Hosting Client Events

This course is designed to help build relationships and show appreciation to your clients by hosting events. By the end of the course, you should be able to successfully plan and execute top-notch events.

Overview:

Client events are a fantastic way to bring together your team and your clients and create shared experiences that build relationships and demonstrate expertise. There are generally three different types of client events, though some events may be a blend of all three:

- Appreciation
- Educational
- Passion Prospecting

The first step in hosting a client event is determining the primary goal for the event. Is it to show appreciation for your clients, to share education and expertise with your clients, or to create a relaxed space in which your clients can introduce you to their friends and family?

This course will focus on appreciation and educational events. If you are interested in hosting events for your clients to make introductions, see our lesson on Passion Prospecting.

The high-level steps to hosting client events are:

- **Step 1:** Identify the type of client event you would like to host
- **Step 2:** Plan fun or educational events that allow you to show appreciation and/or demonstrate expertise
- **Step 3:** Invite clients to come to the events
- **Step 4:** Host the events and build relationships with clients

Client events should be a part of ever advisor's overall communication and appreciation strategy for clients. Continue to Step 1 to learn what type of client events you might want to host.

Step 1: Identify what type of client event to host

The first step in hosting a client event is determining the primary goal for the event. Is your intention to:

- Show appreciation to your clients

OR

- Educate your clients

Some events are a blend of both, but it can help to determine which outcome is most important to you before planning an event.

Client appreciation events are generally fun, relaxed events that allow you to build relationships and say “thank you” to your clients in a meaningful way.

Client education events help position you as an expert while teaching your clients about concepts that are important and relevant to their financial goals and objectives.

Once you know the primary goal for the event, decide what type of event this will be:

- Large event for all clients
- Medium event size open to all clients but with limited capacity
- Small, intimate event for top clients
- Targeted event for certain segments of your clients

Next, select the topic or activity for the event. Below are some popular event topics, or you can download our list of Passion Prospecting event ideas for other creative event ideas.

- Holiday Event Ideas
  - Valentine’s Day brunch or Spa day
  - Easter photos or egg hunts for families
  - Thanksgiving Pie pickup
  - Holiday Brunch
  - July 4th Picnic
  - Veteran’s Day Luncheon
  - Mardi Gras Party
  - Pie Day (March 15th) - invite clients to pick up a pizza pie from a local pizzeria
- Virtual Appreciation Events
  - Virtual museum tour
  - Virtual garden tours
  - Speaker series
  - Health and fitness webinar
  - Virtual wine tasting
  - Virtual concert with local musicians

- Large Client Events
  - Sporting events
  - Car shows
  - Renting out a movie theater
  - Musicals, plays, or symphony events
  - Bring in a speaker or author
  - Event at a zoo or animal sanctuary
- Targeted Small Events
  - Wine tasting
  - Tasting at a local brewery, winery, or distillery
  - Private table at a local restaurant
  - Trap/skeet/clay shooting competition
  - “March Madness” watch party
  - Garden tour
  - Golf scramble
  - Tickets or box seats to sports events
  - Tickets to your favorite charity gala
- Educational Events
  - Market-based, similar to the Forecast and Halftime Reports
  - Estate planning
  - Social Security
  - RMD planning
  - Tax planning
  - Medicare planning
  - LTC & life insurance planning
  - Retirement checklist

Download our ***list of Passion Prospecting event ideas*** for other creative event ideas.

Once you've decided on the topic or activity for the event, clearly define for yourself and your event project manager what you want this event to look like. For best delegation results, get specific:

- Is there a specific event like a sports game, concert, or movie showing?
- What type of venue are you looking for? Location? Upscale or casual? Private room?
- How many attendees do you expect?
- What type of food and beverage do you want served? Price range per person?
- Do you want a professional or expert leading the event (CPA, estate planning attorney, sommelier, tour guide, etc.)?
- What is the overall budget?
- What does a successful event look like?

Step 2: Plan fun or educational events that allow you to show appreciation and/or demonstrate expertise

Once you decide which events and activities you would like to implement, it is time to move to the planning phase. Having the events and dates determined up to a year out will help ensure you are able to execute seamlessly. Remember, the purpose of these events is to share a great time with your clients and continue to build deep and meaningful relationships with them.

