

# Little things not to say when you're emceeing ...

There may be a million things not to say when you are in charge of a program or ceremony.

Let me share a half-dozen wee comments that, in themselves, aren't going to get you hooked off the podium, but, done right, they will easily distinguish you as a professional who is comfortable and smooth...

For example, do you know anybody who wants to be introduced last (unless that spot is saved for the highlight of the show)? Even worse, "last but not least." Why not say "final" or "concluding"? Or if you are using numbers, like "first speaker," "second speaker," and so on, just use the number for the last? Like "Many of you may have heard our fifth speaker, ..."

Along the same line, "We've saved the best for last..." Hmm, if I was speaker #3 of five what goes through my mind? I must have bombed, or whatever one does who isn't the best...

Ever hear, "the one and only"? That does convey special esteem, but it also makes the listeners ask, "the one and only what?" Why not tell the audience why that person is held in such high regard, like "the fastest woman in the world, ..." Even there "the one and only" may be one race from being inaccurate. Consider something less transitory like "America's most rewarded Olympic Gold swimmer, ... "

How often have you heard that the speaker "needs no introduction," then they are introduced (usually in great length)! Two points here: (1) surely there are folks in the crowd who have absolutely no idea who the person is, so you have to say something about them or their prominence, and (2) if you are certain that the coming speaker is beyond

introduction, prove it. Save the introduction.

But you can't just point at them and grunt or push the microphone into their hands. So a compromise. "\_\_\_\_ is well known to most of us..." and complete the introduction with a concise listing of their accomplishments or honors.

Finally, you must remember which is the podium and which is the lectern. You are standing on the podium, your notes are sitting on the lectern.

A very good emceeing guidebook full of solid advice is Dana LaMon's *Master the Ceremonies* (see [www.danalamon.com](http://www.danalamon.com)).

Emceeing is lots of fun—it's also alarming the first times out. The most important thing to remember is that the audience isn't there to see or hear you.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

P.S. Want to be an emcee for three or four hours, probably alone and usually non-stop? Give full seminars! Details at "[How to Set Up and Market Your Own Seminar.](#)"

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## **Promoting Your Own Seminar: Planning and Implementation**

To promote your seminar other people must know about it. Making them aware of its existence can cost you more than all of your other costs combined. So success with self-promoted seminars is directly related to how you inform potential participants, its cost, and the sign-ups resulting from that

information.

Some things help before you blow the first bugle.

If you are well known, participants may come simply to see and hear you. So **one tool is to make yourself better known**—and worth hearing. *[I talk about this in depth in the more than 20 blogs about seminars stored at this site. Just write “seminars” (no quotes) in the search box in the upper right of the first page of this blog and most of them will appear, sometimes chronologically!].*

**If the title of your seminar sparks instant interest**, you might be able to thrive with a minimum of planned publicity, counting on word-of-mouth (and usually greed) to draw an audience. If you plan to show how to turn kitchen spoons into gold, for example, you could probably speak at the dump at 2 a.m. and charge \$100 a head and make more money than you could count. Show a few opportunists a “before” spoon and an “after” gilded creation, tell each to bring a friend who can bring a friend, and so on—you get the point. And bring several dozen spoons each! Two things are at play here: the title (or topic) and your credibility. The latter can be greatly enhanced by hordes of listeners going home with golden spoons.

A third element is crucial: **audience identity**. You must know to a type and age the kind of people who will benefit most from hearing you speak. Who needs to know what you will say, why, and what benefits can they expect from it? You must also have a feeling for how badly they need your message, or think they need it. And you must sense how much they will pay to attend the seminar.

Assuming that you have worked and worked at developing a clear, enticing title followed by an exciting, **reward-promising description**, and that you have identified who will attend and why, what remains is simple: **getting as many through the door for as little expense as possible**.

So first you should concentrate on the **information dissemination items that are free**. They may be the most important elements anyway.

Start with a **news release** sent to every possible outlet: newspapers (dailies, weeklies, free handouts), newsletters, company organs, any vehicle read by others who might attend your gathering. **Also send a .jpeg** to those with the greatest impact on potential participants. (Make sure that your appearance is in keeping with your purpose: tie and coat or business attire if you want businessmen at your meeting, etc. Shoes are a must.)

Then condense your material into radio-TV (any audio) release segments: 24 lines for a 5-second spot; double that for 10 seconds. Write "COMMUNITY ACTIVITY" on top, followed by the copy and your name, address, and phone. No photo here, of course.

What are the chances that this material will be read? Good for newspapers, if it sounds newsworthy; poor for radio; worse for TV or online—but it's free and if it is used you are that much ahead. Any exposure makes others aware, increases your visibility, and helps.

If you use **social media** this way, go to it. Remember that if you call for action, they need way to respond.

To increase your exposure even more, contact the **area talk show program directors** to see if you could appear on a show some days before your seminar to discuss your topic. Tell him/her why the subject would interest the listeners. (Don't dwell on the seminar if you do appear; mention it once [maybe twice], and refer to it again before the show closes: that's enough.)

**Your best selling tool is you**, so visit every group, organization, gathering or outlet you can to tell those there about your offering. Contact the meeting director and ask for

two minutes early in the session. Introduce yourself, your topic, why they would benefit from attending, how to sign up, and leave enough flyers for all in attendance. Ask others interested in your program to tell friends. **Put fliers on bulletin boards**, in places where participants might gather, or at any logical spot where they might attract sign-ups.

