



HEATHER NELSON

The concierge at downtown's hottest hotel just sent you an email...

Dying to have you and forty of your friends celebrate your BFF's birthday at their sleek, rooftop venue, they're offering you a sweet food and beverage deal and promise to provide top-notch VIP service. The proposition is tempting, but you're keeping your options open. You hit *REPLY* to tell them you *might* be interested.

Next up in your inbox is a message from a chic La Jolla lounge. They want to host your party, and their offer is out of this world and just what you've been waiting for. You book the reservation and relish in the celebrity treatment you've grown accustomed to. But you're no A-lister; you're just a savvy user of Social Betty—San Diego's new event-planning service.

Social Betty is the next step in the evolution of party-planning. At the heart of the service is SocialBetty.com, an online portal that invites venues to

compete for your business. You call the shots. You negotiate the deals. Here's how it works: you post your event's details, including date, time, number of people, budget, etc. Participating venues respond to the postings they're interested in accommodating, then you communicate with the venues that appeal to you.

After connecting through the web portal, you and the venue iron out any final arrangements before the big day. It's a win-win—event organizers save time and money, gaining leverage by having venues compete for their business, while venues benefit from gaining access to a pool of event planners, which can lead to a boost in revenue.

San Diego native and SDSU alum, Heather Nelson, founded Social Betty in 2006 to satisfy event organizers' growing demand for a way into hip

venues at reasonable prices. Nelson's concept also fulfills venues' needs to attract groups to their establishments, especially during off-peak hours.

In a tumultuous economy, SocialBetty.com is a site for sore eyes. "So many restaurants and bars are facing hard times due to consumer cutbacks on discretionary income," says Nelson. "Venues generate additional revenue while attracting groups that they otherwise might not have access to. On the flip side, organizers are provided with venue options they might not have considered. Accessing venues has never been this easy or affordable."

For now, SocialBetty.com serves only the San Diego area, but Nelson has plans to launch the service in Orange County, Los Angeles and major metropolitan areas nationwide.

INFO: socialbetty.com

Show gratitude to your hosts:
DON'T complain about the food choices or how last year's party was better. **DO** make sure to show gratitude to the host and sponsors of your big night. Time, energy and money are spent on planning holiday parties, and your host/employer may remember your compliments—or complaints—when deciding your next promotion.

Make it a night to remember:
DON'T do shots. It's true, they usually bring groups to a cohesive state, but they also have a way of sneaking up on you and bringing out your alter ego, putting you at risk of embarrassing yourself, or worse. **DO** stick with more traditional drinks and mix in some water and food.

Avoid copy machines.
DO let the hired photographer do his job.

Consider your significant other.
DO be mindful of how your relationship with your better-half could affect your office reputation. **DON'T** make this the place to reveal that you live in a war zone or have an open relationship.

Prepare your exit ahead of time.
DO make sure ahead of time to arrange a taxi or an alternate ride home if you plan to drink at all. These logistics are more difficult to manage once your third glass of wine hits its mark, and you **DON'T** want to impact others' enjoyment by forcing them to make arrangements for you.

Don't show up drunk.
You may not think people can tell, but they can. **DON'T** be the one that can't recall the hours that led up to waking up on the boss' basement floor.

CHOOSING A VENUE:

- * Score better deals with the hottest venues by planning your events on weekdays and off nights.
- * Consider other community happenings and plan accordingly. Don't plan an event next to the ballpark on game days, for example.
- * Consider logistics such as parking availability, traffic patterns, etc.
- * Be open to trying new places. Some venues will be more willing than others to accommodate your specific needs and earn your business.