

# How To Increase Attendance At A Class Reunion

Having a strong and focused class reunion planning committee is one of the keys to increasing attendance at your event. Read on to learn more.

Imagine going to your class reunion only to find out that most of your classmates are not there. You're looking around all over the place but cannot recognize a face in the crowd that looks familiar.

And it's not just you either. Just about everyone at the class reunion has that same look about them.

With the average class reunion attendance of 20%, most of your classmates will be very disappointed with the turnout.

## Why Don't People Want to Show Up To The Class Reunion?

How many of you feel comfortable going to an event where you don't know anyone? After all, there are so many business mixers and social events that we skip because we don't know anyone?

Well, that is exactly how all your classmates feel when they receive the class reunion invite. They do not want to go to a party where they will feel alone or awkward.

Your job as a class reunion planner is to make sure they get comfortable before the class reunion by engaging them by way of conversations onlines, meetups, fundraisers and more. Basically, you have to find a way to get people involved.

## How do you get more classmates to attend the reunion?

Below, you will find several dozen different ways to increase attendance. Some are there to entice by way of a discount and others will create a sense of belonging to the group. Try several of the methods below to see which works best for your group.

### **The cost is one of the biggest deterring factors for guests coming from out of town**

And one the biggest expenses for classmates that are coming from out of town is the hotel rooms. They can cost hundreds a night so a three day weekend may run classmates over \$500, and that is before taxes. One simple way to lower this is to get group rates at one hotel (near the school). Often a group can get a 25% discount at a hotel so it's worth it to get group quotes for classmates coming from out of town.

### **Don't just email invitations and save the dates**

Make personal phone calls and ask them to attend. Say something like "We would love to see you at the class reunion. Many classmates have already committed to coming and we hope you can too. It would mean a great deal to all of us if we can get everyone together one more time". Making this phone call can be awkward and uncomfortable but it is absolutely necessary.

### **Use Facebook groups**

Even if you have a class reunion website, create a Facebook group. Post pictures (Old and new), share stories, let classmates talk and catch up on the Facebook group's "wall". Make sure to post any videos of graduation to get people to start reminiscing about their past.

### **Lower the cost of the class reunion by offering an early bird discount**

Lower the price by 10-20% for early bird registrations and that will instantly get you a bunch of commitments and much need cash flow to continue planning the event.

### **Keep your registration form short and simple**

Long forms with lots of questions cause people to set it aside. If you need additional information, you can always ask for it after the person has registered.

### **Turn your classmate finding into a competition**

Let everyone know that the person who helps find the most classmates will get to go to the class reunion for free. In exchange for paying for their meals, and their registration, you will have dozens of people on the hunt for you.

### **Create a class reunion website that keeps your classmates engaged in the planning process**

Ask questions via polls, participate in live chats, and answer classmate questions in the message boards. Also, post pictures and information of a nostalgic nature to keep people thinking about the past etc.

A class reunion website serves as an icebreaker in that your classmates will be able to see that they are not alone in the aging process. They won't feel the same anxiety having spoken to people through chats and message boards on the website and that will increase attendance.

### **Consider the class reunion website as a permanent home where people can connect long after the class reunion is over**

By sending out regular emails with upcoming birthdays, featured profiles of classmates and other interesting tidbits, you give people a reason to come back. Plus, by maintaining the website, you won't have to go back looking for classmates in 5 or 10 years. They would all be connected through your website or a Facebook group.

### **Have a family friendly event**

Host activities that would encourage your classmates families into attending as well. One of the biggest reasons people don't attend is because they think that they have to go alone. And that's not the case at all. Your classmates want to see how things have turned out and having your family take part in the festivities will just add to the enjoyment for both you and your family. Also, arrange for babysitting if your class is in its child rearing stage

### **Set the class reunion date around Thanksgiving or around the time of a homecoming weekend**

Many people are visiting family at this time and homecoming weekend will provide lots of school activities that classmates can participate in. Since they are going to be coming to town anyways, they may stop in to the reunion as well.

### **Encourage informal reunions in different neighboring cities or where clusters of classmates live**

Your class reunion in South Pasadena could be preceded by small mini-reunions (5 or less people meeting for lunch) in the neighboring cities or anywhere there is 4-5 or more classmates. Take a look at our, "Where We Live" feature (on a private ClassCreator class website), it's on the home page, on the right side, and see how many classmates live near you. Doing so helps classmates that are geographically in the same area meet up ahead of the reunion.

### **Tell classmates who is attending**

If they see a list of names that they recognize, it will encourage them to register too. When creating a class reunion website, make sure to have a page that has a list of confirmed attendees. You can maintain

this list manually but we would recommend that you choose a class reunion website builder that automatically updates the list of “Who is coming” based on new registrations. The site we use, ClassCreator.com does a good job of this for the individual private class websites.

### **Create a competition between classes**

Let your class know that the previous year had this number of classmates attend and that you would like for your class to beat that. Make it a pride thing that your class reunion is stronger than theirs etc.

### **Communicate frequently with classmates, especially during the last 12 months before the reunion**

Send out email updates, post polls on the class reunion website, and ask people to get involved by volunteering. Basically, do anything it takes to keep people engaged with the class reunion. Whether that involves hosting a monthly chat online or an active message board, do whatever it takes to keep the interest high in the class reunion.

### **Have people complete their profile on the class reunion website**

Have a set of questions that let other classmates get to know the person even before the class reunion. Something like “10 Random Things About Me”. Posting this kind of information makes the site engaging and far more interesting than posting peoples ages or what they wanted to be in high school. Plus, with all this “random” information, you can create a whole slide show for the class reunion with lots of fun facts about each classmate.

### **Have a diverse group of committee members organizing the event**

Enlist classmates on the class planning committee that represent different parts of your graduating class (i.e. Male, Female, Caucasian, African American, Asian etc. ). The more diversified the group, the better a chance you have of attracting individual groups.

### **Market your class reunion every chance you get**

Do it through public service announcements, calling people, email, regular mail, and any other means that you can think of.

### **Make sure to include a tour of the school in your class reunion agenda**

Make it a 30-45 walk on a Saturday where you can visit the library, the cafeteria, the gymnasium and maybe the Junior High (now called the Middle School). People want to reconnect with their past and a tour of the school can be just the catalyst to get them to register. Sometimes the ideal place to hold your class reunion may be at the school itself. It could be held in the cafeteria or the gym. Doing so brings back memories for classmates and makes for one nostalgic evening. Of course check with the school to see if this is even possible and what is involved.

Increasing the attendance at a class reunion creates a stronger class identity that will last an entire lifetime. It will help form stronger bonds of friendship and give each an identity that they will cherish. Use as many of the suggestions above to help you increase the attendance at your class reunion.