**Having a professional looking book that you wrote** about your topic is a huge plus. Include a copy of the cover with every press release or flyer. If the book's title is the same or similar to your seminar title, all the better. It can be self-published, but it must be impressive in appearance. You might also up the program cost and include a free copy. (Or give a free copy to the first 10 or 20 paid registrants, or whatever number you can afford. Sign the book on the inside title page and give it to the person when they arrive.)

**Flyers:** I can't tell you how to make them here. Most of it is common sense, and much of that comes from using what works best on other fliers. Two places can help you with basic how-to information: art supply stores (sometimes office supply too), that sell the tools, and printers, who put the flyer on paper. Tell either what you have in mind, find an example similar among the millions of flyers in the mail and on boards, and let them tell you how to make one similar. A seminar or even a class about basic graphics and flyermaking should be seriously considered if you will be your own provider of graphics.

Keep in mind: a flyer is a selling tool. It needn't be done in three colors on glossy paper to impress, but it must be clear, neat, errorless, and inviting. Too much copy is worse than too little: white or blank space means class. Stick to simple type, straight-forward messages, don't be too funny, get the "5 W's and H" down—who, what, why, where, when and how—and be sure that the title is what everyone sees first. The viewer will assume that the seminar is like the flyer. Too shoddy and they'll stay away.

**Newspaper advertising?** Probably a waste of your limited funds, unless just about everybody would want to attend, you have money to buy a big splash (1/3 of a page or more) to run about three times, or you can place a key ad in a specific section read only by your people. The major exception is for a specialty newspaper, like one sent to nurses only when your seminar offers BRN credit to nurses.

Likewise, radio and TV are not good vehicles for paid seminar advertising unless the appeal is extremely broad or you can somehow focus your topic and the programming of the station on a specific audience: a seminar on how to become a professional umpire needs a spot, if any at all, in the middle of the sports results.

How to get started with newspaper, radio, or TV ads if you think they are for you? Go to the person who sells the ad space, leave your wallet at home (I'm not kidding), and say, "I think that \_\_\_\_\_ would be a good vehicle to advertise my seminar about \_\_\_\_\_. Do you? (Of course.) Then how would I go about setting up the best ad possible to draw the most participants?" Let the person explain, write it down, take the handouts, and go home and think. Don't buy anything that day; don't buy the whole package: try one ad and test. Rewrite it, if it doesn't draw well, and test again... Compare costs and evaluate possible results. If you decide to go ahead, do everything you can yourself, hiring others to do the rest on a freelance basis and under the condition that they will explain how they did what they did. Soon enough you'll be able to do it all. About 90% of promotion is also common sense and a hard financial eye, plus some creativity. The rest needs tools.

Remember, **you are the best advertising possible**. Your enthusiasm, your drive, your planning, and your clear prose. Put that in action, on paper through friends. Let everybody know, keep a hard eye on expenses, and study everything you see in print or the media to see how others are doing it. By your third seminar you will have it down cold—if you hustle,

plan, and economize enough in the beginning to survive (and thrive) until seminar four!

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

P.S. For 20+ years I offered more than 2,000 four-hour seminars. From that experience I created a four audio cassette program, with a 26-page workbook, called "[How to Set Up and Market Your Own Seminar](#)." It's now [available](#), if interested.

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## **A paid speech you can book at every association any year...**

I call it the "state of the art" speech, but it could have lots of similar names. And if you do it right, the sponsor is very likely to ask (perhaps even beg) you to give it again and again! (You can even build your own empire around it.)

An example helps here. Let's say there is a Lighthouse Management Association, there are 50,000 lighthouses, and twice as many members who are involved in keeping the light lit and the coal stacked. (You can see what I know about lighthouses, born in suburban Chicago!)

The core of your "state of the art" lighthouse management presentation would **answer these three questions**:

(1) How did lighthouses and their management get to where they are now? That's mostly quick history, some "march of time" visuals, problems along the way, and their solutions. Call this **IN THE PAST**.

(2) It's 2015. How are the managers and lighthouses doing today? Numbers, budgets, the most common or most serious 5 or 10 current problems, plus visuals of several model lighthouses. Maybe a summary of the best and worst job requirements for the chief honchos. A look at salary ranges, lighthouse-related courses in colleges, anything they want to know more about across the country (or is it shore to shore?) This is **RIGHT NOW**.

(3) **IN THE FUTURE** might be at set dates (5, 10, 15, 50 years from 2015), or in the near future and the far future (provide realistic time spans like 2020-30 and after 2030...). Here you focus on changes afoot now, possible need solutions likely implemented in the future, long-range needs decades away and how they might be met... If possible, maybe even some sketched visuals of how lighthouses might look in 50 or 150 years.

**Compiling (1)** is pretty much a history dig, some search tools, lighthouse history accounts and books, a few retellings of relevant "as it was" stories by the pioneers. Humor helps here, as does brevity. (Summarize it in the speech, but you might do full research and write "the" or "a" key book about it in the future. That's another foundational brick in your empire.)

The association may be your biggest helper in **composing and organizing (2)**. It's always amazing how little most practitioners know about the larger field they serve. (They are busy doing what they do where they are at. To know more is probably why they are at the convention you would address.) Gathering the present-day facts is another blog. Lists are good: lighthouses and managers (or how to find them quickly), money in and out (global to wee beamers), personnel job descriptions, most common local and national problems (financial, political, directional, technical), equipment (present, problems, solutions), and so on. The listeners should know in 20 minutes the current state of the lighthouse art (where they are, why, how they are the same and

different—you fill it in.)

**Number (3)**, probably the last 10-15 minutes, **is the testiest** because it's "maybe" stuff and usually anybody's guess. Of course the listeners will wonder if you are just pulling the guesswork out of the air—or their leg. One way to handle that is to say that you contacted 100 scattered lighthouse managers with a questionnaire, plus of course you asked the associationfolk and a dozen recommended "big names" in this field (you actually have to do it!) and here are the 10 trends or innovations or areas of most likely change they saw in the future. List the 10. You might place them on a horizontal "future line" with dates every 5 or 15 or 25 years when they would most likely be started or implemented. Then you discuss all 10, most in some depth (with source links, if available), a few shorter "who really knows but..." comments.

**Why would associations or related sponsors jump at the chance to book this speech or seminar?** Because it's exactly what the members want to know. And in a small part because you are objective and aren't likely to be pumping some company line. (The questionnaire will help you see what they do want to know. Just ask, "What do you really want to know the most about..." and "How will your lighthouse look in 50 (or 100) years?—or "ideally, how might your lighthouse (or your job) look in 50 (or 100) years?"

**Why would they hire you to speak if you can't tell a lighthouse from a farm house?** Because if you present yourself and the topic right, they need to share that information. It would be easier if you were a 40-year lighthouse manager, or at least a manager, knew lighthouses, were an association soul, were a federal officer dealing with lighthouses, were a futurist and you did "state of the art" speeches (preferably about lighthouse management), taught lighthouse history, and so on. But an experienced speaker with a long interest in lighthouses might be plenty. (Long might be relative. Perhaps long vertically, with book jamming your new passion.)

**Where does the empire fit in for you?** If what you say on speech day is a resounding (or even moderate with clapping) success; it was honest, instructive, and even (heavens) enjoyable; it made huge sense to all listening, and they want a follow-up in two or three years (with more emphasis on (2) and (3), that's a warm roar telling you to write a book in the general lighthouse management area. And from that book you spread out with more books, more speeches (why not a next-year follow-up about technology, management, and lighthouses, another related need the following year, and on the third year, "state of the art" again?) By that time you're an "expert" in your defined ("state of the art in...") area and attendees eagerly fill your hall to hear about themselves again. Emperors or empresses open the door with expertise, then expand it (and add other information dissemination means to sell more of it, like books, a newsletter, blogs, workshops, public speeches (at lighthouses?), videos, and so on...) An excellent way to begin the financial fiefdom is by starting with "a paid speech you can book at every association any year..." (Just pick one you at least really care about!)

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

P.S. I'm half done with a how-to "state of the art" book. I will run an occasional blog on this topic too. If you want to know more or know a "state of the art" speaker whom I might interview, send an email ([glburgett@gmail.com](mailto:glburgett@gmail.com)) or get on my free, every-two-month, easy-to-escape [newsletter](#) and I will add you to the "state of the art" elist and tell you when the book has seen light. You'll get a discount too!

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# Sample evaluation sheet for seminars and other programs

If you are sponsoring or giving seminars you want to know what **the attendees think** of the presenter's presentation skills, the worth of the information offered, and how that topic might be offered better.

The **speakers want to know the same thing**. (I have given 2100+ paid programs so I think I have distributed and reviewed almost every kind of evaluation imaginable. The worst (least informative, at least to me) were those that just fished for praise for the sponsor.

Actually, **the simplest evaluations were the most informative**, in part because they were most often completed before the attendees left. Let me offer a sample of this evaluation. But note that it is designed to capture the two prevalent kinds of responders: (1) those who just want to check boxes and flee!, and (2) those for whom the choices were never quite right and they felt compelled to add commentary as well. Two of the most important points simply had to be answered in written responses: "What did you find most valuable?" and "Suggested improvements..." They are wisely scattered in the middle of the questionnaire.

**The last two items also require prose responses**. I put them last because many leave them blank and I wouldn't want that to set a precedent. Anyway, I suspect they don't know what else the speaker can talk about or can't think of what wasn't said—probably because it wasn't said. Still, if they do respond to them what they share is often very helpful.

I recall speaking one sultry day to about 40 dripping listeners. Three people made the same suggestion: in essence, "get your glasses fixed. It drove me nuts when you kept

sliding them back into place.” Who knew? But that would have driven me batty too, so the next morning I went to the glasses booth at a mall megastore and asked the helper if there was any way I could stop my glasses from sliding down my nose all the time. It took her about 20 seconds to make the free repair! A wee thing but not to listeners who had to witness the sliding glasses for minutes or hours.

Here’s the **model sheet** that I think works best.

## **EVALUATION SHEET**

Title of the program: \_\_\_\_\_  
(City or School) \_\_\_\_\_  
(Date) \_\_\_\_\_

We very much appreciate your responses. They help us determine whether this program meets your needs and interests—and what we can do to make it better!

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### **(1) Your evaluation of the SUBJECT:**

\_\_\_\_\_ excellent  
\_\_\_\_\_ very good  
\_\_\_\_\_ good  
\_\_\_\_\_ fair  
\_\_\_\_\_ poor

Comments:

### **(2) Your evaluation of the SPEAKER:**

\_\_\_\_\_ excellent  
\_\_\_\_\_ very good  
\_\_\_\_\_ good  
\_\_\_\_\_ fair  
\_\_\_\_\_ poor

Comments:

**(3) What did you find most valuable?**

**(4) Your reaction to the COST:**

The cost of the seminar was...

