



## How to use Seminars and Speaking Engagements in Your Marketing Plan

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One of the most powerful ways to position yourself as an expert, and increase the number of clients interested in your services, is to conduct seminars, lead workshops and speak in front of targeted groups. As part of a word-of-mouth marketing plan, public speaking can expose you to greater numbers of people, showcase your expertise and accelerate your success.

It is important to target the proper audience for your speech, presentation or seminar. Many attorneys, for example, market their seminars directly to prospective clients. But the direct approach may not suit you or be appropriate for your practice area. Your target audience may be attorneys with whom you desire to build credibility because of their ability to send business. Or, for that matter, non-attorney referral sources for their ability to send business. No matter who your target audience is, take time to find the right fit from the beginning as all of your plans -- including what content you will teach and how you will enroll your audience -- hinge on this important factor.

Once you've determined your target audience, determine their issues and concerns. Your seminar will compete for attention with many distractions in their busy lives. Why would they take time out of their busy schedules to attend your seminar? Instead of relying on your own opinion, survey a representative mix of your target market (potential or existing clients, referral sources or other attorneys) for hot topics and issues that currently interest them. Once the topic is selected, create visual aids or a Powerpoint presentation to assist you in explaining it. Develop handouts that participants can take home with them and include your contact information in a prominent location. Give yourself three hours of prep time for every hour on stage if you are presenting a topic familiar to you. Allow much more time if you are tackling a complex or unfamiliar topic.

To determine how to deliver your seminar, consider the four most common types of presentations. The *self-spon-*

*sored approach*, where you, the attorney, would sponsor and be the sole leader of the seminar. The *partnering approach*, where you co-lead the seminar with one or two other presenters, is another option. The other presenters might be partners in your firm, attorneys from other firms or referral sources. This approach gives you the ability not only to market the seminar to your client database, but to the co-leaders' databases as well. Also consider the *third-party sponsor approach* where the sponsor promotes your seminar or adds you as a speaker to an existing program or conference. This approach can give you added credibility and increased exposure. Finally, there is the *panel approach*, which is easy to do and has the advantage of being more interesting to the audience due to the multiple perspectives presented. With the panel approach each presenter has a small amount of time to present their view on the topic with the audience being invited to ask questions and interact with panel members. This lively presentation approach allows the audience to tailor the presentation to their needs due to its interactive nature.

The date for your seminar should not conflict with the business cycles of your target audience. If you create a seminar for CPAs, for example, during tax season -- don't expect high attendance. When you consider that many people are away during the summer and too distracted during the end of the year holidays, spring and fall are usually the best times to schedule your seminar. Do remember to schedule enough time before your seminar to send invitations or place advertising in order to fill the room.

In most metropolitan areas there are a number of different locations that can host your event. Ballrooms in large hotels or banquet rooms in a local restaurant are popular options. If you expect only a small number of attendees, your seminar could be held in the conference room at your office or at a sponsor's facility.

There are a number of ways to fill your seminar. You might create and mail invitations to people in your database of

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past clients and referral sources; advertise your seminar in a flyer or newspaper insert; or place an ad in a journal or newsletter your target audience might read. You could also purchase a bar association or other organization's mailing list and send out a direct mail piece. Whatever method you decide to use, include a confirmation request -- usually a phone number for participants to call and register. This will enable you to predict the amount of materials and seating to provide.

A special "offer" should be given to the audience at the end of every seminar you present. By offering something to the attendees, such as a free packet of information, you remove any hesitations an audience member may have to contact you in order to send you business, ask questions or become a client. Begin the offer by informing the audience that since there isn't enough time to answer all of their questions, you'd be happy to offer a free (or reduced fee) telephone or office consultation, or mail them information on your firm, or place them on your mailing list to receive your newsletter. If possible, get a list of the attendees beforehand or collect business cards at the end of the seminar.

The most important part of the seminar may well be what you do when it is over. The follow-up plan is critical to a successful seminar -- this is where the full impact of all the time you've spent preparing and presenting, pays off. The follow-up plan might consist of calling the attendees who are existing, or potential, referral sources to schedule time together. Or, you might request that the seminar attendees fill out an evaluation form after the seminar and indicate if they'd like to be contacted. Attendees could also give you their business card with any additional requests indicated on the back.

Having a successful seminar is great, but not taking advantage of the credibility and momentum you gain by not following up with attendees, lessens the impact. Do yourself a favor and block time to turn those attendees into clients or referral sources for your practice. Applause from your audience is nice, but additional revenues are nicer. Earning the admiration of your audience is where you begin.

## *About the Authors:*

*Mark Powers, President of Atticus, Inc., and Shawn McNalis, co-authored How Good Attorneys Become Great Rainmakers, "are featured marketing writers for Lawyers, USA and a number of other publications. To learn more about the work that Atticus does with attorneys or the Atticus Rainmakers™ program, please visit [www.atticisonline.com](http://www.atticisonline.com) or call 352-383-0490 or 888-644-0022.*