Virtual Engagement Tips for RSOs

from the Student Activities Office

Consider The 'Why'

Now more than ever we see how critical online engagement is. Due to COVID-19 leaving most of our classes online and many of our students off of campus, we must consider new virtual methods of engagement.

Our first step is to decide what our goal for online engagement is, what is the purpose behind your hard work? Perhaps your RSO is engaging in recruitment, performing elections, holding a meeting or training, working on membership retention, or simply sharing news.

Identifying and recognizing your purpose for virtual engagement as an RSO will better help guide your focus through the rest of our tips!

Choose Your Platform

Who is your primary audience? Where can you best reach this population? Perhaps the answer is in more than one platform.

The Student Activities Office has brainstormed a few platforms f or you: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Twitch, Discord, GroupMe, WhatsApp, Zoom, Google Hangout, Skype, MS Teams, Flip Board, YouTube, HuskyLink, Kudo Boards, and more!

If you're using a new platform, be sure to give it a test run before an event! Also consider capacity constraints on different platforms.

No matter the platform, we encourage all RSOs to consider issues of accessibility while conducting online engagement.

Plan Your Timing

With folks mostly online during this time, scheduling can be difficult. Not only do we need to account for classes, jobs/internships and other commitments, we now have to take into account different time zones as well.

This may mean simply finding out where folks live, it or it may mean planning engagement at multiple times throughout the day. Consider using WhenToMeet or DoodlePoll to help align schedules!
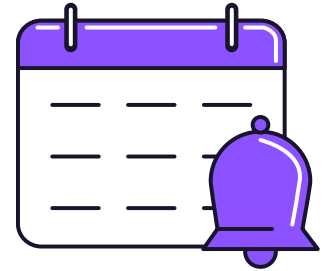
Always be sure to record engagement activities if possible to share with folks who could not attend.

Consider Your Content Theme

How can your RSO engage your community? Remember to consider your 'why' while choosing the type of content you want to provide to your community. Decide what level of involvement you want your community to play in your virtual engagement, are they there to take in information or to engage in team building? Questions like these can help determine what content to provide!

The Student Activities Office has come up with some content themes to kickstart your brainstorming! Our hope is that you alter and go above and beyond our building blocks.

- Watch parties
- Online games
- Crafting
- Book club
- Movement/ exercise
- Cook/ bake/ food culture

- Storytelling
- Q&A
- Speakers
- Teach a skill
- Virtual service projects
- Panels
- Magic show

- Auctions
- Fundraisers
- Open mics
- Talent shows
- Poetry Slam
- Member spotlight
- Competitions

- Career exploration
- Speed 'dating'
- Scavenger hunt
- Study groups
- General check-in
- Rethink your RSO!

If utilizing a third part company for your content, be sure to consider the price, accessibility, safety, and information being shared.

Spread The Word

Advertise for your virtual event! With minimal students on campus, spreading the word virtually is going to be key. No more posters and word of mouth, we're shifting to social media and e-newsletters!

We again encourage you to consider your platform. How can you best reach your target audience? If it's just your RSO members, perhaps in a group chat or email, but if you're attempting to reach UW students in general we may have to get a bit more creative. We all know that social media is key, but how can we grab folks attention? Perhaps an animated advertisement or an incentive for sharing your advertisement. The key is to stay creative with your ads and catch the eyes of your target audience.

Consider collaboration with other RSOs or the ASUW! Collaborating with another RSO means also having their subscribers and followers to share your virtual engagement information with. Perhaps even academic departments will consider adding your virtual engagement information to their weekly e-newsletter!

Be sure to include your RSO contact information in advertisements for folks who may have questions!

Build A Sense of Belonging

This is especially important with a virtual incoming class! Make sure students feel that they can find their campus community within your RSO. Building this peer-to-peer connection virtually is going to be so vital to our community until we are all able to back together again on campus.

Again, go back to your 'why.' While conducting your virtual engagement, remember what your purpose is and understand how building community and a sense of belonging contributes to it - it will make your engagement that much more meaningful!
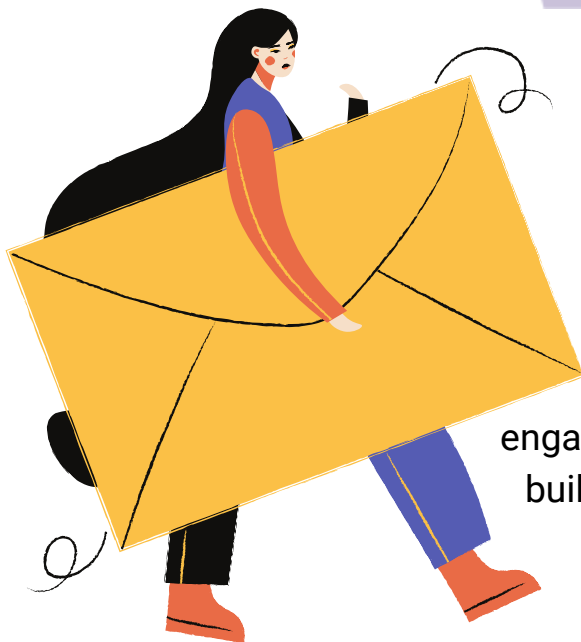
Reflect and Debrief

After your virtual engagement, in whatever form it may take, take a moment to reflect on the experience. Did you reach your audience? Was the platform a good choice? Were people engaged? How successful was it? What was challenging? What would you do differently next time? By answering questions like these you can continue to grow and evolve your online engagement!

One easy thing to do to aid in the evaluation process is to ask for feedback from folks! This can be formal in the form of surveys or informal by simply asking around for thoughts.
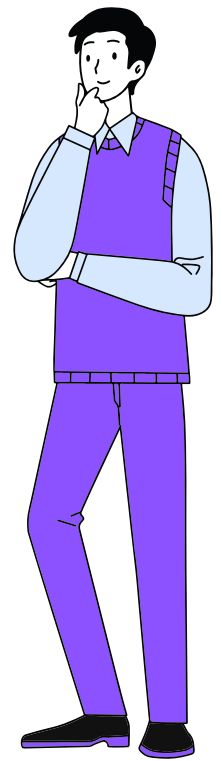
Ask Your SAO Adviser

Seriously, ask us! We can provide guidance no matter the type of virtual engagement you are planning and are more that happy to brainstorm with you. To find out how to contact your SAO Adviser to schedule a meeting, visit this page: https://hub.washington.edu/sao/sao-advisors/

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