

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](#).