

# How can you get better results from hosting in-person events?



**A guide to improve your return  
on marketing investment**



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**Hosting events can be a good way to:**

- **get closer to existing clients, referrers and other professional contacts**
- **showcase your firm's expertise**
- **introduce new fee earners**
- **start conversations and get to know new prospects**

**There is a multitude of formats for hosting both business and social events.**

**Examples include (but not limited to):**

- **legal updates**
- **educational talks**
- **after work drinks**
- **expert panel discussions**

**However, one thing we've learned is that hosting events doesn't always deliver the return on investment of time and resources that is desired.**

**This is why we have brought together what we've learned and will share with you:**

- **Practical tips that will help you to get better results from events that you host in your firm**
- **Checklists to help to prepare, deliver, and follow up events**
- **Ideas to help you make your events more memorable**

**And of course, if this special report raises any questions regarding hosting events (or about anything else related to your marketing or business development) please email [info@tenandahalf.co.uk](mailto:info@tenandahalf.co.uk).**

# What can you do before to prepare for events?

## 1. Have clear objectives

**What do you want to happen after the event?**

Many events are planned with a lack of clarity about the purpose, target audience, and how that success will be measured. Its better to have a small event with clear objectives and the right audience who will act afterwards than a large event that delivers no return to the business.

**How exactly will you measure success?** Set smart and specific goals, e.g., number of follow up conversations after the event with people that attended; number of requests for additional information (e.g., a report that is referenced at the event); an uplift in visits to the firm's website in the next 24 hrs; etc.

**In the planning, be clear at the outset about who is responsible for what.** A project manager should be appointed to oversee the process and have overall accountability.

## 2. Mitigate risk when scheduling

**When committing to a date, plan a minimum of 6 - 8 weeks from the date confirmation to the actual event.** It takes time to get invites out, prepare, and promote. Invitees have busy diaries and need plenty of advance notice to schedule around other commitments.

**If you are planning a social event, Thursdays are usually the best as people will be more relaxed about a late night and that is close to the weekend.**

**Before committing to a date check that there are no clashes with other events in the firm internally and externally.**

## 3. Book appropriate facilities well in advance

**In deciding on the size of space required anticipate that only 70% of people who book places will attend the event.**

**Booking a smaller space gives the impression of more intimacy. A large space with poor attendance isn't a great look.**

**Catering is important. Book this well in advance from a trusted source. Order more than the numbers you expect so that there is no danger of running out of food or drink. Surplus food can be donated to a local charity and drink can be kept for future events. People are more likely to remember good catering than the content of a talk!**

# What can you do before events to prepare?

## 4. Be targeted and personal in sending out invitations

Use a Client Relationship Management (CRM) system to compile a first draft list. This list should then be shared with fee earners who can make checks and suggest additions and/or deletions.

Sending out email invitations from a central marketing address feels cold and the acceptance rate will be lower. Instead make it personal by asking fee earners that own relationships to invite their contacts.

Sending out one email invitation will not be enough. A reminder should be sent out at the half-way point between the initial invite and the date of the event. The day before the event a 'we are looking forward to seeing you' note should be sent too as a way of welcoming invitees.

## 5. Create and deliver engaging content that sticks

Know your audience and frame the content for their needs. Too often content is unnecessarily technical and not focused on explaining clearly, in bite sized steps, what people need to do back 'in the office'.

Research of recall after events, shows that people can have difficulty assimilating a lot of information that is presented. What people will remember is how the presenter and event organisers made them feel.

By focusing on engagement (not content details) you will get a better response from the audience. This means making slides and text light and visually engaging. Structure talks around 3 key messages. More than this will not be remembered.

## 5.1 Close with a call to action.

Ask the audience to take a small next step to nudge the conversation forward.

Effective business development is a process, not a one-off activity.

Here are some possible calls to action:

- Ask people while they are in the room to connect with you now on LinkedIn.
- Offer to send a report with additional information, within the next 24 hours, to those people who leave their details in a box by the exit.

This is a great way to get around the problem of people not being able to assimilate a lot of detail at the event. Also, it makes it easier to continue a dialogue with event attendees.

