

Seminar, workshop, breakout, or a conference? (#2 of 15)

I created a four-hour CD program a few years back called “**How to Set Up and Market Your Own Seminar.**” It was comprised of three audio CDs where I explained the concept and process, plus a downloadable guidebook (workbook) on the fourth CD, in Word, that divided the program into 15 sections.

As I update that workbook (and the audio CDs) it occurred to me that I’d never shared the workbook in blog form, in case there were other potential or active seminar-givers who might be interested or would benefit.

So here it is, section 2 of that workbook. (Section 1, the introduction, appeared on Feb. 22.) It’s a work in progress, one section a week.

(Credentials? I co-wrote a book called **Speaking for Money** (long out of print) with Mike Frank, the former President of the National Speakers Association, and, mostly after that, I gave 2000+ paid seminars.)

First, let me repeat a **guideline** from section #1 that I particularly like for achieving success in seminar-ing: “Sell hard-to-find but easy-to-apply information to participants who perceive that it will meet their needs.”

Here are four brief definitions of presentations that are often lumped together and called seminars. This might help clarify the terminology:

SEMINARS: “A group discussion” (*Webster’s New World Dictionary*); usually connotes a topic- or process-centered

gathering that meets once or a limited number of times, to discuss or share information; a short, intensified course about a specific topic. They often last 2-4 hours.

WORKSHOPS: "A seminar or series of meetings for intensive study, work, discussion, etc." Differs from a seminar in that it includes both physical and mental activity, such as teaching an art technique or skill, then making or changing an object by applying the technique or skill. Often implies a less formal atmosphere or hands-on teaching. Workshops are usually as long as a seminar, but sometimes last a full day.

CONFERENCES: "Formal meeting of a number of people for discussion or consultation." Larger than a seminar or workshop, generally featuring many speakers (or seminars, workshops, and/or breakout sessions) gathered to share knowledge about one or a series of closely-related subjects. Many times they last a weekend.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS: Often at a conference there is a keynote speaker, a main speaker or two, and one or many group sessions in seminar or workshop format. Often an hour long to about three.

Another way of defining seminars is by how many sessions comprise the seminar.

A **ONE-PART SEMINAR** is given at one time, though there may be breaks or, rarely, it may be given in two sessions on successive days or a week apart. The distinctive feature is that the seminar promises a body of information or instruction (often the solution and implementation of a gnarly problem)—and that is what the participant receives.

Another classification, a **TWO-PART SEMINAR**, can be misleading. Think of a seminar about attending summer camp or buying houses with no money down. The first part of the seminar is

usually an introductory (or “teaser”) session to explain (and sell) the product or service. The second part (almost never in seminar format) is the follow-up for those attendees who want more information or who want to register for or buy the product or service explained in the opening session. The second part may be a visit to the summer camp site or signing the contract for their children to join the camp. Or it may be a video (or several) plus a course that tells how one can purchase the houses with no money down. There is no second meeting (or group gathering). Sometimes; the attendee has bought items that are provided, or they have registered for a longer, many-session program, classes, or lessons.

A third definition might be based on how or where the seminar is offered.

PUBLIC SEMINARS: Open to the public. Often given at hotels, colleges, convention or conference sites.

IN-HOUSE PRESENTATIONS: Usually for businesses or institutions, the speaker gives their program at the sponsor’s site (or a site arranged for and paid by the company). Participants are usually from that company or from a group of cooperating companies.

Session #3 will be posted in about a week.

Best wishes,

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