

Develop Workshops and Promote your Business

By June Campbell

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Pssst! Want to make money while promoting your business? Deliver workshops or training events in your area of expertise, and you'll accomplish both. You'll also establish yourself as an expert in your field.

If you are afraid of public speaking, there's a work around. Engage the services of an experienced presenter or facilitator, and you act as the assistant. With practice, you'll overcome your anxiety and eventually you'll be comfortable going it alone.

Here's how you get started:

1. Decide what you want to teach, and to whom. I.e. if you have a bookkeeping business, you might decide to offer instruction in basic bookkeeping to new entrepreneurs. When the entrepreneurs decide it's time to contract out their bookkeeping, whose name will come to mind?
2. Decide whether your workshop is to be conference style or skill development style. In conference-style events, the trainer stands at the front of the room and speaks, using audio-visual or other props where appropriate. Participants learn what they can from the performance and from the distributed handouts. In skill development workshops, participants have the opportunity to practice and develop specific skills throughout the course of the event. If selecting the latter method, you will want to limit the number of participants since each will need personal attention during the hands-on learning activities.
3. Next, create a preliminary outline of your workshop and the activities you will be incorporating. Decide: key points, skills that your participants will acquire, and the instructional method you will use to impart these skills.
4. Now, decide upon the ideal length of workshop, including breaks. Determine your workshop schedule. Will it be delivered over the course of a weekend? One evening a week for six weeks? Other?
5. Determine the type of venue that you will need. Consider seating space, building regulations, parking, restroom facilities, and plugins and power supply adequate for operating your equipment.
6. Decide how to market your workshop. Will you promote your event through posters, advertisements in local media, letters to existing customers, press releases, email, etc?
7. Create a budget. First, determine your expenses, including facility rental, equipment rental, cost of providing coffee & snacks, promotional budget, fee for helpers or assistants, administrative expenses, handouts, samples, binders, etc. Then, play with the figures until you have identified the number of participants that you will need and the fee that you will charge in order to break even and to generate a profit margin. Is your fee reasonable and is it in line with what your participants are likely to pay? If not, tinker until it is.

8. Decide the minimum number of participants that you must attract to break even. Be prepared to cancel the workshop and return participant fees if fewer than this number register. Similarly, decide upon the maximum number of participants that you can handle and offer a waiting list when that number is reached.

9. Next, arrange for your facility. If suitable space is not readily available, consider meeting rooms at universities and colleges, community rooms in shopping malls, community halls and agencies, convention centers, etc.

10. Promote your event.

11. Complete the planning for the workshop. Create a detailed agenda for the workshop outlining the activities and learning goals for every session. Arrange for equipment. Arrange for beverages and snacks, if appropriate. Locate your assistants.

12. Prepare for last minute disasters. For example, if you're planning on showing a 45-minute video, what'll you do if the VCR breaks? You'll fare better if you plan for the unexpected, develop a flexible attitude and a sense of humor, and always bring backup material.

Ready? Now break a leg!

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