



Keys to Successful Client Appreciation Events

Client Appreciation Events can be a valuable tool to build your business *if* they are done right. Not only will it help you to continue to build a strong relationship with you clients after the sale, but it will help you to show them in a tangible way that you value their trust and loyalty.

Unfortunately, most agents do not know how to effectively utilize this powerful business building tool. If they do an event it seems that most often, the agent puts on a party or dinner and then wonders why they aren't getting more business from this relatively expensive marketing campaign.

Here are some ideas to help make an event successful while appealing to boomers and adding a number of opportunities for touch points for your top of mind awareness campaign.

1. Mention the Client Appreciation Event in your Initial Meeting. Near the end of your first initial meeting with clients, you should mention to them that you sponsor an event every year and hope they will be able to come. Now it is time for them to talk, inquire of them if they attend events like yours and if not, why. Often it seems, boomers have more time available and are more likely to attend an event than younger clients. You can also use this time to find out what your clients like to do so you can possibly plan a party in the future that will be well attended.

Here are some example scripts:

"We really believe in showing our appreciation to our clients here at ABC Financial Services and one of the ways we do that is to host an annual party as a way of saying thank you for your trust and business. So for you, could you tell me, what kind of events do you like to attend?"

"Many of my clients fall into one of two categories. One is clients that really like good financial education and they want a speaker on the economy and information related to investing. The others just want to have fun, so they are more interested in a dinner dance, a symphony or maybe a quick retreat opportunity. Which category do you feel would most describe you?" If they say education, ask for topics that they feel would be of interest. If they say fun, then ask for ideas on what would make a fun outing.



2. Touch base with your existing clients. If you have never done an event before or have failed to have your clients attend, now may be a good time to contact your clients and get their input. This can be another great reason to touch base with your clients without them feeling like you are calling to sell something.

Here are some example scripts:

"Hi, Mr. /Mrs. - - - I just wanted to check in with you to let you know that we are doing our yearly updating of our databases and wanted to make sure we have the right contact information for you."

"We are planning to host a client appreciation party in October and we want to make sure it would be something you would enjoy if you attended. We are thinking of two different events one is a game event and the other is a dinner at the country club. Which one do you feel you would find to be more appealing? Also, what night of the week usually works best for you? Do you have any suggestions? We always appreciate your input."

3. Update your database. Now that you have good information about what your clients like make sure you input it into your database.

4. Set goals. Before you host any marketing events, it is important to determine what your goal is and what you would like to accomplish. Here are suggestions for sample goals:

- Clone your top clients by attracting others like them
- Expand upon your already good relationship with your current client base
- Ask everyone in your database for a referral
- Touch base with everyone in your book at least 4-6 times per year
- Add X number of names to your prospect list per month
- Create a fun and memorable affair for your yearly client appreciation event



5. Type of event. Here are a few examples of some suggestions for successful client events:

- High end get together at a local country club with food and dancing, a wonderful evening out but not too far away.
- Picnic in the country complete with picnic tables and entertainment.
- Dinner dance at a high end hotel like the Ritz or other local 5 star hotel
- Hors d'oeuvres at the museum
- Golf event on weekend with lunch included

Here are a few tips to keep in mind when planning an event:

- Invitations – good as a reminder tool, but you should plan on making personal phone calls to your clients.
- Length – not too short and not too long; ask your event planner for the ideal time the event will be fun, interactive and productive. If doing dinner and a dance event, be aware to cut the timing so as to not allow guests to become too intoxicated and the party turns into one of those bad events we have all been too.
- Days of the Week - in general Tuesday or Thursday evenings seem to have the better turnout and maybe Saturday mornings.
- Time of Year. It's usually best to choose a time of the year so as not to conflict with family vacations, holidays and other major activities people tend to do at certain times of the year.

6. Hiring an Event Planner. There are a lot of details in putting together a successful event, so do not try to put the meeting together yourself. Stick to what you do best, which is meeting with clients and closing business. Event planners frequently know great locations and all the best places to get good food and talent. They will pay for themselves many times over.



7. Follow up

Many advisors do not know how to get enough mileage out of an event. One of the worst problems can be the advisor who puts on a great event with a lot of excellent prospects, but never follows up with a call afterwards.

Any time you plan an event, set aside a couple of days afterwards to phone and follow up with the prospects and opportunities that came out of the event. Don't waste this chance to turn these prospects into clients. Isn't this one of the reasons you held the event to begin with?

8. Use the Event to add Touch Point Opportunities

When it comes to getting the most out of an event, think in terms of touch points. Remember, average working American clients are subconsciously expecting about 14 touches per year and your high-net-worth clients likely will require twice that amount just to keep you towards the top of their minds.

Here are some suggestions for touch point opportunities you can get from the event:

1. Voicemail Broadcasts – Great tool used to announce the event.
2. Written Invitation – Used to remind everyone of the event, time and place.
3. E-mail - Send a personal styled e-mail reminder with directions, place and time of the event about a week in advance.
4. Voicemail Broadcast - Send another voicemail broadcast the day before the event to remind people again of the date, time and location, as well as to encourage them to call the office if they need more help with directions.
5. The Event - Make sure you are positioned by the front door available to welcome each of your guests personally. You might want to consider using a digital camera to take pictures - you would want to make sure you have one of you with *every guest* there.
6. The Day after the Event. Send out personal thank-you notes to everyone who attended. A personal note is a great way to add another opportunity for a touch point.
7. The Week or so after the Event. E-mail copies of the photos you took as another reminder of the event.



9. Work It! Take the time to learn about how to properly and most importantly “work” your event.

1. Your job is to socialize with as many people as possible and to make sure *they* are having a good time.
2. No drinking - this is work, not a party for you.
3. Spend all of your time with clients and prospects – do not *hang out* with fellow employees or with people you know. Try to spend an even amount of time with each person or set of couples. In other words, if possible, no favorites, at least until you have successfully worked through your crowd.
4. Introduce the guests to each other so they will feel comfortable and included and also they will get to meet other people. This is also a great way for them to “see” just how big your practice really is. This also might help create networking opportunities for your clients, who you know would welcome that opportunities themselves.

Client appreciation events can and will become a valuable part of your business, if you can complete the long term goal for them right. Take the time to educate yourself and your employees, and you will create and maintain valuable relationships with your clients that will last for years!

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