

Excited about the next conference? Five reasons you should be!



In our busy, social media crazy world we often forget the importance of being in a live face-to-face setting with others from the profession. Being active in our profession can bring with it many benefits. There is power in being connected to colleagues, but it can also be easy to talk yourself out of committing to that annual meeting year after year.

Many people think that joining an organization is enough, but to capitalize on the return of your investment, you need to be engaged and participate in professional meetings. Some quarters do think that being around colleagues for what essentially is a self-employed person's profession can be a waste of time, or worse, a chance for others to steal your ideas. However, not everyone in your profession is actually a competitor, as many can be allies and friends. The mindset one chooses about participating in events will eventually impact our results and professional success.

The primary goal of conferences is continuing education. It should be underscored however that traditional scientific conferences set a wide array of goals and that their key strength lies in the widespread interaction and social networking they provide. Technology has yet to overcome the power of eye contact in generating new ideas, thoughts and collaborations.^[1]

HERE ARE FIVE REASONS TO ATTEND YOUR NEXT ORTHODONTIC CONFERENCE

Educational opportunities

No matter how experienced you are at orthodontics, everyone can learn. The world knowledge bank is doubling every 3 years, and updating as well as contributing to it is a professional obligation! Working in a practice by oneself,

can often be isolating, and without exposure to a variety of points of view, we can miss new ideas and trends that can impact future results. The educational aspect of a conference can expose one to new ways of conducting your practice, and help you discover how to be more productive.

Networking with peers

Conferences provide a great opportunity to network. Often colleagues from other regions of the country/world can become valuable resources for referrals and best practices. Avoiding peers for fear of others discovering your competitive advantage can actually limit your own success. Collaboration is the way to approach networking. While there are those whose intentions can be suspect, most people can help each other uncover ideas and spark inspiration when they get to know each other on a personal level. I for one, have learnt a lot of my orthodontics by peer interaction and continuing education lectures, and vouch for a fact, that just reading the same information would not have been as insightful. A casual statement to this effect by Dr. House, MD from the popular television (TV) series says it all, "Watch more TV, read less"!!! Holistic education has to be beyond published literature!

Encounter new products and suppliers

Too often, people shy away from the trade show exhibit halls at conferences. They fear that they will have to bear the shameless selling by salespeople, but these industry suppliers are some of the best people for you to get to know, if you want to learn more about the current professional climate. Discovering innovative products and services for your practice is necessary to stay competitive in today's fast-paced world. Plus, these vendors who sell to your profession, fully grasp what is happening inside your competition. Invest time with the sponsors at the event and turn them into your friends and allies.

Position yourself as an expert

When you are active in your profession, you can develop a reputation as an expert to your peers, students and patients. Those who are engaged over the long term are often asked to speak at events and to write articles for their professional publications. Like it or not, others like to associate with the experts in any industry. Patients feel

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good about being with those that are celebrated by their peers. If your strategy is to be “the best-kept secret in your professional community,” you will be missing a lot of valuable opportunities!

Have fun

Being a successful professional should be rewarding and fun. All work and no play can get you old fast. Conferences can add a layer of enjoyment to managing your career growth by mixing a social aspect into your learning and professional branding efforts. Many events have fun activities such as parties, golf, and tours of the local area where the event is hosted. Taking an extra day at the beginning or end of the trip to explore or visit friends in the region is also a great way to maximize the investment in travel. Never underestimate the power of a little fun mixed with some interesting people!

Many falsely believe that since they can now access industry information via the Internet that the days of the live meeting are gone. The truth is, meetings are more important than ever.

The value in meetings comes from the human-to-human connections that occur. Often people cite the serendipitous “hallway conversations” that they have with other attendees as the most valuable parts of attending an event. While these are not on the agenda, or mentioned in the plenary sessions learning objectives, when two or more people

begin to discuss topics on a deeper and personal level, the success of the event to those involved becomes irreplaceable. It is the people that actually bring the “Return on Investment” to your time at a conference!

So friends from the APOS, tighten your seat belts, and brace yourselves for the many one-on-one’s that await all of us, later this year in Kuching! See you all there ...



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