Below you will find some common event details to consider, but be sure to use our ***Client Appreciation Event Checklist*** for a complete view of the event planning process.

You will also want to create a written, repeatable process in your process manual for hosting client events. Download our sample ***Client Appreciation Event Process*** for an example of what yours might look like.

Event Details:

- Event Attendees
  - Who are you targeting for this event?
  - Approximately how many people would you like to invite?
  - What are the minimum desired or maximum number of attendees allowed?
- Date and Time
  - You might be planning an event that is best held in a certain season, such as renting out a section of seats at a baseball game. You want to be sure to keep in mind holidays and other busy seasons when planning events.
  - Select a preferred time and day of the week for the events, some of which may be narrowed own by the type of event or venue.

   - A failure to plan is a plan to fail. One of the biggest pitfalls of event planning is not allowing enough time for planning. You will want to plan out at the very least 6-8 weeks in advance and note that large events will need even more leeway.
- Venue
   - Determine if the venue provides a professional/expert.
   - Determine if the venue allows outside food & beverage, or requires you to choose from a list of pre-approved vendors.
   - Express desire for advisor to welcome attendees and introduce the professional and close the session at the end if the location allows for this.
- Entertainment
   - Does your event leverage any entertainment? This can be a great value add to an event.
   - Check references to ensure they will provide a wonderful experience for your guests.
- Food & beverages
   - Are food and beverages provided by the venue?
   - Be sure to account for any special diets or food restrictions of your guests (Gluten Fee, Kosher, Vegetarian and Vegan are some of the most popular).
   - If food and beverage is not the focus of the event (i.e., wine tasting/private dinner), what refreshments do you want to provide to ensure an enjoyable time?
- Miscellaneous
   - Is the parking sufficient?
   - Are there any parking logistics or fees that need to be communicated to the guests?
   - Do you want to arrange for transportation options if alcohol is being served?
   - What time can you begin setup?
   - What time must you be gone from the venue?

Once you have the details of the event in place you are ready to invite your clients. Depending on the event size you might take one or more approaches to inviting the clients. Be sure to provide an RSVP deadline with your invitation.

Step 3: Invite clients to the events

For larger client events, we recommend starting with an e-mail invitation or physical invitation. If all clients are invited consider using our newsletter, social media or your website to provide high-level information and ask the clients to email or call the office for more information. Here are a few sample invitations that you might consider using:

- July 4th Event

- Valentine’s Day Event
- Thanksgiving Pie Giveaway
- Spring Pie Giveaway
- Holiday Brunch

Additional resources that may be helpful in planning are in the CCO Resource Library:

- ***Pie Giveaway Executive Summary***
- ***RSVP Phone Line Scripts***
- ***Valentine’s Day Executive Summary***
- ***Client Appreciation event opening and closing script***

If you are using an email marketing tool check to see if that resource has invitation templates, you can use. If you would like to create a custom invite check out the ***Event Invitation*** resource or consider hiring a graphic design freelancer on a site like upwork.com, freelancer.com or fiverr.com for a professional look at a very reasonable cost.

For smaller client events, in addition to an e-mail invite or physical invite we would also recommend considering a personal phone call invitation. Here is a sample script that you might use for the call:

> *Hi **{Insert Client Name}**! **{Insert Company Name}** is hosting a **{Insert Event Name}** on **{Insert Event Date and Time}** and we hope that you can join us. This event is our way of thanking you for your business, enjoying our friendship and spending some time with you. Do you anticipate being able to join us?*
>
> If the answer is Yes, ask them how many will be attending.
>
> If they want more information or need more time, follow up with an email with the information.
>
> If the answer is No, thank them for the business and let them know of any future planned events for which they can save the date.

Once you are about two weeks out from the event, it is time to start confirming reservations, or sooner if required by the venue for food and beverage.

To track RSVPs, make sure that there is one or two team members specifically assigned to handle questions and incoming calls. You might also use a company email, your CRM or a recorded phone line to assist you with communicating to your clients. Included with your recorded message, clients should be given contact information for questions or cancellations on the day of the event.

Finally, we recommend that you send out a reminder at least one week in advance. For smaller events you might also have the team call clients that has RSVP’d for the event. Check out the ***Client Appreciation Event Checklist*** for more details.

