

## Guide to Social Events

PDA hosts social events as a tool to welcome members and introduce nonmembers to organized dentistry. With no CE or other business agenda items, the social events provide an avenue for interaction and networking among colleagues and with leaders.

## Benefits of Social Events

- **Recruitment** – social events are a great opportunity for communicating member value, highlighting member benefits, interacting and developing relationships with nonmembers. This allows leaders and staff to generate their interest in membership and foster that interest with follow-up communication and future events. A social event isn't lightening in a bottle – while it's true the nonmember may very well join the next day (it has happened), nonmembers typically require repeat exposure to organized dentistry before they make the decision to join.
- **Building Your Volunteer Base** – one of the most common benefits of social events is recruiting current members to serve as volunteers. Social events can create an interest to become more involved. They might be inspired to plan a future event, or participate in follow-up like creating a Facebook page to display event photos.
- **Camaraderie** – many dentists just want the opportunity to network with their peers and “talk shop.” Providing an outlet for them to do that is a real benefit. Face-to-face > Facebook in this case!
- **Retention** – often times, social events provide the one “touch” a member will get on a yearly basis with organized dentistry. If business meetings conflict with their office hours and local CE isn't their thing, the social event might be the only program that gets them in the door. Forming those relationships with current members, so they find a source of tangible value to their membership, is what will encourage them to renew every year.
- **Feedback** – these events provide an open opportunity to gather feedback from members and nonmembers. How do they like your CE programming? What needs do they have in their practice? What about tonight's event do they really like? This can lead to essential information for recruiting and retaining members.

## Helpful Hints

- **Plus One** – At some of PDA's social events, spouses or guests are invited along with the dentist. Some people might feel uncomfortable coming to an event by themselves. Bringing a guest can make them feel more at ease.

- **Welcome Wagon** – The environment at your social event needs to be warm, welcoming and safe. You don't want new guests to feel alienated or uncomfortable. For more tips, check out the **Creating a Cordial Atmosphere** document in the Component Resource Center at [www.padental.org/crc](http://www.padental.org/crc).
- **What's in a Name?** – Make sure you have name tags available for all your attendees. This makes it easier on everyone to network. It's also a good idea to have blank name tags and sharpies on hand for walk-ins to create their own name tag.
- **Membership, Membership, Membership!** – Don't forget to have membership materials at your events (your own and PDA's). Give PDA a call a few weeks prior to the event and we'll send you some materials to display. (800) 223-0016
- **Many Thanks** – with both members and nonmembers, make sure you send a follow-up email or even make a personal phone call. Thank your guests for attending, ask for their feedback on the event and share any upcoming CE programs or meetings your society has scheduled. We also encourage component societies to send their attendance list to PDA so we can distribute our marketing materials to nonmembers.
- **The Writing's on the Wall** – consider having a rolling PowerPoint presentation run during the course of your event. Use TVs or a blank wall in your venue (if available) to display about 10 slides highlighting member benefits or recent ADA/PDA/Component accomplishments. This is a great eye-catcher and conversation starter.