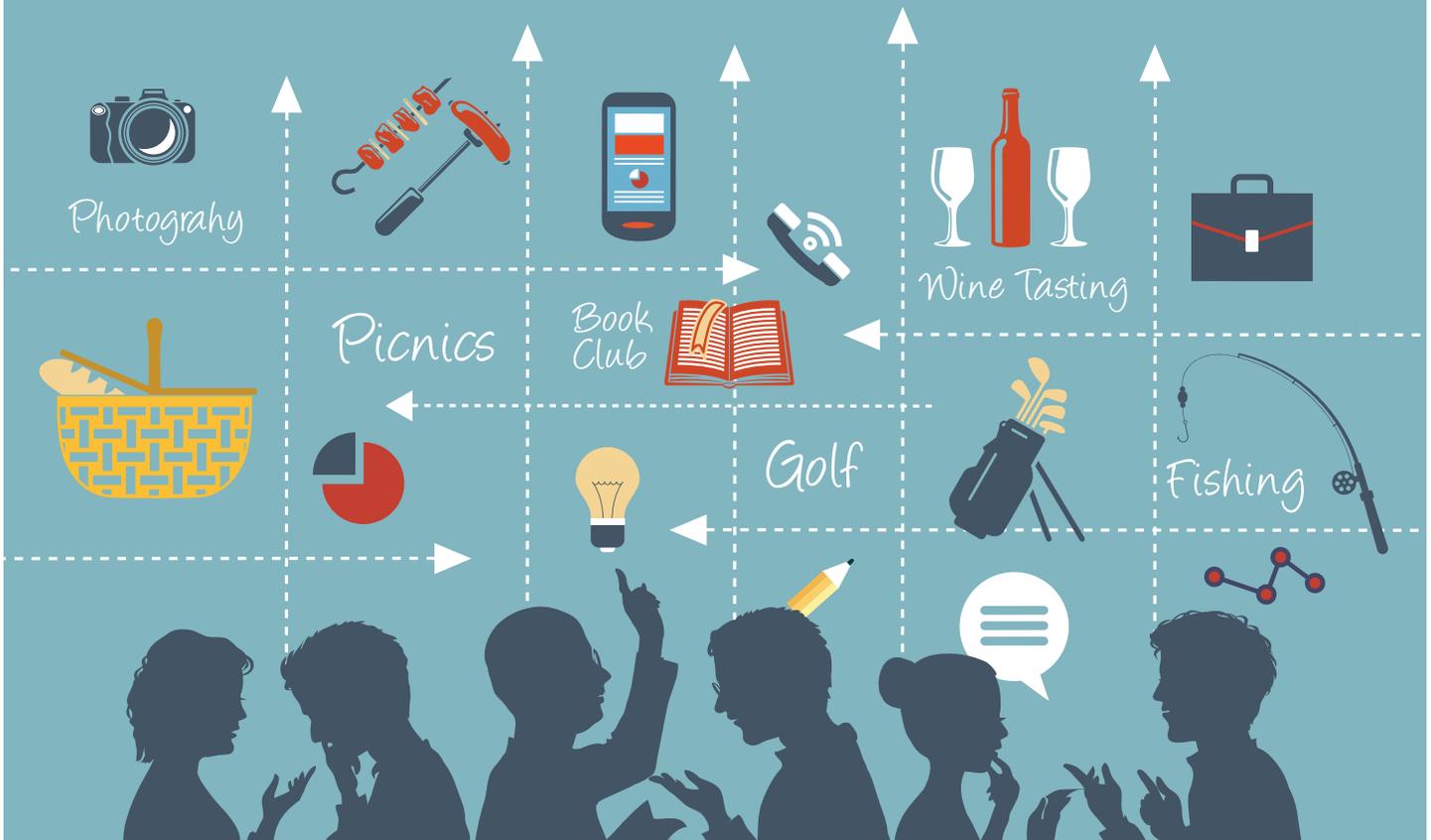




# BONDING, BUILDING TRUST & BREAKING BARRIERS

How to get the most from your client events.



Client events bring a bevy of benefits, including business growth, better-educated clients and new clients. Learn from top-performing advisors how to host client events that can help build your book of business, improve client retention and deliver a valuable experience.



## Events Ideas

In addition to the events mentioned in this article, here's some more inspiration.

- *Popcorn and a movie, in your office or rent a theater*
- *Outdoor movie*
- *Bowling night*
- *Grandparents Day celebration*
- *Ice cream social in your office*
- *Retirement day (host a "retirement party" to discuss how to prepare for retirement)*
- *Animal lover's evening at a local shelter*
- *"Antique Road Show" event with free appraisals*
- *Thanksgiving pumpkin pie giveaway (buy pumpkin pies, and send happy Thanksgiving cards/emails that invite clients to pick up their free pies at your office on a certain date)*
- *Money happy hour (host a two-hour "happy hour" at an upscale hotel lobby bar)*

## Why client events are important.

You know that even the savviest client makes decisions based on emotion. She wants to provide for her grandchildren. He wants to invest in a company that aligns with his values. With a client event, you connect with clients on an emotional level and build rapport and trust by showing that you're interested in them as individuals and not just as revenue generators. They see that you want to get to know them. This is a powerful message and motivator.