- Say that you are ringfencing half a day on a specific date in 4 weeks' time, to have off the clock 30-minute conversations with anyone at the event that would like to speak to you. Make it clear this will be on a first come first served basis and direct people to block time on a pro forma that is in the room of the event.
- Say that you will be staying on after event to answer questions 1on1, etc.

# What can you do before events to prepare?



## 6. Rehearse

Rehearsals are critical to iron out issues and ensure everything goes smoothly on the day of the event. Make time in fee earners diaries for this at the start of the project planning in order to protect the time.

If you are collaborating with external speakers this is particularly important as the approach should be consistent and you need to avoid duplication, mixed messages, or unwanted surprises on the day of the event.

Good advisers do not necessarily make good presenters. Honing the presentation skills of fee earners is time well spent. Strong delivery of presentation skills correlate with effective business development.

## 7. Promote your event across different channels

Social media is an effective event marketing tool due to the large number of users and ease of sharing that it provides. It is a great way to stay top of mind among your target audience. Make sure to announce the event and post regular updates on LinkedIn.

Also promote events on the firm's website through an event calendar and/or blog. The blog can be a versatile place to share related content leading up to the event, as well as the event's success afterwards through photos, video clips or recaps. This is good for search engine optimization purposes and helps keep your audience engaged.

Consider setting up online registration on your website or an external platform. Online registration offers a quick and easy way for people to sign up for an event, such as a seminar or webinar. It can also help you anticipate the number of attendees and prepare accordingly.



# What can you do on the day of the event?



## 1. Make your guests comfortable

Be considered in who and how many colleagues at the firm are present. You don't want to overwhelm guests with too many introductions and give the impression of being salesy.

Make people feel comfortable and introduce attendees to one another. Have a plan to do this rather than leave to chance by deciding before the event, who will look after who.

Firm attendees should spend time with external guests, not talk too colleagues. They should stay for the duration of the event and be the last people to leave.

## 2. Set up the room to maximise audience engagement.

If there is a talk and the audience will be c.60 people or more, set up tables in cabaret format to enable the presenters to walk around the room.

If there are c.12 people a horseshoe arrangement works well. If there are 10 people or fewer it's better for presenters to sit down with the audience rather than stand up.

Remove any physical barriers that may cause a disconnect between the presenters or panellists and the audience. This means removing unnecessary tables and lecterns. Lecterns are old fashioned and not necessary for slick presenters.

Set the room temperature to 19.5/20.0 degrees, not warmer, A room with people will warm up quickly. An over warm room will result in people switching off and even falling asleep.

Ensure that the meeting room presents the firm in the best light and that the décor is consistent with the firm's client value proposition. You may, for example, showcase clients and/or pro bono activity in the community with photographs on the wall and have awards on display.