Step 4: Host the events and build relationships with clients

It's the week of the event and all the hard work over the last month or two is about to pay off. Be sure to block out time on your team members' and your calendars the day before the event. You will need this time to wrap up any last-minute details to make sure the event is well executed and memorable. We also recommend doing a dry run of the event if there are any presentation or logistics that are new for the team.

The day before the event should have a team huddle led by the project manager:

- Review the attendee list, including final number attending
- Review event details: time to arrive at the event, location, special parking instructions, and proper attire for the event
- Reminder to bring individual company name badges
- If event is being held in the office, send a reminder to ensure individual offices are clean and all client data is out of sight
- Confirm everyone is on the same page with event roles – who will be doing what
- If assigning seats, make sure to assign staff to different tables
- Confirm final preparation checklist items are assigned
- Answer any outstanding questions

The event project manager should print an attendee list, name badges, and prepare a box with event supplies. See ***Client Appreciation Event Checklist*** for details. In preparing the nametags, consider the following formatting, which several advisors have found to be helpful:

- Names appear in ALL CAPITAL letters if a CLIENT
- Names appear in Proper Case letters if a Prospect or Guest
- Names appear in Italics if a Vendor, Presenter, or Employee
- Small gray dot in the lower left-hand corner represents the attendee had a birthday in the last 30 days
- Small gray dot in the lower middle of the nametag represents the attendee's birthday is the day of the event
- Small gray dot in the lower right-hand corner represents the attendee has a birthday within the next 30 days

Ensure name badges are reviewed for correct spelling, and group them alphabetically by couples or families.

Day of event

Plan on arriving at the venue approximately two hours before the event. The advisor and event project manager should use this extra time to introduce themselves to the site manager/contact, familiarize themselves with the space, set up any necessary signage and A/V equipment, and organize the check-in table. Some clients and guests will arrive early, so make sure you're prepared for guests at least 30 minutes before the start of the event.

As clients and guests arrive, check them in at the registration table and hand out name badges. If guests arrive who did not RSVP, make a handwritten nametag and make sure you collect their name and contact information so that you can follow up after the event. The advisor should be welcoming clients & guests, so make sure you have at least one or two team members operating the check-in table.

The advisor should kick off the event with a warm welcome and brief introduction. Don't give a "sales pitch" at an event like this, but at the same time do make sure to thank clients for coming and introduce your team members.

During the event, team members and advisors should spend their time building deeper relationships the clients. Be sure to encourage the team members to mix and mingle and not group together.

At the end of the event, the advisor should thank attendees for coming, and express how much they enjoyed the event.

After the event

The day after the event, hold a debrief meeting with your team to cover what went well, what you would change for the next event, and next steps for everyone on your team. This is an important step, so do not skip it and be sure to have the project manager record all the information gathered.

COACH TIP: Ask the team members to input any notes about the clients that they gathered during the event in the company CRM. Be sure that you and the team block off time on your calendars for event related follow up.

If you had any prospects or referrals at the event be sure to have the advisor directly follow up with them within 2 days.

We generally recommend gathering feedback from the attendees. This can be done informally by email, or you can put together a survey and send it to the clients. For more information on conducting a client survey, visit the ***Client Experience: Surveys*** course. Regardless of the means of collecting the data, be sure to thank the clients for attending and have them save the date for any upcoming events.

In addition to collecting feedback from the clients, you can ask for more detailed feedback from your Client Advisory Council at the next meeting, or over email.

Finally, compile any compliance related items that you may need to submit.

Summary:

Hosting client events can be an incredibly fun and rewarding way to connect with your clients, express your gratitude, and share important information that helps them reach their financial goals. What matters is that you choose events that are meaningful, allow for ample time in the planning process, and execute well.

FAQs:

- What is the frequency of events I should host for my clients?
    - We generally recommend hosting at least one large client appreciation event per year, 2-4 educational events per year, and up to 12 smaller appreciation events.

Resources:

Learn more and download the resources referenced in this document from the ***Hosting Client Events*** course in Carson Coaching Online.

- **Passion Prospecting Event Ideas**
- **Client Appreciation Event Checklist**
- **Client Appreciation Event Process Template**
- **Event Budget**
- **Client Appreciation Event Opening and Closing Scripts**
- **Event Invitations Fact Sheet**
- **RSVP Phone Line Scripts**
- **Valentine's Day Executive Summary**
- **Pie Giveaway Executive Summary**