\_\_\_\_\_ about right

\_\_\_\_\_ too high

\_\_\_\_\_ too low

Comments:

**(5) Suggested improvements?**

**(6) Regarding LENGTH, the seminar was...**

\_\_\_\_\_ the right length

\_\_\_\_\_ too short

\_\_\_\_\_ too long

Comments:

**(7) How did you hear about this seminar?**

\_\_\_\_\_ newspaper

\_\_\_\_\_ flyer sent by us

\_\_\_\_\_ told by another person

\_\_\_\_\_ radio/TV

\_\_\_\_\_ other: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ other: \_\_\_\_\_

**(8) What other program(s) would you like (the speaker) to offer?**

**(9) What haven't we asked here, and how do you feel about it?**

Adjust this evaluation as you wish, of course. It's a good starter form to build from.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

P.S. If you want to read more about this topic, my program "[How to Set Up and Market Your Own Seminar](#)" might also interest you. (The evaluation form is excerpted, and modified a bit, from that program.)

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## Sample newspaper releases for a public seminar (#12 of 12)

Here are two typical newspaper releases I sent simultaneously to every newspaper within about 50 miles of the location, usually addressed to the city editor. They were sent about 2 1/2 weeks before the program. (I have altered some of the numbers.)

### Item 1:

#### NEWS RELEASE

HAROLD SMITH

Communication Unlimited

P.O. Box XXX, Novato, CA 94947

Email [gordon@gordonburgett.com](mailto:gordon@gordonburgett.com)

Web site [www.gordonburgett.com](http://www.gordonburgett.com)

(800) XXX-1454

Release date: by Sept. 7

"How to Set Up and Market Your Own Seminar" will be given at the Sheraton Santa Barbara next Tuesday evening, Sept. 8, from 6-10 p.m. by Gordon Burgett, who presents 100+ seminars a year throughout California.

Gordon focuses on the key requirements for seminar success, marketing, pricing, scheduling, promotion, content, and follow-up. Program participants also receive a step-by-step, 26-page workbook. For specific registration information, call (800) XXX-1454.

“There’s still plenty of room for the beginner in the field,” says Burgett, a Novato writer and former university dean with 1,700+ articles and 43 books in print, “particularly if they can clearly present ‘how-to’ information that others need and want. In fact, it may be the only multibillion-dollar industry where the average man and woman can still get a firm, profitable toehold. Most just need to know how to get started.” Gordon has given 2,100+ paid public presentations.

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I also included in the same envelope a short one-paragraph insertion for use in the daily or weekly activities section. Very often if Item 1 wasn’t used, Item 2 was—and many times both appeared.

**Item 2:** to use in the “Calendar of Coming Events” section:

#### **NEWS RELEASE**

“How to Set Up and Market Your Own Seminar,” by Gordon Burgett, Sheraton Santa Barbara, Sept. 8, 6-10 p.m. For specific registration information, call (800) XXX-1454.

Why did I use the name Harold Smith in the return address? A newspaper editor, and friend, told me early on if I sent the press releases in my name about my own programs they wouldn’t be used! So I invented a press agent, Harold Smith. The very rare times that someone from a publication called to speak to Harold Smith I just said, “Thank you...” and answered the questions. I guess Harold and I sound alike.

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This 12-unit blog program is excerpted from "[How to Set Up and Market Your Own Seminar](#)," an audio CD four-tape program with a digital workbook and an audio text summary. More details are [here](#).

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett (or is it Harold Smith?)

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## 5-step guide to seminar speaking success (#11 of 12)

Several years back my book *Empire-Building by Writing and Speaking* was published. It's OP now (although Amazon probably has some dog-eared copies for a penny). Fortunately, I kept two copies on my shelf because some weeks back I was asked to update and share parts of that book for another publication.

Since I'm also about to end a blog series about seminar here, this 5-step guide from that book might fit well in this series. So here it is in its slightly updated version:

**Step 1.** *Your seminar subject must be appealing and clearly stated in both the title and description. It must also meet a need sufficiently strong that one will pay to attend.*

That is, by the title, then reinforced and expanded in the description, the person must be attracted to the subject. He/She must see it as a way to meet a need. It must be clear why he should attend. The benefits must be stated or obvious: by attending the seminar, he will solve personal problems, get rich, learn a skill that will ultimately result in a raise or a more responsible position, find security, overcome

frustrations, improve his sex life, and so on...

This is by far the most important guideline of the five. The best promotion, finest location, and most attractive fee will not sell a senseless title or a garbled, pointless description.

*(2.) The seminar must be scheduled when and where the public will attend.*

Naturally, you say. That's obvious. But how many times have you seen seminars about personal safety given at nighttime—the very hours when those most worried about their safety won't leave their homes? Or seminars that teach how to make one's boss richer, by improving your skills or efficiency, during your nonworking hours?

If you are offering a seminar that shows how to turn marbles into rubies, you can charge a bundle, give it atop a mountain at 3 a.m., and throw in a hellacious rainstorm to test the participants' mettle. The throngs would joyously haul their glass spheroids to wherever you are whenever you speak!

But most of us offer programs markedly less glittering. To us, the time and place are proportionately more important to our seminar's success.

