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Seminar Marketing: Boost Your Business by Running Seminars

By Stuart Lockley

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All professional practices have the perennial problem of how to attract new clients. The comfortable days that some of us once knew have long since gone and competition is now the order of the day. Professionals who have not been trained in marketing must feel their way towards a solution which will bring them new clients.

Many professionals opt for seminars as a way of obtaining new business. The traditional method is to organise a number of short breakfast or after work seminars. The seminar is advertised locally and a nominal price charged because we have all learnt that people who do not pay, often do not attend. A few staff will talk on topics we believe potential clients will find interesting then there will be food and a chance to network. We all tell ourselves that this system must work otherwise our competitors would not keep doing it.

The problem with this model of course is that we are not fooling anyone, with the possible exception of ourselves. Everyone knows the reason for the seminar and only attends because they happen to be interested in that specific topic. The other problem is that not one firm in a hundred has an effective system for following up on the people who attend the seminar.

It is time to re-think the model. Seminars can be a very valuable marketing tool if they are used correctly. The seminar should be used both to provide existing clients with something of value and to attract potential new clients in a low cost way. This can be achieved with the following approach:

“ First begin by understanding that your most important clients are the ones that you already have, not the ones that you hope to acquire next week.

“ Secondly understand that your best source of new clients is existing clients. I am assuming of course that you are providing your existing clients with a good service.

“ Thirdly realise that it is a lot easier to prevent existing clients leaving your firm than it is to attract new clients to try your service.

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Begin by listing all of your clients in descending order of importance, probably ranked by fees or turnover. Now divide your clients into four categories, Platinum, Gold, Silver and Bronze. When you look at your own list of clients it will probably be obvious where to draw the dividing lines.

Once you have carried out this exercise the first thing you will realise is that to lose a Platinum or Gold client would be a blow to any firm regardless of their size. These clients would be both difficult and expensive to replace.

In order to keep your best clients with you it is a good idea to provide them with something over and above your normal service that has a low cost to you and a high perceived value to them. This is where the seminar comes in, but structured and sold differently.

Organise a bi-monthly seminar that you will call the 'Platinum Club' or some such name to provide an element of exclusivity. This can be organised for breakfast or after work event although breakfast is usually cheaper to provide. The format will be one speaker, food and the opportunity for all of your Gold and Platinum clients to network. Ensure that your clients realise this opportunity is exclusive and that they will have the opportunity to network with people similar to themselves.

The speaker should not be one of your staff but should be an outside speaker with something of interest to say to your clients. You should not have much difficulty finding people willing to give up a few hours to speak to your Platinum and Gold clients, hence there should be very little cost.

Your clients 'pay' for their admission by bringing with them a guest of similar standing to themselves who would like to hear the speaker and network with people similar to themselves. Of course during the networking period you and your staff are busy meeting and greeting both your existing clients and their guests.

If twenty clients each bring a guest then you have twenty potential new prospects. It is important to obtain name, address and email address for all of the guests and then put in place a systematic process for keeping in touch with them until you make a sale.

The benefit of this seminar model is of course that you provide your key clients with something of value that has cost very little and you now have a number of prospects in your system that you can follow up. If you run the 'club' every few months on a regular programme you will obtain a regular supply of new prospects.

You should have little difficulty arranging for someone to talk at the meeting if they have the opportunity to obtain contact details from the audience.

Good luck.

How To Market Your Seminar to Your Local Market

By Kirk Ward

Seminar Marketing: Boost Your Business by Running Seminars

This is the third of five articles on using seminars to market your offline consulting or professional business. The complete series can be found either on this website, or can be received by sending an email to

How To Market Your Seminar to Your Local Market

If you have created a small business management course or seminar, you are most likely anxious to get started with selling your course or seminar. Unfortunately, it doesn't matter how fantastic your course or seminar is if no one knows about it. For this reason, the next step in successfully launching a small business management course or seminar is marketing. But, just how do you go about marketing your small business management or seminar?

Know Your Market

In general, the best place to start when promoting a new course or seminar is within your local market. Therefore, you should search within your community, and your surrounding communities, to find individuals who might be interested in your small business management course or seminar.

Obviously, people who are already involved in a small business might need the extra insight you can provide with your expertise. This makes your yellow pages an excellent resource for potential students of your course or seminar. Look for small businesses that are locally owned and target their owners as potential students of your small business course or seminar.

But, what about those people who are thinking about starting a small business, but are looking for a little extra guidance and assurance before taking the leap? This is where you come in. With your course or seminar, you can give these people the little push they need – and you can tap into an eager market when you offer them your course or seminar. Unfortunately, people who are just thinking about going into business can be hard to find.

If you are not sure how to go about finding people who are interested in your course or seminar, or if the whole process seems overwhelming, marketing vendors are available to give you the assistance you need. Through these marketing vendors, you can learn strategies for discovering who is a part of your target market, as well as how to get information about your course or seminar into their hands.

Know Your Resources and Options

One avenue for marketing your small business management course or seminar is through your community college. If you have a community college in or near your community, contact their office of Continuing Education. Often, Continuing Education offices are looking to provide great non-credit courses and seminars to their community. Even better, the college will do a great deal of marketing for you.

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Of course, you might not want to form a partnership with another entity. Perhaps you don't want to share in the profits of your course or seminar. Or, maybe you don't want to be restricted by the guidelines of other institutions.

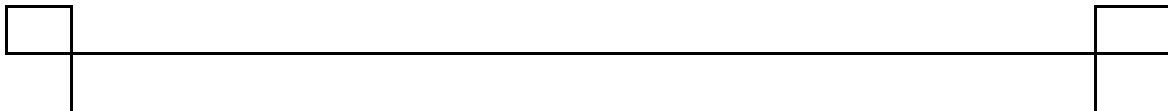
If this is the case, it is helpful to contact a marketing agency. A marketing agency can help you formulate a business plan. A marketing vendor can also help you create marketing materials, such as brochures and news releases. In this way, you can remain the independent owner of your course or seminar.

Another great source of marketing is word of mouth. Therefore, make sure you let it be known that you have an excellent course or seminar available. Pass out business cards and share information about your course or seminar with as many people as possible. With time, the word will spread about your course or seminar.

Many people are interested in being their own bosses and owning their own businesses. A large market for this type of course or seminar exists, but finding the people interested in this type of course or seminar can be tricky. Through the proper marketing techniques, however, a small business seminar or course can be highly successful.



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