



Virtual Networking Ideas

Small Group Meetings, Pupillage Teams, Mentoring Pairs or Full Inn Membership

While nothing can duplicate the experience of face-to-face collegial networking and interaction, here are some ideas on how to get close in the time of social distancing. By setting out expectations for participation and creating pre-program discussion opportunities by posting questions and instructions in advance, you are laying the groundwork for interaction. You'll be surprised at the value your members can find in the experience.

Networking in a virtual environment must be purposeful, planned, and intentional. It is certainly not the same as networking in person, however if the Inn agrees to approach virtual networking as an opportunity to build transferrable skills, there are ways to make virtual networking fun and engaging.

For smaller Inns: If your platform allows for it, assign members to virtual breakout groups for small group discussions, then bring them back together for the main program.

Pupillage groups: Organize conference calls by pupillage groups for 30 minutes prior to the meeting, and then have them join the program at the appointed time. Give groups discussion questions related to the program, or a fun activity to do together.

Discussion thread: Members log on to the meeting and engage in a chat discussion on a given topic prior to the meeting. A team of Barrister members can act as moderators.

Random groups: Use a random number generator to assign members to groups, then have them connect during the week leading up to the meeting to get to know one another. This activity works well for Inns with many new members.

Everybody: Ask each member to engage in an activity relevant to the Inn or the program; have them upload a short video, audio clip, or whatever to document the activity and share during the apportioned networking time.

Sharing thoughts: Have small groups or pairs "meet" on Skype, Facetime, or a similar platform, discuss a topic, record it and then post it to the Virtual Inn Meeting prior to the full meeting.

Try it; you'll like it. Do a version of any or all of these things before, during or after an educational presentation, either live or recorded.

Survey says... Do some live polling but identify 1 – 2 people in advance to share a related story after poll results.

Party People: Hold a "Virtual Dance Party" where the host plays a song and everyone moves around for a minute or two; it gets the blood going, lightens the mood, and then people can come back together for the "program." Advanced: do it with your webcams on!

7th Inning Stretch: Lead the group – verbally or via webcam – in a short yoga stretch.

Virtual “bread-breaking” Ideas:

- **Happy hour!**
 - Create a meeting – or Inn – themed cocktail (or a drink of their choice) and encourage everyone to have it on hand during the networking segment.
- **Get your snack on.**
 - Suggest easy, accessible menu options and encourage members to eat the same meal or snack during the programming hour even as they sign in from different locations.
- **Dorm throwback day.**
 - Everyone orders pizza and has a slice during the meeting.
- **Virtual cooking show!**
 - Is someone in your Inn a good cook? How about the chili cook-off winner? Recruit them to be the chef.
 - Share the recipe before the meeting so everyone can go shopping and get the requisite items.
 - Everyone is muted except for the “chef” who will be on webcam (they may need an at-home assistant to film it and then monitor the question or chat box).
 - The chef explains and demonstrates each step; members follow along at home.
 - While something is simmering or baking, you can discuss a legal topic – be creative and somehow tie it to your recipe!
 - At the end, you all sample your creation and enjoy the connective and collegial experience.