*(3.) The cost must be in line with perceived benefits and other ways of realizing those benefits.*

"Perceived" is the key word. The benefits can be there but if one doesn't perceive them—why they are worth having or that they can be gained from your seminar—any cost will be too high.

Assuming that the benefits are not only perceived, they are desired, then your seminar must be affordable and in line with other means of getting those benefits. For example, if your seminar costs \$100 and one virtually identical costs \$35,

where do you think the participants will go? On the other hand, if you are explaining a crucial "how-to" link absolutely necessary to securing \$100,000+ contracts and yours is the only program focusing on that vital information, isn't a fee of at least \$500 or more worth the investment?

Your main competition is other seminars—and sometimes wildcat consultants. Rarely will taped programs have more appeal than a live presentation, and books, though they may cost only a fraction as much, will be a factor only when your seminar is considered marginal by the participants, when your audience is already book-oriented, or when it is highly price-conscious. (On the other hand, if you have a solid, professional-looking book that validates your expertise in the seminar's topic, it will be a valuable selling tool.)

The length of your presentation is important too. If other seminars like yours last four hours, yours probably should last four hours too—or maybe three or three and a half hours. A longer program than your competition will be very hard to sell.

*(4.) The participant must know of the seminar's existence and be attracted to it.*

If one has an idea that is salable as a seminar, promotion is usually the difference between success and failure. For though it may be the best idea imaginable, or a foolproof way to solve the most pressing need, if nobody knows about it, who will attend? Without promotion, who will read the title and description and rush to register?

Yet promotion is also the greatest financial risk. Self-promoted seminars often spend as much as two-thirds of their anticipated income to attract registrants before a penny is made. Promotion properly done can draw crowds to seminars that are promotable. But if the topic, title, description, timing, location, and all the rest aren't right, that is, if the

seminar isn't promotable, all of the costs spent making your seminar known may be useless—or at least ultimately profitless.

So the dice are thrown and the gamble is made through your program's promotion, content, and cost. Your seminar must be promotable—and promoted. The rest is risk.

**(5.)** The seminar's content and your presentation are crucial for its long-term success.

If you are going to offer the seminar often—and why would you go to so much trouble if you weren't?—what you say and how you say it will be its own best long-term promotion.

Neither the actual content nor your presentation will attract participants to your first seminar. They will register by what you tell them that you will say; why they should hear it; by the title, description and the promotional promises. Like a book, first-timers buy seminars by the cover. They don't know if you're a bumbler or have a tongue of honey. They buy on faith.

But if you are a bumbler or you don't give what you promise, your future is limited, for nothing is more forceful or harder to erase than negative word-of-mouth.

Therefore, the first time out you must provide not only solid content and a professional presentation, particular attention must be paid to the first four steps of this guide so there are many bearers of positive word-of-mouth. Over time, solid content and excellent presentation will reduce the risk of promotion and will provide the desired cushion of profitability, as long as the first three steps in this guide are properly tended to.

In the business realm, content and presentation are particularly critical. The first question a potential programmer will ask is "Where did you give this seminar

before?" Those references will then be asked, "Is he any good?" You will be booked primarily from the responses of those who heard you perform. Businesses don't take the risks that the public must. Thus the first business booking is extremely hard to get. Later bookings are far easier when that reply is, "He's super. The best money you'll ever spend." That's why content and presentation, properly done, are money in the bank.

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Another related item that should help participants decide whether to attend:

I was usually asked in my empire-building seminar if one's expenses were tax deductible. I imagined so (I would deduct them) but it was really up to the attendees to make that decision. So I almost always inserted a box on my fliers and other promotional material called **TAX DEDUCTION CLAUSE**. They could then determine whether to deduct the expenses—and which ones.

A few years back this was what my box said:

Tax Deduction for Educational Expenses. Treasury regulation 1.162-5 permits an income tax deduction for educational expenses (registration fees and cost of travel, meals and lodging) undertaken to: (1) maintain or improve skills required in one's employment or business, or (2) meet express requirements of an employer or a law imposed as a condition to retention of employment, job status or rate of compensation.

The regulation might need updating. If so, just tell your potential attendees of the pertinent regulation and what it says. (You can Google that clause.)

Much of the above comes from my "[How to Set Up and Market Your Own Seminar](#)" (a four-tape audio CD version of a four-hour seminar of the same name. It includes a 26-page digital

workbook and audio text summary.)

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

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## **Creating successful seminar brochures (#10 of 15)**

Program developers and coordinators almost always need brochure copy that “sells” their programs. Since not everyone is well versed in the task of writing and organizing brochure copy, the following will provide you with some easy-to-use, helpful hints. It’s also a ready-reference checklist of items that are a must for every brochure designed to be mailed, digitally or snail mail, to attract people to a workshop, seminar, conference, short course—any type of educational activity of usually one-session duration.

There are six major components in all successful brochures. By making sure you use all of them in one way or another, you can create copy for your own brochure that will sell your program to its best advantage.

You can explain the information in an easy-to-follow format that leads your reader from one important point to another, which is equally important to the reader and to you. Your copy becomes a sort of roadmap that leads the reader from the mailing panel and cover of the brochure, inside to the descriptive material on program content, audience, speaker credentials, registration and lodging information, and on to an enrollment form that makes signing up easy.

