

# Value of Trade Show Events and Orthodontic Meetings

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Some orthodontic residents and recent graduates will debate the importance of attending orthodontic meetings such as the American Association of Orthodontists national meeting. It is believed that these meetings are intended only for doctors who currently have practices, but that is a common misunderstanding. There is an immense amount of value for residents and recent graduates who attend orthodontic meetings. These events specifically host lectures and exhibitors directly targeted to doctors just starting their careers. Orthodontic events are a fantastic way to search for practice opportunities whether you plan to become a partner or hope to purchase a practice.

As a resident, the scope of meetings you may be interested in attending is greatly varied depending on your interests and career goals. Typically, residents are restricted to attending the AAO national meetings and any special interest meetings the AAO may hold, such as regional society meetings, state society meetings and of course the GORP meeting. You will not necessarily qualify or be interested in study club meetings, consultant meetings, or user group meetings for topics such as practice management, imaging and patient education software.



When thinking about finding a practice opportunity there is no place better to consider than the AAO and GORP meetings. These events provide an excellent opportunity for beneficial networking. We know of several orthodontists who met their partners by mere coincidence in the cafeteria line or during a presentation while at a meeting. The overall idea is you should have a plan in place to maximize your exposure when attending these meetings. Make a list of companies you would like to speak with at the event. It is strongly suggested to begin with any exhibitor that deals with valuation and transition planning. These companies will have a grasp on the orthodontic market and will be knowledgeable about what practices may or may not be available. Ideally, you should be able to sit down and discuss candidly your future desires such as the type of practice you anticipate owning outright or in which you would like to become a partner. This conversation should be somewhat detailed, so arrive prepared and available to allocate time at their booth if you are eager for expert help.

The next set of contacts you should speak with is the major supply companies. These company's representatives have a very solid pulse on the majority of the practices in their territories. Once you build a strong relationship with them, they can help you identify several potential practices that may be looking to sell or to bring in a partner. Representatives are extremely knowledgeable about market conditions and the competitive environment in certain areas, which may interest you. It is paramount in all these discussions to treat any information shared as strictly confidential.

Consider talking with practice management consultants that may be attending. While you do not have a practice yet, registering with them and allowing them to know your prospective practice interests may move things along faster than either of the previous two methods. Orthodontic practice consultants have a very loyal group of practices that rely on them not only for their expertise, but their knowledge of the marketplace and what is occurring at any given time within it. A consultant may have a client who needs, or is looking for, someone to enter into the practice. Additionally, throughout your career you may wish to hire a consultant, so becoming acquainted with them now is always helpful in building your practice in the future.

There are countless ways to locate practice opportunities. By using the resources available at key trade shows, one can advance in the transition process ahead with confidence. There are individuals that residents should speak with for additional help. Do not let the few days spent at a meeting slip away without making contacts. Your trade show contacts may ultimately help locate a practice where you eventually work as a partner or become an owner.

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