 45 min Live Presentation
 - Company Logo placed in Virtual Conference Platforms Vendor Library
 - Company Logo placed on the Vendor Splash page, which will be shown to all Attendees before every recorded session.
 - **Tier II Sponsorship = \$1,000.00**
 - 45 min Live Session
 - Company Logo placed in Virtual Conference Platforms Vendor Library
 - Company Logo placed on the Vendor Splash page, which will be displayed before every recorded session.
 - Company Logo placed on all National/State communications used to promote the Virtual Conference.

ORGANIZATION

- Used Trello to keep track of tasks and updates throughout the planning process
- Highly recommend this or another platform to avoid lengthy email strings
- Used Team911 to facilitate our conference registrations.
- Can track attendee registrations as well as vendor registrations
- Makes it easy and cost-affordable to accept credit cards

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Does your conference platform provide “badges” or other attendance incentives?
- Do you want to organize your sessions into tracks?
- Will you have door prize giveaways? If so, how to publicize and when/how to do the giveaways?
- Key takeaways in preparation:
- Ensure roles and responsibilities are communicated within the Conference Committee.
- Publish the schedule with session titles and presenter names as early as possible, to drive participation. The schedule might change as you go along, be sure to keep it as updated as possible.
- Ask presenters to submit session descriptions with their proposals so they can be included in promotional materials. Be sure to set your presentation deadline early enough to handle unexpected issues that might come up.
- Use social media and your chapter’s website to promote your conference. APCO’s PSCConnect can also be used to spread the word. NENA’s website has a function for Presidents and Secretaries to send emails to your chapter membership.
- If using door prizes as incentives, include this in your promotional materials.
- Determine ahead of time if vendors will receive attendee names/emails/contact information for all attendees or just their session attendees.
- Determine ahead of time if vendors will be allowed to access the entire conference or just their session.
- Have a firm deadline ahead of the conference for vendor registrations, especially if they want a live session. You need to make sure you have room in your schedule for them.
- Ensure your platform provider has redundant connectivity capabilities, so no interruption during the conference is likely.
- Ensure someone logs in and reviews ALL the recorded presentations prior to launch of the conference. Ensure they are working properly, with sound.

DURING THE CONFERENCE:

- Key takeaways for during the conference:
- Designate at least two Conference Committee members to be available during conference hours for questions/needs. At least one of those persons should be following along with the conference to ensure things are running smoothly.
- Ensure your registration vendor/platform can quickly pass new registrant information to the conference platform vendor/person responsible, so new registrants can quickly access the conference.
- Motivations, Inc. suggested having a firm deadline for conference registration cutoff, as it was difficult to accommodate last-minute registrants (although they did an amazing job at it).
- If "following along" on your social media, ensure someone is available to do it each day of the conference, as attendees may ask questions on that platform.
- Ensure you have a quick turnaround to load the "live" presentations into the conference platform after recording.
- Use a survey platform that allows you to aggregate the data. Ours was provided in an Excel format; this was good in some respects but did not allow for easy aggregation.
- If your platform does not provide for a Q&A session during recorded sessions, develop a pathway for attendees to ask follow-up questions of the presenters.

POST-CONFERENCE

- If conducting prize giveaways, do so in a timely manner
- Ensure Chapter has access to final numbers, including financial, attendance, and surveys
- If providing survey results to instructors, do so in a timely manner
- Key takeaways post-conference:
 - Hold an after-action meeting to capture successes/lessons learned from Committee members, preferably within two weeks of closing
 - Ensure post-conference responsibilities are attended to

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE:

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