

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.

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.

(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 / (800) 563-1454

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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).

Giving your own very profitable seminars (#6 of 15)

Let's see how offering seminars on your own differs from offering seminars with academic sponsorship, where you give up

about 40-50% of the gross income paid by attendees in exchange for the school listing your title and description in a catalog, providing a room, and giving very little additional promotion.

Nobody else must approve where you offer your own seminars, when you do it is up to you, and you will never suffer because the institution can't tell the difference between a news and a jail release.

That's because you do all the work yourself or hire somebody of your own selection. There's nobody else to blame. You also get to keep 100% of the money, after paying only the expenses necessary to make the program work.

The ORGANIZATIONAL CALENDAR (the next blog in this series) will tell you, roughly, what is done when. The toughest and most important thing you must do in advance is pick your topic, write a tight and alluring description, create a title that the interested "must" attend to hear more about, and then find the market that you can reach with your limited resources.

Choosing a site, a date, and setting up the structure are the easy parts. Getting others to pay and attend to hear what you have to say, plus, you hope, buy some of your back-of-the-room products you sell later, are harder. They might be even harder for beginners because they start, probably wisely, in their home town where others know them.

Promotion is how you fill the hall. It can cost you more than you'll make, it may not work, and you must pay for it up front. That is made harder for newcomers because too often they cringe at having to laud their virtues in public print, particularly if they haven't given their program yet and they aren't quite sure what those virtues are. There's no cure for this dilemma short of plunging in, planning with prudence and common sense, being frugal and showing boundless enthusiasm

when selling the worth of your offering to others. Make it clear that you want to help them define and solve their need. Exude confidence, and others will help pass it on.

We will discuss using the media in coming blogs; use it wisely. One of the best things about putting on your own seminars is that you can aim specifically at those most benefited by your program, almost personally directing quality promotion at them. Study telephone selling. Talk to local groups, speak with directors and supervisors, tell your friends, get on a radio talk show, speak with the feature editor at the newspaper and show why what you have to say will interest his/her followers—in short, you have a chance to do far better on your own because you carry the promotion, mostly in person, to those who will most profit from hearing what you have to say.

Not much else differs from the college seminars: content, handouts, actual presentation, BOR sales. Whatever the sponsorship, you must show your professionalism as you grow into it. Wear the suit until it fits. The nicest thing of all? It's your suit, every thread of it. You created and caused the success. And there can be plenty of reward—for plenty of work.

But it's a real risk to start your speaking career by first giving seminars on your own. You can earn a bundle or you can lose your shirt. It probably makes more sense to begin seminar through institutions, like colleges or hospitals. Or offering workshops to and through businesses. (I tell more about each later in this series.)

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

From Gordon Burgett's **How to Set Up and Market Your Own Seminar**, the audio CD version, with digital workbook and audio text summary. Produced by Communication Unlimited, P.O. Box 845, Novato, CA 94947, (800) 563-1454. There's more

information [here](#).

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

“How to Set Up and Market Your Own Seminar,” blog #1 of 15

Somewhere about seminar 200 three attendees independently asked me if I could tell them how to set up their own seminar. I was flattered—and surprised that there was nothing in print at that time about the topic, though seminars bloomed in profusion nationwide, on week nights and weekends.

So I created a four-hour audio cassette program at about the 250th seminar called “How to Set Up and Market Your Own Seminar.” Three cassettes were me explaining the process orally. The fourth was the guidebook (workbook) divided into the sections you see below, in downloadable text should the person wish to read it as they listened.

While I was at it, I also co-wrote a book called **Speaking for Money** (long out of print) with Mike Frank, the former President of the National Speakers Association. In it I mostly wrote about seminarss. It seems that the process worked because I gave my 2000th paid seminar several years ago. (What did I talk about at the seminars? How to sell 75% of your freelance writing, travel writing, niche publishing, writing comedy greeting cards, how to self-publish, empire building, and lots of derivatives!)

I know. Who cares? And why am I using the public airwaves to brag about it?

It dawned on me a few weeks back, as I was packaging an order for the \$50 program, that I had never shared the workbook publicly. So that’s what I’ll do in about 15 blogs this spring, probably one a week or so (with another blog about something else also about a week apart).

I will update the workbook's contents as I go along, although I'm always surprised at how much the basic components remain about the same, as technology rushes by and there are many other ways to share the context than on audio cassettes or DVDs!

Why not start with a guideline, then an agenda, a roadmap of what you can expect this spring?

One guideline for success in seminar is:

"Sell hard-to-find but easy-to-apply information to participants who perceive that it will meet their need."

And an agenda I will follow:

1. Introduction
2. Brief definition and overview of seminars and the potential income
3. Eight kinds of seminars; three that we will focus on here: public institutional seminars, private business/corporate seminars, and public self-sponsored seminars
4. How do you find a subject?
5. The guideline above and how that seems to help
6. Feasibility study: learn from others
7. Writing a description
8. Creating a title
9. Identifying a market most likely to pay to attend
10. Selecting the most appropriate sponsor—or doing it yourself
11. Income boosters, like B.O.R. sales
12. Workbooks
13. Booking, price, time, location, and promotion
14. What you do before your listeners arrive
15. What you do after they have left

If you're still interested, I hope to "speak" with you next week. (You are invited to tell friends about it too.)

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

Excerpted, modified, and expanded from the workbook for 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, P.O. Box 845, Novato, CA 94947. (800) 563-1454 or info@GordonBurgett.com/order3.htm.

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Since the description is usually part of a catalog or like announcement that explains the program's location, the time, and ways to register, your job is to explain why the readers' registration would reap hard-to-find benefits from a person with tested qualifications and experience.

A much-used format 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 to five items are best, and asterisks are much better than numbers or letters separating the benefits in the list. (This list is the biggest drawing element of the description, so do it!)

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 to be posted, 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.

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