Personal interaction with a targeted demographic can build loyalty and generate new interest, adding to your customer base and building business. With this in mind, here are some reasons why client events are important and should be in your sustained marketing plan.

**They set the stage for future referrals.** In real estate, it's location, location, location. For advisors, it's referrals, referrals, referrals. Use client events as a referral strategy for business development. If you host a regular campaign of client events, your clients will think of you more often than if you merely have a yearly meeting in your office. In addition to seeing you more often, clients will feel that you've done more for them. When a friend or colleague asks for a referral, you'll be at the top of the list. Kevin Dunnigan of Loveland, Colorado knows this firsthand. As he reports, "I take a dozen top clients to my mountain cabin for a few days of fishing every year to spend time with them outside the office. This has really worked well."

**They help cement client loyalty.** Client events are invaluable for building relationships and loyalty. A popular client event, especially one with fewer attendees that offers a valuable experience, lets you get to know your clients and vice-versa. Events also let you demonstrate quiet leadership. The more your clients like and trust you, the more they'll trust you with their investments and future.

**They create more business from current clients.** For one thing, when you sponsor appreciation events, clients feel that you care about them, their family, their objectives and their future; for another, they'll feel that you've made an extra effort to get to know them beyond a portfolio analysis. As a result, they will entrust you with more business. Joy Johnston of Sheyboygan, Wisconsin holds an annual picnic and noticed a measurable difference in her business. As she put it, "The big client appreciation party is in September. My business spikes in October. That is not a coincidence."



**They are a way to reinvest in your brand.** Your positioning in the market is critical and events are a way to add value to the services you provide, not to mention differentiate yourself from the competition. Events let your clients know you care about them, and this adds substance to your brand – you aren't "the advisor who never calls." The more you can surprise and delight your clients, the better. Another benefit is, clients enjoy meeting members of your team. As Drew Grider of the Chicago area found out, "Clients told us that they didn't realize our practice was as big as it is. They liked meeting the whole office."

**They promote you as a leader in the field.** You don't need to "talk shop" at a client event, and indeed, often you shouldn't. But if it's an educational event and you're the speaker, you automatically gain expert status. The same will happen if you're not the speaker, but can answer related questions from your clients more accurately because you know their situation.

**They are easy to repeat.** Once you have a successful client event, you can repeat it regularly. Clients will look forward to attending, and you have another reliable component of your marketing plan. In addition, once you have vendors and a location in place, it will be easier to plan and execute.

**They're a golden opportunity to spend time with the people who are most important to your business.** Without clients, you wouldn't have a practice. Above all, client events are a way to spend an enjoyable stretch of time with the people who are the heart and soul of your business. You're important to them because you help them with their investments, financial management and retirement. They're important to you because your practice is important to you. It's a win-win no matter how you look at it. In addition, as Bernie Van Eperen of Green Bay, Wisconsin discovered, "Clients will tell you 10 times more things in a social setting than they will in a business meeting." More and better information helps you make better decisions for your clients.

### Event Ideas (cont.)

- Evening at a local aquarium
- Book club with a local author discussing their book
- Casino night
- Tastings: wine; cigar and scotch; coffee; beer
- Night at a comedy club
- Cooking class
- Evening at the museum with docent
- Family event at amusement park
- Fashion and finance seminar with a fashion show
- Fishing night at a local hatchery
- Helicopter ride outing
- Photography lessons
- Poker night with lessons
- Boat cruise
- Scrapbooking night
- Shrimp and lobster boil
- Tennis party and Wimbledon viewing
- Holiday decorating class



*"We give Tiffany wine glasses to all the clients who gave a referral the previous year. We typically get two or three more referrals the next week after people see the wine glasses and want them."*

**Bernie Van Eperen**  
Green Bay, WI

## The three types of client event.

**1. Prospecting.** Ask your best clients to invite guests, provide you with referrals, or you invite prospects you've met. (Please note that A clients aren't necessarily the wealthiest; they are also those who supply referrals.) These events can be as wide-ranging as a large-group outing to a baseball game, or as intimate as a dinner for four. If your event is for those who share a common interest such as fly fishing, that's "niche prospecting" or "passion prospecting."

**2. Education.** You provide information about some aspect of the industry. If the program, lecture, panel or workshop focuses on one of your offerings, keep it low-key – clients don't like a sales pitch, but they are open to interesting presentations. Invite a wholesaler to speak and they often will share expenses or pay the entire bill. Some topics for educational events include estate planning, Social Security benefits and how to choose the right Medicare supplemental plan.

**3. Appreciation.** Make your clients feel valued by fostering friendships, getting to know them and letting them get to know you. You may give them a brief market update, or not, depending on the group. This is also an opportunity to resurrect dormant accounts; if there are clients you'd like to get back into your office, invite them, too. Popular outings include picnics, wine or beer tastings, cooking classes, professional sporting events, theater performances, concerts and wine-and-paint classes. Take advantage of what your town or city has to offer, as does Mary Kusske of Burnsville, Minnesota: "I've taken clients to a baseball game and we had a tailgate. We've gone to the zoo, bowling and to gardening classes. One of the most memorable events was when we rented out our dinner theatre for a performance of a popular musical."