The six components are the 5 W's + H—Who, What, Where, When, Why + How. The answers to these questions provide the solid ground in which your copy is developed. It's easiest to think of a brochure as a basket into which a lot of eggs have been very carefully and deliberately placed. Each "egg" is a copy component that answers one of the six questions.

## **H, the Easy One**

H is the easiest component of your brochure to develop because it deals with clearly established facts. The H, or **HOW**, egg in your basket provides information on location of program, registration procedures, fee schedule, lodging and meal details, parking availability, and other nitty-gritty details.

The majority of this information is often grouped in a separate section headed "Registration Information." The details are in one place, making it easy for the reader to find and check through. You can adapt the following HOW components to your particular circumstances:

**Location:** Be specific and include an address and directions to the program site (or note that a map will be sent with acknowledgment of advance registrations).

**Registration Procedures:** Include the cut-off date for advance registrations; the link, address, or phone number to call for registering by email, shopping cart, or phone; where to mail the registration form; when and where to report on-site to pick up name badges and other materials, and a reminder to sign up for limited or concurrent activities.

**Fees:** Clear listing of all fees/advance deposits; what they are for; what they include; how fees are to be paid (check, money order, charge card [what kind], or organizational billing); if U.S. funds are the requisite; when fees are due; if CODs are acceptable.

**Cancellation/Refund Policy:** Date/time when any notification of

cancellation must be received for refund; how it can be made (in writing, email, by phone), and information about any service charge for cancellation, if applicable.

**Meals:** Listing of the refreshments included as part of fees; listing of those optionally available for purchase and their cost; where those “on your own” meals are available.

**Lodging:** Where it’s available, its proximity to the program site, and the needed link or phone number to call; outline of rates; reservations deadline; notation if special rates for those attending your program are available.

**Transportation:** General directions on how to reach your program site by car—or how it can be reached by any other means of transportation.

**Availability of CEUs or other accreditation.**

**Issuance of certificates.**

**Tax Deductibility of Fees.**

**Affirmative Action/Non-Discrimination Statement,** if required by your organization.

Address, website link, phone number for **Additional Information:** Include hours of operation, highlight if the phone number is free.

**Registration/Enrollment Response Form:** This should be tear-off if your brochure is a self-mailer or it can be a separate piece if your brochure will be mailed in an envelope. If it’s a tear-off, make sure the reverse side doesn’t contain information the registrant must have. Try to design the brochure so that the mailing label is automatically returned with the registration form. This label that “worked” can help you plan strategy next time. If the response is digital, it should be downloadable, to be faxed or mailed back. The easiest are the writing forms where they can return it

completed, with a credit card and the necessary additional information. If you will acknowledge their registration completion and payment, tell them that and how the “receipt” will be sent—and roughly when.

## **The Five W's**

The other five eggs in your basket are the 5 W's. Each one—**Who**, **What**, **When**, **Where**, and **Why**—is answered in several ways in several places within your brochure. In general, the 5 W's address the following areas:

### **WHO:**

- program sponsors
- audience definition
- speaker identification
- planning/advisory committee

### **WHAT:**

- title (and subtitle) of program
- overview
- schedule of activities
- titles of presentations
- description of presentations

### **WHEN:**

- date(s) and time(s) of program

### **WHERE:**

- location of program

### **WHY:**

- program benefits
- special features

On the **cover of your brochure**, include four of the five W's. **WHAT** will be the title (and subtitle, if there is one) of your program, prominently displayed. **WHEN** will be the date(s) of your program—be sure to include the year. **WHERE** will be the

general location, at least city and state; you can be more specific if the actual site would serve as a major “drawing card.” WHO will be the sponsors of the program, an identification tool that serves to build credibility for the program in the minds of potential audience members.

**Extra thoughts when creating your seminar brochure:**

\* Avoid clichés and the newest buzzwords. They can trivialize or mask what you are really trying to say.

\* Avoid \$120 words. Don't use a word that you yourself don't understand or can't correctly pronounce.

\* Write your copy in plain, easy readable English.

\* Use the present tense and active verbs.

\* Break up long segments of copy with headlines and subheads—or write in outline format.

\* Create little sections within the brochure for your various copy components (5 W's + H) and give each a bold headline that “sells.”

\* Format your copy so that your readers start at the cover and continue through the material in roadmap fashion to the registration form at the end.

\* Write copy that involves your readers. Give them a sense of participation just by reading your brochure (since involvement in your program is your final objective in this project anyway).

\* As a general rule, keep your copy short. Simple, easy-to-read text is more likely to get read and then acted upon, to your advantage.

\* Make sure the reader immediately understands the program's major benefits. What will they get out of it? How can they

apply what they will learn?

Some of this blog comes from a brochure used with the permission of Hugo Dunhill Mailing Lists, Inc., 630 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017.

For more details, hear my four-DVD program called **“How to Set Up and Market Your Own Seminar.”** See [www.gordonburgett.com](http://www.gordonburgett.com). The program includes a downloadable 26-page digital workbook.

Best wishes,

Gordon BURgett

[www.gordonburgett.com](http://www.gordonburgett.com) / Communication Unlimited, 185 Shevelin Rd., Novato, CA 94947/ (800) 563-1454.

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## **The easiest and best way to organize a seminar (#9 of 15)**

Since seminars are offered about everything from stuffing sausages to unstuffing fatties, it is difficult to devise a master format for contents and organization that will work for all.

