

Do this, Not That:

11 Tips for Virtual Advocacy and Lobbying



The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 has moved the government and public affairs grapevine and industry to a totally online environment. While your work may not be as confined to your home now as it was back in March, a majority of lobbying work and networking events still have to be done through Zoom or [other team collaboration platforms](#).

As if your life couldn't get any more complicated, with this new normal comes a new set of expectations, best practices, and etiquette to navigating this virtual environment.

Here are a few do's and don'ts we've put together with help from policy and advocacy experts to make sure that you are still able to drive your organization's legislative and regulatory agenda, even from the comfort of your own home.



The 11 **Do's** for Virtual Advocacy & Lobbying



1. Keep meetings short. Try capping one-on-one meetings at 20 minutes and larger group meetings at 50 minutes.



2. Break up longer meetings into shorter, topical meetings. Instead of having a 90-minute or 2-hour meeting, slice the topics to have more fruitful conversations.



3. Try new things. Given the circumstances, people are more understanding, flexible, and appreciative of your efforts.



4. Check-in with existing relationships with a quick email or call. Not to push an issue, but to preserve the personal connection.



5. Empower your advocates. More than ever, personal stories and connections from constituents resonate with lawmakers.



6. Appoint active facilitators in larger virtual meetings that can set the rules, go over etiquette, and help troubleshoot technical issues.



7. Keep advocates engaged with guest speakers, trainings, and opportunities to share their stories.



8. Have a pre- and post-meeting strategy. Prepare an agenda and send materials ahead of time. Follow-up with a recap and action items.



9. Stay sensitive to the reality of the situation we are living in. Be flexible to the struggles many are dealing with while work, school, and all activities continue to be remote.



10. Be candid and direct with your communications. It is difficult to detect subtle nuances or body language in a virtual setting.



11. Prioritize relationship building. Be purposeful and bold in your outreach. You might be surprised by people's responses!



The 11 **Don'ts** for Virtual Advocacy & Lobbying



1. Use video for every call. A simple voice call is preferable in many cases, which helps avoid "Zoom fatigue."



2. Leave Q&A to the end of the meeting. Incorporate breaks for questions to keep people engaged.



3. Try to recreate a live event in a virtual setting. Look for what your attendees value the most and find new ways to deliver virtually.



4. Only have talking heads in video calls. Engage participants with polls, surveys, and breakout discussions.



5. Overextend yourself. Make room for breaks between calls to step away from the computer like you would between in-person meetings.



6. Host large virtual meetings. Cap attendance at 15-18 people to keep the conversation interesting and avoid too many distractions or technical issues.



7. Operate in a silo. Cooperate with other organizations covering similar or complementary issues to make a bigger impact.



8. Make it all about work. Create spaces for people to connect on a human level.



9. Assume everyone has a reliable internet connection or is technologically proficient. Adjust your strategy based on the audience to make sure your meetings are inclusive.



10. Pretend like nothing is going on. Be professional but also show concern and ask people how they are coping.



11. Rely only on email. Inboxes are already flooded. Regular phone calls or creative ways to communicate, such as podcasts, short videos, blog series, or social media can be more effective right now.



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