



HISTORY: The Table for Six format event has been a consistently successful alumni event that encourages a variety of networking opportunities in a flexible format. The event has six tables with one speaker and five guests at each table. Attendance at the event is purposefully capped at six tables. The events are typically held on a weeknight evening from 6:00pm to 9:00pm. Each speaker provides a short bio and picture that can be used for event marketing and programs.

DETAILS

The organizer of the Duke NY events, Phil McKenzie (B'99), hosts a Table for Six events three times per year and has been selling out Table for Six programs for three years. Historically Duke NY has only expanded two of the previous programs to accommodate seven tables and feels that this maintains demand for the events and keeps the interaction more personal.

Duke NY typically hosts their Table for Six events in the same venue twice in a row. Doing this keeps the venues interesting for registrants while offering the familiarity and convenience of planning the event with one venue and using the same planning template for the second event at that venue.

The venue ideally will have an open area where people can mingle at the beginning and end of the event. It is important to select a venue that allows the seated guests at each table to talk easily, and it is recommended that the event be held in a separate room or section of the venue's dining room. Use of a corporate spaces such as a law firms can help reduce overall cost, but requires coordinating a caterer and bartender.

Pricing is kept at a modest level to encourage registration for all. The price point for NY Table for Six events is typically \$65 to \$79 and liquor is provided using a cash bar. The host volunteer is responsible for catering arrangements and providing guest numbers to the venue. The menu offerings usually include a choice of at least two entrees and it should be possible to accommodate all types of diets including gluten free and vegetarian.

To attract more young alumni, the lead volunteer can consider cost-cutting measures to reduce the registration fee. For example, the event could be hosted at a venue like an ad agency with open seating that could accommodate the necessary table arrangements. Box lunches or other casual menu items can be substituted to reduce costs also.

The host volunteer will coordinate with the DAA on contracting terms and payment. Online registration is closed prior to the event date with an option for late registrants to contact the volunteer host. Payment from those who respond after registration is closed and no walk in guests are allowed due to the format of the event.

When guests register for the event, the registration system will ask them to rank their top three table/speaker choices. Once the event registration has filled, the lead volunteer organizer will allocate the registrants to each table based on their selections. Speakers should be introduced via email at least a week to ten days prior to the event.

DETAILS continued

In order to encourage conversation, some volunteer hosts supply a short list of suggested questions for the attendees. The volunteer hosts also provide a bio of each speaker at the event using the information that was collected for the electronic event invitation.

Once guests come in, the lead alumni volunteer welcomes everybody, has them sign in using the registration list and asks them to introduce themselves quickly. The lead volunteer also makes sure the speakers know where their table will be. To keep the meeting on schedule, allocate 30 minutes to open mixing, then 60 – 90 minutes for dinner and 30 minutes for the post dinner mixing. This gives everybody a chance to meet and talk to all of the speakers.

The day after the dinner, the host should email the attendees to thank them for coming.

SPEAKERS

Duke NY curates an attention-grabbing mix of speakers for each Table for Six event and strives to include a blend of alumni from Duke's undergraduate, graduate and professional schools at each event. Doing this helps bring forth new ideas and discussion topics amongst the guests at each table. It offers the dual benefit of attracting a wider array of alumni to each event. The speakers he curates usually have attained a similar level of success and anticipated level of popularity in attracting registrants.

Philip McKenzie shared that he believes that his speaker formula stimulates interaction and does not lead to as much transactional networking as is often seen at typical "networking" events. An outcome of this approach is that the speakers and guests often advocate more for each other after the event and create more meaningful long term relationships.

PAST SPEAKERS

The format supports a wide range of diverse speakers in keeping with the "One Duke" philosophy. Examples of previous speakers include:

Lori Conkling MBA'99 – EVP, Strategy and Business Development, NBCUniversal, Inc.

Lee Waite MBA'83 – Managing Director, Citi Group

Danielle James '06 – Founder, Interactive One

J. Michael Prince MBA'01 – President & Chief Operating Officer, Cole Haan

Paul Felipe Lagunes '03 – Assistant Professor, Columbia University

Brandi Stewart '06 – Bloomberg Philanthropies Arts Program

Isela Bahena MBA'04 – Senior Director, TIAA-CREF

Detavio Samuels '02 – President, Interactive One

Rob Principe '95 – Founder & CEO, Scratch Music Group

Lisa Hinds MBA'98 – Business Development, Schultze Asset Management

Alex Fallon '93 – Co-Founder and Creative Director, The Prendel Company

Norma Padron AM'08 – Associate Director, Population Health, Lankenau Institute

THEMES

Although the NY Table for Six events do not usually have a theme, the format of Table for Six easily adapts to the use of a theme. Recently the School of Medicine organized a Table for Six event focused on "Healthcare: The Business of Medicine" with industry speakers in the Bay Area. The NC Triangle Alumni region recently organized a Table for Six event titled "Starting from Scratch: Triangle Entrepreneurs Share Their Recipes for Success" and a variety of alumni with their own businesses and startups. Both events sold out.