Let's share some steps and guidelines, though, that apply to most. Like making certain that what you promise in your title and description is what you give to your listeners.

To do that, convert your title into a question. Instead of “How To Set Up and Market Your Own Seminar,” ask “How Does the Participant Set Up and Sell His/Her Own Seminar?” Then list all of the questions that come from the working question: why does he/she want to offer a seminar? when? where? what should

he/she charge? how can others be made aware? what should the seminar contain? and so on...

If you do that to your seminar, asking all of the questions that your participants would/should ask, it is difficult not to meet at least most of the needs.

The quality of the answers given to the questions will be the difference between a passable and an exceptional program. Two things particularly enhance that quality: research and clarity of thought and expression. (Humor is invaluable too.)

Learning from a personal experience is the basis of many seminars. Yet few experiences are so comprehensive, despite the years over which they spread, that research couldn't add depth, breadth, and sharper perspective.

An annotated bibliography is particularly useful to help the participant fit one person's experience into the broader readings in the field.

In responding to the working question(s) one must constantly seek the clearest forms of expression. To paraphrase Winston Churchill (the gall!), "Use short words rather than long, old words rather than new." Explain terms not commonly used, simplify to make your points, and use examples and quotations to vary your presentation. If your seminar still isn't understood by everyone there, clarify more.

Audio-visual aids often show far more clearly than words can express. Videos, Power Point, slides, and charts/display boards are usually the easiest to integrate into a presentation. Whatever form is used, it must add enough to offset the time for the required set-up and dismantling. (To reduce that time, audio-visual displays are usually best used before or after a "break.")

As for organization, the most common is chronological (in time-order). That is sometimes mixed with a set of

explanations which must first be understood before they are presented chronologically. Another form is developmental: do this, do that, then this, etc.

Others isolate parts of the whole, explain each, and tie them together at the end. This seminar is an example. A similar structure is used in industrial seminars that focus on one phase of an operation, then integrate it into the larger process.

There is no single form of organization that always works for every program. The working question, and its answers, will dictate the way that the contents should be presented or organized. The result must be a seminar that does what it promises, is interesting and clearly understood, and leaves the participant eager to attend another program that you offer.

All that I've said seems logical and obvious. Alas, I don't know how many programs I've endured were neither. Save us, please!

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

From Gordon Burgett's audio CD version of "[How to Set Up and Market Your Own Seminar](#)," with a digital workbook and audio text summary). Produced by Communication Unlimited. For further information, check [here](#).

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**A            fetching            seminar**

# description is a must! (#8 of 15)

However you book your seminar, the sponsors and participants must know what you will talk about; thus, a concise description is your most important calling card.

It is either part of the opening correspondence to get booked at a business or corporation, to explain the kind of program or training you can offer, or it is part of your submission process when offering public or school presentations, where the attendee pays for the opportunity to hear you speak.

In either case, it must be written around the benefits that participants will receive from (lovingly) hearing your orations. "What's in it for me?" is what the readers ask themselves. And "Is it worth the time, hassle, and cost?" Then mix in the who, what, why, where, and how—plus prayer, if you are so given.

Corporate or business presentations will be serving a different master. "What's in this for the company or sponsor?" is the orientation of their description.

For public programs the description is usually part of a catalog or like announcement that explains the program's location, the time, and ways to register. You must add to that why the readers' registration would bring them hard-to-find or hugely desired benefits from a person with tested qualifications and experience.

A much-used format in a public description is to begin with a lead, a catchy opener, that tells why they should attend, what valuable information or skill they will learn, and how long the program lasts.

Segue into a short, bulleted list of the most important take-

aways. Three-five items are best, and asterisks are much better than numbers or letters separating the benefits in the list.

If the registrant will receive a workbook, describe what it contains and if it is free. Often the presenter's qualifications are part of the closing copy, which reinforces the benefits already shared.

Very important is that the seminar-giver adhere to the description length required of each description, so part of the gilded message isn't unkindly clipped or compressed before it is shared with potential registrants. Very often the maximum length is four compact paragraphs, including the list of benefits. Make certain the sponsor will not change your title or alter the text without informing you.

The sample that follows is a college extended education description about this very topic that I used throughout California for more than 20 years. Study closely the other descriptions in sponsor's seminar catalog to see what will make your topic unique and sought by likely participants who need to know what you are sharing.

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## **HOW TO SET UP AND MARKET YOUR OWN SEMINAR**

Want to earn a healthy income selling your know-how to others? Or convey knowledge to clients or prospective customers at free, informative, image-enhancing gatherings? Seminars meet the bill. In four hours you will learn the essential ingredients of seminar success:

- \* how to give your first seminar with no financial risk
- \* why topic definition and the right title are crucial to success
- \* which key words most titles should include
- \* what promotional strategies work
- \* what four key questions seminar-givers must be able to

answer about sponsorship or selection

A 24-page free workbook includes an organizational calendar, a current bibliography, two sample news releases, and a model evaluation form, plus guide sheets about publicity, mailing lists, locations, flyer/brochure preparation, budget, content and organization, and how to get scheduled at colleges and universities.

Even more, Gordon Burgett, California's most prolific seminar-giver with over 100 offerings annually, will explain what he is doing as he does it, tying together form and content in one fact-packed program designed to provide you with the basic information and tools needed to get you speaking (and banking) quickly, confidently, and permanently.

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(This information accompanies the description and is used by the booking office for their records.)