# What can you do on the day of the event?

## 3. Food and drink

**Avoid the arrival or removal of food from distracting your audience from speakers.**

**If possible it's better to have food outside the event room.**

**Alternatively encourage people to eat before presentations or wait to serve food until the talks are finished.**

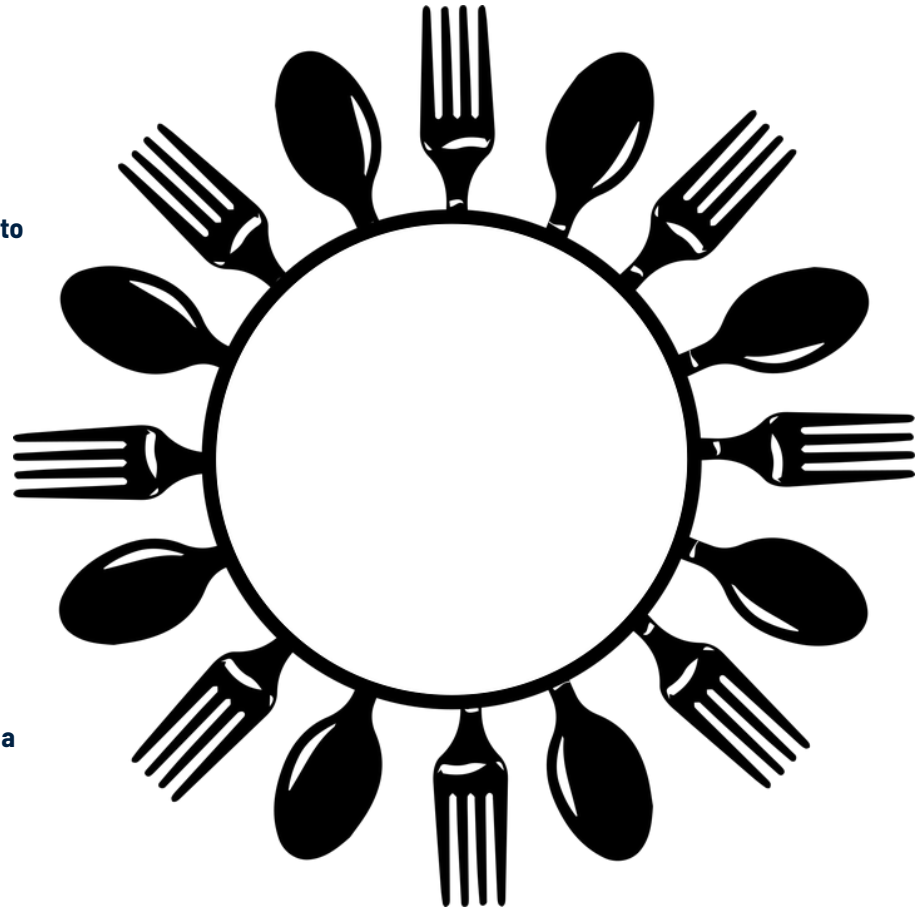
**Hire professional staff to do the waitering. Employing more junior staff sends the wrong message, especially if these are female employees.**

**Don't scrimp on catering. Eating and watering people well shows warmth and generosity.**

## 4. Photographs

**Ask someone to take photographs.**

**These can be used after the event to support LinkedIn blogs and as a follow up mechanic to continue the dialogue with guests.**





# What can you do AFTER the event?

## 1. Post key takeaways on LinkedIn

Share key takeaways from the event within 24 hrs and support these with a photograph to help engagement. Name tag people that you wish to thank for supporting the event.

## 2. Have an internal debrief

It is important to have a debrief while the event is still fresh in peoples' minds. What worked? What might you do differently next time? Who is assuming responsibility for the follow up and when is this going to happen?

## 3. Recycle, repurpose, and repackage content

Video record all events and make them available to people that were unable to attend the live event. These recordings can also be uploaded onto the firm's website and become part of a knowledge bank. This will help both search engine optimisation (if you support with key words) and showcase the firm to potential new clients and referrers.

You can extend the shelf life of video content by repurposing it into blog posts, special reports and/ or eBooks.

## 4. Immediate follow up to those that attended

Winning new instructions, referrals and opportunities will require you to build in many touch points into the marketing and BD process. Its critical to follow up promptly and with a campaign of communications that add value at each step of the process.

By making available supporting content after the event (e.g., fact sheets and supplementary information) its easier to nudge the conversation forward naturally.

If this feels too salesy just ask for event feedback to help maintain a dialogue.

Sharing photographs is another effective way to keep communication open. Email photographs the day after an event that you host.



# What can you do **AFTER** the event?



## 5. Follow up to those that signed up but didn't attend the event

Email people that signed up but didn't attend the event. Again, you can share slide-decks and/or supporting materials. You might also suggest scheduling a phone call or arrange a coffee meeting.

## 6. Stay visible

The marketing doesn't stop there. Implementation of ongoing coffee plans, creating valuable content, and staying on a contact's radar is essential to translate investment of events into new business.

# What next?

**If you'd like to discuss how your firm can get a better return on its marketing investment from hosting in-person events, (or have any other questions relating to marketing or BD) please email us at [info@tenandahalf.co.uk](mailto:info@tenandahalf.co.uk) and we'll find a convenient time to talk.**



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