

How to Hold a Winning Seminar: Checklist for Success

Plan every detail with confidence. Follow these steps to ensure smooth sailing at your seminar.

Three to four months before the seminar

- Determine your target audience, based on your niche in real estate.
- Write down your business goals for the seminar (referrals, name recognition, etc.).
- Pick a compelling topic that would appeal to your audience and help you achieve your goal. To brainstorm for ideas, ask yourself: What are the top concerns that my prospects have? What aspects of the buying and selling process do they want — and need — to learn more about?
- Estimate your budget for the event.
- Draft a rough agenda for seminar that includes:
 - Topics you will cover.
 - The format: Lecture, panel, guest speakers, etc.
 - Multimedia components: PowerPoint, video, etc.
 - Handouts.
 - Snack and comfort breaks.
 - Time for audience questions.
- Decide how many people you will invite, and what marketing components you'll use to invite them (postcard, letter, e-mail, newspaper ad, etc.). Determine how you will collect registration information.
- Select a date and time that will be convenient for your prospects.
- Reserve space at a venue that fits within your budget and is easy for prospects to access.
- Invite guest speakers who will cover the topic enthusiastically and with authority. Big names attract big crowds, but higher-profile speakers likely will expect payment.

Two to three months before the seminar

- Create your seminar announcement/invitation. This may be a flyer, postcard, e-mail, newspaper or online ad, or a combination of any of all of those. In addition to the date, time, and place, the announcement should include:
 - A catchy title for the seminar ("How to Find a Condo Your Dog Will Love!"), and a brief description that explains why your prospects should attend.
 - A rundown of the speakers (Will it just be you, or will you moderate other speakers).
 - A deadline by which to sign up.
 - Instructions on how to sign up. Make it as easy as possible; Filling out an online form is one quick method to register for the event, and it also captures the attendees' contact information.
 - Information on whether breakfast, lunch, snacks, or other refreshments will be served.
 - Information on giveaways, any drawings for gifts.
 - Information on who else is welcome to come. It's smart to ask attendees to bring a friend, their kids (if the event will be kid-friendly), or even their pets.
- Check deadlines for publications and other media where the event will be announced. Submit announcement as appropriate.
- Create a list of people to whom the announcement will be e-mailed and/or mailed.
- Start assembling materials for handouts.

One to two months before the seminar

- Order special supplies or equipment you'll need for the event.
- Add event and registration page to your Web site.
- Mail or e-mail announcements (no sooner than one month before the event.)
- If you'll be serving food, plan what you will serve and who will cater the event.
- Decide on giveaways or gifts for drawings.
- Continue to develop high-quality handouts.
- If you'll be doing the presentation or acting as moderator, practice what you will say.
- Begin to develop any PowerPoint or multimedia presentations.

One to two weeks before the seminar

- Call to confirm the meeting room arrangements.
- Call people in your sphere of influence and invite them to attend.
- Send out newspaper announcements at least 2-3 weeks in advance.
- Confirm that you have all of the supplies and equipment necessary for the seminar.
- Shop for refreshments that you'll be providing yourself. Order food from caterers.
- Re-confirm with your guest speakers. Fill them in on registration details, and get them excited for the event!
- Check on the number of people who have responded. Follow up with people who you expected would come, but have not responded.
- Finish working on handouts, including an agenda for the seminar that includes information on you and the speakers.

One to two days before the seminar

- Confirm your guest speaker one last time. Provide directions, if you haven't already.
- Confirm the meeting room.
- Make copies of handouts and gather other materials you will be sharing with the audience.
- Gather the audio/visual equipment you will need to have that day, and practice with any new equipment you haven't used before.
- Create signs that you'll put up at the event to direct participants to the correct area.
- Monitor how many reservations are received and make adjustments, if necessary, to your refreshments or seating arrangements.
- Send an e-mail to the registrants reminding them of the event and providing a recap of what they can expect.

Day of the seminar

- Be sure your day is free of time-consuming appointments.
- Review the material you will be presenting.
- Take a copy of the reservation list with you.
- Put signs in front of the event location.
- Arrive early and relax.
- Greet the participants as they arrive.
- Keep an eye on the clock; To ensure the seminar moves along seamlessly and ends on time, you may need to remind speakers when their time is running out.

- Take photos and videos, and post on your Web site.
- At the end of the event, be sure to ask for feedback. Provide a feedback form to learn what you can do better next time.
- Make sure attendees know how to reach you.

Two to three days after the seminar

- Send a hand-written thank you card to each guest speaker and attendee. Send 'Sorry We Missed You' cards to all no-shows.
- Reflect on what went well and what could be improved for your next seminar. Review any feedback received from attendees.
- Enter the contact information attendees into a follow-up system.

One week after the seminar to quarterly

- Begin communicating regularly with attendees, perhaps by sending them your e-newsletter or mailings.
- Keep attendees in the loop about future events, especially if the seminar is on a related topic. And remind them that you appreciate their business and referrals!