SEMINAR LENGTH: 4 hours

MINIMUM COST: \$50, including workbook

Gordon Burgett, 185 Shevelin Rd., Novato, CA 94947

[www.gordonburgett.com](http://www.gordonburgett.com) / (800) 563-1454

Soc. Sec XXX=XX-XXXX

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Best wishes,  
Gordon Burgett

From Gordon Burgett's four-CD program, [How to Set Up and Market Your Own Seminar](#) , with digital workbook and audio text summary).

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# Checklists for organizing your own seminar (#7 of 15)

Here is a checklist, in rough chronological order, of the key steps to organizing and programming your own seminar:

(1) Write a one-sentence topic for a seminar.

(2) Concerning that topic, write answers to the following:

Who cares?

What problems will it solve?

How and where else can the same information be found?

How much time or money would the participant save by attending your seminar?

Why else would people attend it?

Do other seminars about your topic exist?

What do they cost?

What's their approach?

How long do they take?

How often are they given?

Where/how are they booked? Subsidized?

(3) Write a seminar description that includes objectives, benefits, who should attend, and why.

(4) Write a dozen titles. Select the best.

(5) Evaluate the resources for your seminar preparation. While checking the resources, compile a bibliography for your workbook. Later, in using the resources, select the best and annotate them.

(6) Prepare your budget: itemize expected costs and anticipate when the money will be needed; list the possible unexpected costs by source and date; list anticipated income and when expected; plot your income and costs on a calendar; evaluate

your need for a reserve fund, the amount and when needed; list your financial reserves: amount and when available; list the ways to increase income and reduce costs; determine the method(s) of participant payment: pre-registration only, discount for pre-registration, higher fee at the door, cash, or credit cards, etc.

(7) Determine the minimum payment you will accept for offering the seminar, factor in the cost for its presentation, then establish its cost to the participant.

(8) Plan your speaking schedule: dates, hours, cities, sites; check feasibility of travel as scheduled; contact sites, book facilities, make hotel/motel reservations.

(9) Plan your promotional campaign: list target audience, from the most to least likely to attend; list ways to best appeal to each potential audience; establish an operational budget for the most effective promotional approaches; prepare the time/method list for promotional activities; implement your campaign.

(10) Determine who will be your local contact at sites; establish responsibilities, method of reporting results; devise a method for recording and posting names of registrants to your mailing list; provide all needed promotional materials to your contact; determine who will handle/help with door registration and product sale, etc.

(11) Determine the kind/amount of non-promotional printed material needed: workbooks, evaluation sheets, door registration forms, receipts, product sale forms; set up a production schedule: writing, typing or typesetting, paste-up, printing.

(12) Prepare your seminar; plan, integrate audio-visual aids into the presentation; arrange for and schedule any outside speakers; evaluate the need for your own microphone, amplification, projectors, etc.; practice your presentation,

opening and closing remarks; break the seminar into segments, including breaks.

(13) Plan and purchase speaking attire that visually reinforces the seminar's objective.

(14) As the day approaches for final cancellation of facility fee for full/partial refund, decide if the seminar will be given.

(15) Review all promotional activities as the presentation day approaches.

(16) If scheduled, give radio/TV and newspaper interviews.

(17) Check the presentation site, the day before if possible; review the activities and provisions needed for the site personnel.

(18) Arrive at least an hour before the seminar, set up equipment, review the activities and responsibilities of the helpers, dress.

(19) Smile, take a deep breath, and give a super seminar!

(20) Read the evaluation sheets to see how the next seminar can be given better.

### **SOME ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUR SEMINARING BUSINESS**

(1) Select a business name.

(2) Complete the fictitious business statement process.

(3) Get necessary city/state licenses; if selling a product, get resale number from state taxing board.

(4) Open a business bank account.

(5) Check into credit card use at a bank for registration/sale of products.

- (6) Stock business stationery and needed supplies.
- (7) Investigate joining business or professional associations.
- (8) Familiarize yourself with single proprietorship and receipting responsibilities.
- (9) Keep records and receipts for all income and expenses.

#### SOME CONSIDERATIONS WHEN SCHEDULING THROUGH ACADEMIC EXTENSION

- (1) Contact colleges/universities at least four months—six is better—prior to the start of the quarter or semester to present your seminar(s) and yourself for possible inclusion in the next program, sending the title and description plus an outline of each seminar, a list of likely participants (by kind, vocation, description), and a resume—with a cover letter.
- (2) Offer to assist with promotion: news release preparation, radio/TV spots, etc.
- (3) Coordinate your workbook preparation with the extension office.
- (4) Prepare the necessary paperwork for later payment.
- (5) Maintain contact with each school prior to traveling there to offer the seminar(s).
- (6) Familiarize yourself with door registration procedures and evaluation forms.
- (7) Return all funds and forms to the sponsoring school promptly after offering your seminar(s).

Use all three categories as appropriate and needed. Because it is impossible to know all of the elements necessary for all seminars, or the exact order of elements needed for any seminar, the three components should be used as a guideline, with items moved, deleted, or added as exigency dictates.

From Gordon Burgett's **How to Set Up and Market Your Own Seminar** (audio CD version, 2009, with digital workbook and audio text summary). Produced by Communication Unlimited / 185 Shevelin Rd. / Novato, CA 94947 / (800) 563-1454 . For further information, see [www.gordonburgett.com/order3.htm](http://www.gordonburgett.com/order3.htm).