

If you want business - throw a seminar...

So why exactly is throwing a seminar good for business?

Put in its simplest terms, a seminar is a way for you to contact as many people as you like all at once to listen to you. It creates a spotlight for you and your company, to showcase it and what it is all about. It will pull in an audience that is interested in what you have to say because you'll target your invites to ensure that. It's also an opportunity for contacts to meet you, the senior managers, individuals that they would normally only get to meet behind a phone or behind a letter. It's a more informal, relaxed but very professional approach to promotion. And if you get the right organisers involved, it doesn't have to be a costly exercise either.

Get your target audience right...

When you put on a seminar you generally go to mailing lists and contacts through organisations, plus past and present customers. So all you need to do is just ensure that you're specific with the list brokers about who exactly it is you want at your seminar. The mailing lists you choose to promote your seminar are vital. You should also find that those who you target will share your invite to others, if the programme is particularly enticing. Remember it's not all about numbers either. It's about the quality of your guests. Have you got the key decision makers coming along?

The right seminar programme is of paramount importance...

The seminar will draw interest from the subject matter that you present so the seminar programme is equally as important as the mailing lists. You should invest plenty of time into compiling "the right seminar programme". No one will want to attend a seminar that does not have some impact on their business. If you can guarantee potential guests that you'll provide them with information that they need NOW to increase their business you will get a positive response to your invites.

If you find you have a difficult time getting attendees, then perhaps you need to reconsider the topic and its relevancy to the audience you're targeting. **This should highlight the need for ample planning time! You need to build in windows of opportunity to reflect and adjust if necessary.** The programme needs to be fresh and up to date. It needs more than anything to be relevant and somewhat interactive always seems to go down well with the average audience.

And so are the speakers that you choose...

Subject matter is the key to securing seats are "sold" along with good speakers with a great background and solid experience to share. Some individuals will arrive fully prepared with a set of questions. It could be a day of vital research to them. Therefore speakers need to be able to deal with any question that is thrown at them. Likeability is also an important consideration. Think about the type of person you would want to listen to.

Then there is the food! Always provide some form of food and refreshments. Whether it is a light continental breakfast, a welcome snack, a light buffet lunch, refreshments, biscuits all go down well with attendees to events. After all, wouldn't you like to know that if you're taking a day out of work, or a morning or evening, you're going to get replenished in terms of food and refreshments - I know I would!

The right venue is vital...

Put it this way, if it's not easy and convenient to get to, guests will not attend your seminar. Have you thought about guests that have a disability? What's the room like? Is it airy? Are the acoustics good? Is it big enough? Can it be easily adapted for more or fewer guests – you never want a room to look too big and certainly don't want a room that's too small that you have to turn guests away. Be prepared!

Events are a moment in time. Appreciate that moment, don't waste it...

And remember. All guests to your seminar ARE potential clients and opportunities for business whether it is now or sometime in the future. Make the most of the time for networking and get to know your guests. Make sure you have representatives of your company present that know their stuff. It's an opportunity to sell your company. So don't get anything wrong such as sending along individuals who haven't got a clue about the product or service you're trying to promote. Events are "a moment in time". Don't waste that moment. Ensure guests want to stay in touch. Ask guests for feedback and record that feedback. Have a good event database running that's kept up to date. Most importantly, follow up on any leads. I've seen it time over the amount of managers that run events and then just expect the events to seal the business deal, "just like that"! Sometimes they do! More often than not it's then down to being proactive; building a relationship and keeping in touch.

Don't forget to research the date..!

One final tip, research your date! Check when the school holidays are and ensure you avoid key seasonal breaks. The last thing you want to do after investing lots of time and money is to launch a date when no one is around!