

# AN INTROVERT'S *guide* TO THE AADOM CONFERENCE

MEMBER ARTICLE | BY CARA HULL, MAADOM



AADOM Conference registration is open! The AADOM Conference is the one dental conference that I plan my schedule around because I enjoy it and learn so much every year.

With that being said, I'm an introvert! I get a little nervous walking into the conference room filled with hundreds of other dental managers. I can talk myself out of plans because it's easier to stay in on a Friday night with my comfy clothes. I'm ok to have other people take the stage while I sit back and watch, and I'll admit that I'm a little awkward when starting conversations. That's why I thought this article was so important to write. Fellow introverts who are talking yourself out of attending this conference in September because it stretches you out of your comfort zone, just stop and sign yourself up! Here are a few tips to help guide you through this rewarding conference (this just might help you extroverts too):

## START WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

Once you have completed your registration for the conference, you will be able to join the official AADOM Conference Facebook group. This is an easy way to watch and participate before the conference begins. Other office managers share travel and packing tips as we gear up for the conference. During the AADOM conference, fellow attendees are posting meeting places to join for dinner or fun evening activities. Even after conference the Facebook group is active for a couple of weeks as everyone shares pictures or highlights of the event. You definitely want to be a part of the Facebook page to keep a pulse on what is going on during the conference.

## TEXT REMINDERS

Provide your cell phone number and mark on your registration form that you want to participate in text reminders. I know as an introvert,

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you are hesitant to give your phone number because you don't want people to call or send you random information. This will not happen. It will give you a reminder to head to your breakout sessions or other don't-miss opportunities. The text reminders are very helpful.

## ATTEND BREAKFAST

Oh, I can talk myself out of breakfast because it is easier to eat in my room while I get ready. Don't do that! Get yourself down to the ballroom for breakfast. It is great how the conference coordinators have structured breakfast as a time to network and to get to know your fellow office managers.

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This is done by table and usually by a relatable subject like state, specialty or some other clever idea. You are able to eat breakfast with a small table of like-minded individuals and share ideas. Breakfast is the most important meal of the day and gets you started on the right foot.

## VENDORS

AADOM has the best vendors at their conference and the numbers seem to grow each year. This can be a little overwhelming when you see all the tables and booths lined up to share product information with you. Keep in mind, I estimate that over 95% of the vendors are

extroverts. They thrive on visiting with people and having fun. For us introverts, this is good news. We just need to approach their booth and they will take over the conversation from there! Thank goodness, because I struggle with first time conversations.

If you still aren't convinced that you will be comfortable visiting with all the vendors available, start with the ones that you currently partner with and the ones that seem the most interesting to you. I really think vendors appreciate hearing from current clients. It gives you an opportunity to ask any questions or gain assistance for any challenges that your office might be facing; plus, you can thank them for supporting AADOM. The Care Credit booth has sponsored some free book signing events in the past, the Patterson booth has had conference commemorative pins available, and many of the vendors have prizes or giveaways. Remember to save room in your suitcase for all the swag.

Not to mention—you will want to visit as many vendor booths as possible so you can be entered into the drawing on the last day of the conference for fabulous prizes! One year my name was drawn and I won an iPad! I felt like I won the lottery. If you don't participate, you will be kicking yourself on the last day when everyone else's name is being called for a prize.

## SMALL GROUPS

Interacting in small groups is one of my favorite things about

conference. Check if there is an AADOM chapter in your area or state so you can meet office managers close to you. If you are a dental spouse, you will want to check out the Dental Spouse Network which is a wonderful group of people. And if you are a first-time attendee, make sure that you take part in any sessions associated with you. The breakout sessions normally have a maximum number of attendees, so sign up early to get your spot. I like that the breakout sessions are smaller groups so we can feel comfortable visiting with those sitting around us.

## STAY AT THE CONFERENCE HOTEL

Make your reservation early so you have a room at the conference hotel. As an introvert, this is a must for me. I like that I can go to my room for a break at the end of the day before heading out to dinner with friends. If there's a crisis back at the dental office, I have a quiet place to help me regroup and then get back to the fun. And there's nothing wrong with turning in early to have some time to relax and recharge before the next day. If you have a room right at the conference hotel, you have a "home base" and less stress worrying about transportation.

Please know that the AADOM tribe is a very welcoming group, and no matter if you are an introvert or extrovert, you will have a good time if you let yourself. I can't wait to see you all in September! ■



## MEET THE MEMBER

Cara Hull, MAADOM and her husband, Dr. Joseph Hull, own a general dental practice in Gregory, SD. She is a lifetime member of AADOM. Cara is also a member of AADOM's Dental Spouse Business Network. She earned her Fellowship (FAADOM) in 2012, and most recently in 2021 she earned her AADOM Mastership (MAADOM) designation.