

## **Module 10 – Offering Free Seminars**

If you have something of value to offer on a hot topic, people will want to hear about it. Eating well and exercising is an important topic right now, especially as people are beginning to realize that their food choices are having an impact on their health and quality of life.

Seminars are a great way to get the word out about your program. However, before you schedule your first seminar, make sure you know the content inside and out, and if you are claiming to be an expert on the subject, you had better be an expert, because people will ask questions about a variety of subjects relating to your topic.

Choose a topic that is relative to the season and likely to attract a lot of interest. For example, in January, offer a seminar about keeping your New Year's resolution to lose weight. In November, offer a seminar about avoiding weight gain during the holidays.

These seminars should be Powerpoint presentations but with interest not simply slides of the same words that you are going to articulate. The seminars should be approximately one or two hours in length, well organized, and as with your program, give them more than they expect. Perhaps, you can give them a gift to thank them for coming to your seminar or a coupon for a discount on your program.

When choosing a venue, public libraries are a good option. There are usually inexpensive, well-lit, well ventilated, professional, easily accessible, and offer adequate parking. Hotel conference rooms are also a good option, but they tend to be more expensive. If you live near a professional building or corporate centre, they may also rent their conference or meeting rooms to members of the community for a pre-determined hourly rate. Regardless of the venue you choose, make sure it meets your criteria.

Limit the size of the seminar to 10-20 people for the first one, especially if you are not comfortable speaking in front of large groups of people. Get comfortable with the content and format before you address larger groups. When advertising the seminar, encourage early registration and inform people that space is limited. When you are ready for larger groups, a well accepted approach is to advertise that a portion of your fee will be donated to a charitable organization which is relevant to your topic.

Remember, this is your opportunity to tell people who you are and what you do. Your first priority is to provide them with the information they came for in an easy-to-understand format, otherwise they will feel you have wasted their time, but once you have achieved your objective, take a moment to tell them about how you can help them. If you do not feel comfortable selling yourself in this environment, provide them with information pertaining to the seminar in an inexpensive report cover and include your program brochure and business card.

Always conclude your seminar by giving people the opportunity to ask questions. It is often during this time that they will want to know more about your program so this is a perfect opportunity for you to explain how your expertise can help them achieve their goals. Remember to invite anyone who is interested in the program to book an appointment for a complimentary information consultation.

When advertising the seminar, consider local newspapers, flyers, community magazines, and bulletin boards in the community. Plan to advertise the seminar at least 4-6 weeks in advance and allow people to register via telephone or email, for their convenience.

Choose a time that is likely to be convenient for most people. Evenings and weekends are usually a good time, unless your target group is likely to be available during the day, for example, seniors or stay-at-home-moms.

If you need practice speaking in public before presenting a seminar, consider joining a public speaking group, such as Toastmasters. This is a great opportunity for you to develop new skills and network with other members of the community. Remember, everyone is a potential client or knows someone who is, so talk about your program at every opportunity.

For more information about presentation tips, refer to *The Voice*, Volume 2, Issue 4.

### **Action Challenge Ten**

1. Select three topics that you would feel comfortable talking about and you feel would be of interest to your target market.
2. Research the public facilities in your area that offer seminar or meeting space.
3. Write a brief introduction about who you are and what you do.
4. Research cost effective options where you may choose to advertise your seminars.
5. Research public speaking groups in your area.
6. Choose a seminar topic.
7. Research your topic using books and the internet.
8. Talk to other experts in the field, if required.
9. Create an outline for your seminar.
10. Create your seminar on Powerpoint.
11. Develop the handouts and support material for your seminar.
12. Rehearse your seminar alone and in front of friends and family.
13. Time your seminar to establish how long it will take to deliver.
14. Set the date and book the venue for the seminar.
15. Advertise the seminar.
16. Rehearse, rehearse, and rehearse.
17. Compile a folder with pertinent information and promotional material for each person who has registered for the seminar.