

The Insurance Marketing Department Ltd

Sales and Marketing guides

Number: 2

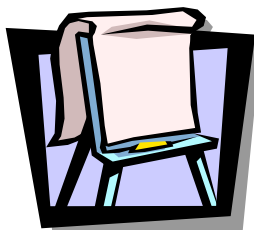
Topic: Organising a seminar. The Why and the How.

Date: July 2001

Seminars are far too large a topic to be covered in one guide. We have therefore split it into two sections; organising the event and actually giving it.

As usual, we should start by asking ourselves why we might wish to hold seminars at all. After all, they usually involve some expense, not least in terms of your time and possibly hiring or even buying some equipment. Then there is the question of catering; should you spend money on feeding attendees? And presentations themselves can be daunting, at least the first one or two times you try.

The answer to this question is indirect, because holding seminars is not about immediate results, so there is no prospect of leaving the room with a fist full of application forms. What seminars can do, is to allow you to inform a group of current – or prospective – clients about something they should understand and which they can then subsequently discuss with you, privately. As a result, you should not expect to achieve immediate sales. However, as part of an overall strategy of enhancing your professional status and



What are you holding a seminar for?

increasing your professional reputation within the community, holding seminars can significantly contribute towards your overall success.

There are three principal audiences you may find worthwhile talking to. The first two, consumers generally and professional introducers, are the most obvious. But the same principals as are outlined today, and in the next article, could equally be applied to groups of employees brought together by their employer, in order to learn about a proposed new Stakeholder scheme, sick-pay insurance scheme, or private medical insurance scheme.

Presenting information to members of the public is an ideal way not only of raising your profile as a key figure in the business community, but also of creating valuable contacts with people who may seek financial advice from you in the future. After all, most people are suspicious of those selling to them; their view is something along the lines of “well, you would say I need that product, wouldn’t you.” Talking to a group of people is totally different. Each member of the audience enjoys a certain degree of anonymity; they do not have to identify themselves to others in the audience. Nor, during the presentation, are you seeking

specific information about them. The process of making a presentation is almost the antithesis of undertaking a fact find. You are not asking questions about the individual’s circumstances, you are giving information, which listeners can compare with their own circumstances. A good presenter involves the audience in the presentation, but only to the extent that general comments are made. Indeed, it is wise to defer specific questions about a participant’s individual circumstances until after the presentation is completed, or you can very easily be side-tracked.

The second principal group, to which presentations can be made is to other professionals. Financial services are an increasingly complex area; the amount of knowledge required of its practitioners, today, is almost mind bendingly broad. So it is easy to understand why most accountants, solicitors and other professionals, who once ‘sold’ financial products, are now increasingly keen to co-operate with IFAs in order to ensure that their clients are given the right advice. There is still, however, a considerable need for these introducers to have a broad understanding of the needs their clients have and the alternative solutions to them.