No matter which type of event you hold, your goal is to always make a good impression, reinforce your current clients' faith in you and bring potential clients closer to signing with you.

## Hosting a successful event.

**Check with compliance.** When planning an event, check with your compliance department so you're aware of all the requirements and have all necessary approvals.



**Take care of the details.** Checklists are invaluable. The bigger and more complicated the event, the more help and time you'll need. For a smaller event, you may be able to handle it yourself or with minimal support.

**At the event, be a personable host.** Talk with every guest and ask them about themselves, their families, their interests. Don't talk business.

**Be flexible.** No matter how carefully you plan, it's likely that something (or several somethings) will go wrong. Do what you can to find a solution, and don't let it ruin the event for your guests.

**Thank your guests at the event.** If it's an intimate dinner, it'll be easy to thank your guests for coming. If it's a larger event, thank as many of your guests as possible. If you make a short speech, be sure to include a thank-you.

**Give them something to take home.** Choose parting gifts that are compliant with regulations and tie in to the event. If you can brand them, even better. For example, if you have a wine tasting, give wine glasses that include your company logo.

## Follow up and make regular touches.

**Thank your guests.** During the week after the event, send a thank-you card, make a phone call, or somehow thank your guests. Ask for feedback on how you can improve the event the next time, and tell them about the next event so they can put it on their calendars. If the guest is a new prospect, ask for their email address and ask if they'd like to subscribe to your newsletter.

**Schedule events throughout the year.** Many successful advisors have one or two big events every year. When you do this, clients save the date and look forward to the festivities. Also schedule regular smaller events, such as a shredding party or coffee social, for the rest of the year and list them in your newsletter.

**Use a questionnaire to discover client interests.** Before an in-person appointment with a client, ask them to fill out a brief questionnaire about their hobbies, interests, sports they enjoy, teams they support, where they went to school, etc. Make lists of clients who share interests, and you've got instant event ideas and guest lists for niche events.

## Event Planning Checklist

- Objective/Purpose
- Theme
- Timeline
- Location  
availability, size, cost
- Transportation
- Invitations  
gather lists, create message,  
print and mail invites,  
track RSVPs
- Food/Catering  
select provider, determine  
budget, select menu,  
consider dietary restrictions,  
place order
- Rental Items  
choose tables, chairs,  
linens, china/plasticware,  
tents/outside enclosures,  
heaters/fans for weather  
conditions
- Entertainment
- Decorations  
flowers, signage
- Pictures/Video  
photographer, videographer
- Audio/Visuals  
sound, TV, overhead projector
- Giveaways
- Liability Insurance
- Security
- Back-up Plans



*“At our annual picnic, clients see their friends, and they feel more comfortable and like they’ve made a good decision.”*

Kevin Dunnigan  
Loveland, CO

## Client events are essential to your business.

Solid client relationships are key to your success, and regularly hosting client events is a great way to build trust-based relationships so that clients will send referrals and more business your way. This isn’t merely “nice”— it’s a powerful expression of client loyalty. Plus, client events happen to be fun!

## NPH can put you on the fast track to growth.

You’ve just read about how events are one way to boost your practice’s success. National Planning Holdings, Inc. (NPH) has business programs, technology, tools and resources that can help you build your book and grow your business the way you want. Here are some of our proven offerings:

- **Practice Management** – Learn best practices for strategy, marketing, business evolution, personnel management and other critical aspects of your business.
- **Advisor Dashboard** – Award-winning,<sup>1</sup> cloud-based front office platform
- **WealthONE®** – Use our advisory platform to manage client accounts and save time with paperless, easy-to-use, turnkey investment solutions

Each product and service offering is fully backed by a team of experts that’s ready to help you. We’ll give you customized training and support, answer all your questions and be there when you need us. Why do we do this? Because no broker-dealer network takes care of advisors like NPH. Your success is our only priority, and we do everything we can to help you reach your goals.

National Planning Holdings, Inc. (NPH) is the nation’s fourth-largest broker-dealer network,<sup>2</sup> dedicated to helping you run your practice your way. We’ve got the solutions, technology, and experienced people you need to help you succeed. When you join one of our four, full-service broker-dealers you gain access to our exclusive Advisor Growth Team, offering one-on-one, in-depth programs that can help you maximize growth and revenue, provide exceptional service to clients, and create an environment that attracts and retains top talent.

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To learn more about the unparalleled support you’ll receive from NPH, contact us at 877-428-8860 or visit [NationalPlanningHoldings.com](http://NationalPlanningHoldings.com).



<sup>1</sup> Bank Insurance & Securities Association (BISA) Technology Innovation Award, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Denise Southwood and Ellie Zhu, “How the Biggest Independent Broker-Dealer Networks Stack Up: Ranking Five Big IBD Networks by Reps and Revenue,” Investment News, May 1, 2015.

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