



# ASSOCIATION OF FRATERNITY | SORORITY ADVISORS

## Volunteer Tip Sheet

## Effectively Navigating Distance Communication

### Resources That Can Help You Manage Distance Communication:

Google Docs File Sharing  
[www.doodle.com](http://www.doodle.com)  
(for scheduling OR quick polls)  
[www.when2meet.com](http://www.when2meet.com)  
[www.freeconferencecall.com](http://www.freeconferencecall.com)  
[www.wiggio.com](http://www.wiggio.com)  
Any Wiki Space  
Skype  
gchat or IM

### Tips for All Volunteers

- Don't wait for the 90 Day Check In OR the evaluations process to articulate that there is an issue with your volunteer role or with volunteers you're working with
- Keep all your AFA work/documents in an easily accessible area
- Contribute to meaningful work—you will feel engaged and people will keep you engaged if you're contributing

### Copy Your Volunteer Supervisor on All AFA Communication!

Why do we ask you to do this (for many new volunteers, it can feel like "big brother" is always watching...)  
One of the reasons we have supervisors copied on all emails is so that they are always in the communication loop and can step in if you need some help OR aren't available to be responsive immediately to questions from others. Including others is all part of effective distance communication.

### Quick Tips for Success for the Volunteer Leader:

- Establish ground rules for communication early in the project
- Ask committee members to identify their preferred style of communication and typical turn around time (do an expectations assessments of your volunteers at the beginning of your volunteer year)
- Provide and reinforce clear and appropriate position expectations. (it's a perfect opportunity to share the position description!)
- Establish clear responsibility for the desired results
- Keep a check list that ensures that you are making regular contact with each committee member
- Create a group email list/listserv (i.e. simplify the tasks that could slow you down like looking up individual addresses every time you need to send an email)
- Set up a regular phone time with your volunteer supervisor (bi-monthly or monthly—this will help you stay on track!)
- Provide the committee with bulleted/action oriented updates at least once a month
- Provide the committee with bulleted/action oriented summaries following conference calls
- Plan for the lead time that allows for committee engagement...when leading and engaging a volunteer committee you can't wait until the last minute to involve your committee
- Volunteers WANT to help.
- Provide at least a couple opportunities each month for your committee to engage, take leadership, or give feedback on a project
- If a committee member has responsibility for a project, check in with them 3-5 days before it is due to help them stay on track
- Be creative about communication AND expect that communication difficulties will arise since they are common to distance volunteering (plan for it instead of being frustrated when it happens)
- **ACCOUNTABILITY:** Since you aren't running into this person face to face, it might be easier to let things slide...This is where your accountability really has to kick in!

## **Addressing Communication Issues as a Committee Members (i.e. what to do if you're not hearing from your volunteer leader/committee chair)**

If you haven't heard from your chair (without advance notification) in 4-6 weeks, it's probably a good time to check in. You deserve an engaged volunteer experience. If you're not getting it—ASK FOR HELP!!!

1. If your chair has gone MIA...send them an email or give them a call and ask for an opportunity to engage
2. If that doesn't produce results, contact the Volunteer Coordinator AND the Director of Member Services to ask for help

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## **Addressing Communication Issues as a Committee Chair (i.e. what to do if you're not hearing from a committee member)**

If you have a committee member who goes MIA (without previously sharing that a block of time is going to be really busy and he/she might be unresponsive)...act **SOONER RATHER THAN LATER**. Too many volunteer leaders wait until a committee member has been MIA for 4-6 months rather than 4-6 weeks. Here's a quick action plan for addressing committee members who are unresponsive:

1. Take action once you've experienced 2-3 unresponsive communications
2. Check in with that individual specifically—if he/she isn't responding to email, ***pick up the phone***. (don't keep using the same communication method and expect a different result)
3. If individual outreach produces no results, contact the Volunteer Coordinator and Director of Member Services who will help you develop a performance contract for the MIA volunteer
4. Typical performance contracts for AFA volunteers identify the behavior needed and the time frame it is needed in—if the volunteer agrees and then still is unresponsive, it's time to move on.

Don't feel bad about setting these expectations for an unengaged volunteer or taking action to remove a volunteer. No one enjoys being part of an unengaged volunteer experience. There's no shame in stepping down—far better to do that (sooner, rather than later!) than continue to be in a role that you feel guilty about!