

When giving seminars, where do do-it-yourselfers fit in?

This is #4 of our 15-blog series about “How to Set Up and Market Your Own Seminar.” More details at www.gordonburgett.com or glburgett@aol.com.

In the nine-classification list of seminars/workshops described in blog #3 ([DEFINING SEMINARS](#)), where does the do-it-yourselfer fit in? And in which of the nine categories is it best to first offer your presentation?

Assuming that the “yourselfer” is you or an individual or a person acting as a single proprietor in business and the program leads back to that business, the third choice below (or the second, where it’s available) of the first three categories (self-sponsored, self-sponsored but aligned, and academic) are usually the easiest, safest financially, and most comfortable places to begin offering your program.

For (1) you find a need, devise a way to help others meet that need through a seminar/workshop, and then set it up, market it, and give it. That’s the simplest, but it’s also by far the riskiest financially. On the other hand, it’s where you can also make a killing. But for the novice or newcomer, it’s all your show. That means you pay all the costs (mostly to promote)—you can spend a bundle and have an empty house! It’s the best choice after you have lots of seminars given and you are fully familiar with the likely attendees and how to attract and register them.

The second approach (2) presumes that there is another group or organization with which you join forces to cut your costs and increase your income. Let’s say you are giving a workshop about cosmetics-making. You might contact the local Women’s Club, offer a percentage of the gate and a reduction (or

elimination) of the registration fee for members to participate in exchange for free use of the club's meeting hall, their mailing list, and their letterhead (with PSA privileges). The trade-offs reduce your risk and get the group to help boost your program's attendance (at least to its own members) to increase registrants and possible BOR (back-of-the-room) sales.

(3) At colleges and universities, you can often make arrangements through the Extended Education division. The extended ed staff usually lines up their offerings 4-6 months before the next semester or quarter begins. They have a detailed process for you to present your program to them so they can approve it (and you)) and to get your description in its coming catalog. Most extended ed programs pay presenters a percentage of the registration fee (which you will work out with them), include your program in their bulletin (sometimes they create additional promotion too), and provide a room for the seminar to be given. Advance registration will also be handled by their office/staff. This approach can be lucrative and almost risk-free if (a) their bulletin is widely distributed, (b) your clientele expects to take a program like yours at an academic setting, (c) your payment percentage (or rate) is high enough, and (d) the institution handles the registration and promotion effectively. Very few institutions do the promotion element of (d) very well; (a) is important and can offset poor additional promotion if it is extensively distributed, (b) is less important if your clientele is college-educated, and (c) depends on the other three.

(4) Offering your seminar through or in conjunction with recreation programs is often much like (2) or (3) above except that they usually charge (and you earn) less, the offerings that aren't athletic are far fewer, and they sometimes try to control seminar content. Woe to you if you're trying to address a sitting crowd between rooms offering ballroom dancing and drum practice!

Two specialized groups—(6) and (7), professional and trade associations—have their own peculiarities and you will receive their sponsorship only if through that sponsorship they receive some clear benefit. Where they have a large, established clientele and your program is central to the group's interest, this can be quite profitable. Expect to be molded, in a program sense, to fit into their established format.

Business seminars, (5) and (8), are the hardest for a newcomer since you compete against established seminar-giving firms. It is best, if possible, to “tooth” in the (1)-(4) areas or with specialized groups, then present a tested, successful program to businesses from the outset. Licensed or customized programs are the most difficult: companies will hire you, if at all, as a consultant at this level because of your proven ability to organize and offer other seminars/workshops. This is based on earlier proven success and is usually the very best paying category.

Keep tuned. I will address all eight of these categories in coming blogs in this series. In the meantime, divine something that people will eagerly pay a decent price to hear you talk about.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett