

Section 1 - Introduction

Chapter 1: Why Do I Have to Do This?

Reasoning Behind Running a Seminar

You may take one look at this book and think, “I’m an accountant, not a salesperson. Why do I have to run seminars?”

Regardless of the field that you work in, marketing is essential to finding new clients and getting more work. Good marketing can help you to get all of the work that you want; poor marketing can mean that you’re just barely getting by. When you’re dealing with people’s money, the stakes are higher. It takes more than just good marketing to keep your existing customers and bring new ones in.

One of the biggest problems that you may run into as an accountant is that it’s very difficult to show experience and expertise through traditional marketing methods. Yes, you can list how many years of experience you have and feature prestigious schools that you attended in your ads. This won’t necessarily convince potential customers that you know the best way to handle their accounts, however.

There are a few specific things that people look for when considering an accountant or other professional:

- Someone who knows their business
- Someone who is able to put that knowledge to work
- Someone who can tell them what they need
- Someone who is not going to try and cheat them

In order to obtain the business of people who are looking for an accountant that they can trust, you’ll need to be able to show them that you are exactly what they’re looking for. The best way to do this is to talk to them, face to face, up close and personal. That’s where running a seminar comes into play.

Getting Your Message to the People

There's a lot that can be said for the power of the spoken word. The most lasting impressions that people make are usually related to the things that they say. If you're going to make a good impression on potential customers, then you need to be able to get them to listen to what you have to say, and you need to be able to say it to as many people as possible. This will help you to establish your credibility and turn potential customers into long-term customers.

So, how do you get these potential customers to listen? Do you entice them into a locked room with promises of food and prizes? Well...not exactly.

This book will go through running a seminar step by step, from coming up with a topic and targeting your audience, to bringing in the crowds. It will also take you through the ropes for organizing a truly outstanding seminar and show you how to pull it off without a hitch. Finally, this book will give you ideas on what to do when it's all over. Following up after a seminar is just as important as the work that goes into the seminar itself.

People from a wide range of professions choose to host seminars as a way to present information about what they do, and there's a good reason for this... it works! There is no better marketing tool than being able to speak directly to people who are interested in a product or service. Nothing can replace human face to face contact. Seasoned seminar presenters know the value of being able to give their message to a room full of interested people.

As an accountant, it's especially important that you're able to reach people and convince them that your services are just what they've been looking for. You also want to give people a chance to get to know you and feel comfortable with you. Trust can be an issue in areas of finance.

A good number of people tend to have a slight distrust of accountants in general. Don't feel bad! It's not because you're horrible people. Consumers tend to be wary of anyone who wants to handle their finances. They would much rather manage their finances on their own, but most people recognize they don't have the expertise to do so.

In order to overcome these preconceived notions, you'll need to be able to convince potential customers that you have their best interests in mind at all times. You need a little extra time that a seminar provides to give them a chance to feel comfortable with you and know that you are honorable and will work hard for their benefit.

The Art of Presentation

By choosing to use seminars as a part of your marketing strategy, you are choosing to take control of the message that you send to potential customers. Instead of simply

letting words in print tell them why they should hire you, the words that you say and the way in which you say them will let you make a much greater impact.

One of the main advantages to choosing a seminar as a means of marketing is that you will be able to directly influence the opinions of a room full of people. You can choose what information to present to them, adjust your presentation to allow for different audiences, and use a friendly demeanor and knowledgeable tone to help build their confidence in you.

Of course, it's important that you know how to present the information in your seminar if you want it to be a successful marketing tool. This is where you need to rely on your ability to take control and show your "stage presence" as it were... captivate your audience and help them to understand exactly what valuable services an accountant is able to offer. Presentation techniques will be discussed later in this book.

Remember, you are not just *any* accountant. You want to use your seminar to take it a step further and show them that you stand out from the rest. You are an expert in the field, and you are their best option.

Seminars and Traditional Marketing

Using seminars as a marketing tool doesn't mean that more traditional forms of marketing have no place in building your business. It's through more traditional marketing efforts that you will draw people in to your seminar in the first place. You will need to advertise your seminar and convince the public at large that it would be in their best interest to attend.

The way that you manage the advertising for your seminar will depend largely on what the focus of your seminar will be. You might have several different seminars planned, depending upon the time of year or as special events come up. In which case, you will need to adjust your marketing efforts accordingly. On the other hand, you might develop a single seminar with which you can use similar marketing strategies each time you present it.

Seminars should never completely take the place of your regular marketing strategies. After all, you'll want to make sure that your name is out there in every way possible. Market yourself through standard means, such as print and television advertisement and directory listings. Now, you should also focus as much of your time and energy as you can on developing seminars, so that you can put yourself in front of the people that your marketing strategy is targeting.

Why You Should Run a Seminar

When all is said and done, there is one main reason why you should choose to develop and run a seminar as an accountant. If you're going to develop new business contacts

and make your business grow, then you're going to need to establish credibility and let people see you as an expert in your field. By running a seminar, you will give yourself the power that you need to establish that credibility.

Once you're on stage, everyone will be focusing their attention on you and listening to what you have to tell them. Develop your thoughts clearly and present all of your information accurately and with confidence, and they will listen to everything that you say. You've eliminated all other distractions and have the full attention of your audience. All that's left to do is show them that you're confident in your knowledge of the subject matter at hand.

By running a seminar, you can establish the sort of credibility that would otherwise only be available through one-on-one sessions with potential clients. It is generally assumed that a presenter at a seminar is knowledgeable in their field, as long as they don't appear nervous. Your confidence level will serve to reinforce the belief that you are an expert.

Those who attend your seminar will leave with the knowledge that you sought to give them, as well as the image of you as an expert in the field of accounting. This can do more for your business than even the largest advertising campaign.

Opening the Floor

In order to secure your image as an expert, it's important that you are able to handle questions from the audience in addition to simply presenting them with information. This will show that you're confident enough about your knowledge that you can handle things other than just what's on the program. It will also allow you to interact with your potential clients and let them begin to feel comfortable talking with you.

Make sure that you schedule a sufficient amount of time for a question and answer session during your seminar. Be prepared to answer any question that may be presented to you, as this will let the attendees see that you really have nothing to hide and that you can be trusted. Take the time needed to answer every question that may be asked, and you will surely reap the rewards later in the form of new clients.

This question and answer session will help to break down any final barriers between you and the public at large, because they can remain anonymous and under no pressure until they feel comfortable enough to speak with you directly.

You didn't actually lock them in the room, so they can leave at any time. The longer they stay, the more their confidence in you as an accountant will grow. You're the expert, after all. You're the person at the front of the room. So, you must be good at what you do. Show that you're not afraid to answer any question put before you.

Instant Replay:

- Seminars can help you to market your services to multiple people at once
- By addressing people publicly, you can have a greater impact than standard advertising
- Make sure that you allow time for a question-and-answer session in your seminar plan

