

## Presenting an Effective Seminar

### About the Author

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### INTRODUCTION (OH-1)

What is a seminar and how does it differ from a devotional talk, sermon, or lecture? A seminar differs in that it is an exchange of information that is confined to a specific topic. The information presented answers questions and usually solves specific problems. A well-designed seminar can profoundly affect the personal, professional, or spiritual life of the participant. Seminars can be from one hour to several days in length. They cover a specific topic in depth, but are not as thorough or as long as a college course.

Your success as a seminar presenter involves mastering two skills. The first skill involves standing in front of a group of people and delivering a specific topic with content and structure in a skillful manner. When you are prepared to deliver a fantastic seminar your reputation will precede you. Quality will earn you invitations to speak, participants who long to hear what you have to share, and referrals.

The second skill involves getting you before a group of people. It also includes the promotion of the seminar. The greatest seminar in the world is worthless if no one is present to receive the information. This second skill we'll deal with later.

### PREREQUISITES FOR SUCCESS (OH-2)

There are three prerequisites for success:

- 1. Knowledge.** You must know your topic well. Ideally, you should be able to advertise yourself as an authority on your topic. Even if you already possess the right credentials establishing your credibility, you must work continually to update your knowledge. Read as many books as you can that relate to the topic of your seminar. In addition, watch videos and listen to cassettes. You can learn from colleagues by attending their seminars. To stay current on your topic, you can subscribe to periodicals that provide current information. Join organizations that focus on your topic.

**2. Attitude.** The second prerequisite is your attitude. As in all endeavors, you will achieve very little unless you possess the commitment to overcome all obstacles that obstruct your progress. Confidence follows your commitment to the task. Confidence is critical in gaining the support of others. You may not always feel confident, but it is always possible to exhibit confidence. And when you are committed and confident you feel a sense of mission and purpose in creating and presenting your program.

If you feel that the seminar you have created will benefit others, and that what you have to share with others is more of a calling than a job, your potential for success is almost unlimited. However, along the way you will face many challenges and possibly even a failure or two. So the ability to recover and stay on course with a positive mind set becomes imperative.

And remember: if you don't know what you want, you are not likely to get it. Therefore, goal setting must become a habit, not an occasional thought. Goals should be short, medium, and long-term and include writing down target dates for achieving them. A short-term goal might include writing an outline for a new seminar topic. A medium-range goal might include completing notes and visuals for the seminar. The long-term goal might be to secure an appointment for presenting this new topic. Accomplishing this requires many forms of energy output. Creative energy is needed to put the program together and mental energy to research the information. Physical energy will be required to present the seminar and keep up with hectic travel schedules. And emotional energy to really care about the participants is also necessary.

**3. Skills.** The third prerequisite is skill. Although the spoken word is your basic method of communication, writing skills are also needed. You may not be a famous author, but if don't already possess the ability to write persuasively you should read books on the subject or attend classes at a local college to gain the ability. If you are going to influence people your letters, workbooks, handouts, and other materials must be high quality.

The ability to present a professional seminar requires more than standing in front of a group and delivering a lecture. Today you must be able to convey humor and include audiovisuals and some drama in your presentation. Even if you already possess good speaking skills, don't stop there. Aim for superior speaking skills, constantly striving to improve in order to excel.

These day computer and word-processing skills are almost mandatory in order to write letters and create handouts and workbooks. A computer will save you time and money in the long run.

## STRATEGIES FOR PUTTING YOUR SEMINAR TOGETHER (OH-3)

Designing a seminar is easy if you remember three simple points:

1. *Meet your audience where they currently are.*

Is your audience at a beginning, intermediate, or advanced level of your topic? A common mistake is to create a seminar that is either too advanced or too elementary for those attending. Either way the results will be disappointing since those attending will not get what they came for. For example, if you are presenting a seminar on leadership for brand-new women's ministry leaders, your seminar should be very broad. They need the basics in understanding their new position. On the other hand, if your group consists of experienced leaders, they will be bored with material they have likely heard before.

2. *Discover what your audience needs to learn.*

What benefits do your participants expect? One topic of interest to women's ministry leaders is how to plan successful events. You are almost guaranteed good reviews if you help them achieve this goal.

3. *Focus on specific useful skills.*

With women's ministry leaders, they want to learn how to conduct board meetings, prepare an agenda, and handle motions before the group. The skills your group needs are your objectives. By achieving the objectives as cited, the group will get where they want to go.

Once you begin delivering your seminar, you can redefine the design of your seminar with information you receive from those attending. The information comes from feedback from attendees either verbal or through evaluations filled out after the seminar.

## THE MODULAR DESIGN APPROACH (MDA) (OH-4)

*Modules make it possible for participants to digest large bodies of information. Think of it as cutting up your food into manageable bites before trying to swallow it as a whole.*

*By using the modular design, you can rearrange the progression of your seminar*

*easily.* You can also customize the design for a specific group. For example, if your group already knows how to conduct board meetings you can easily drop this module and spend the time covering another necessary topic of leadership. A time-management module for Women's Ministry leaders might include tracking appointments and responsibilities. When you use the modular approach you'll find that researching your topic is easier. Each module becomes a mini seminar with an opening, middle and closing.

*This modular approach makes it easier to prepare handouts, workbooks, and chapters of a book or even audio or video programs.* You'll also find that participants appreciate the feeling of completion as you progress from one module to the next.

In addition, you can create spin-off programs. For example, one might choose to do a seminar for women on time management in the home entitled "Home Organization for Busy Women." As these ideas are tested for validity on busy mothers with small children a random list of the biggest areas of concern may develop. The list might look something like this:

- \* How to handle clutter
- \* Shopping for groceries
- \* Meal preparation
- \* The fastest method for getting household chores done
- \* The best cleaning techniques
- \* How to get time for yourself
- \* How to get your husband and children to help with chores and keep things tidy

These listed items become logical building blocks for modules in the seminar. Each topic can be researched independently with workable strategies. Examples are cited and a new three hour seminar is born. It is broken down into seven modules. The first module is broken down in the following manner:

#### Secret to Sanity #1: A Personal Daily Plan for Getting Chores Done

1. Home Management: A Tremendous Responsibility and Challenge
2. Where Do We Begin?
3. Planning: A Key to Sanity
4. The Personal Daily Plan
5. Five Steps for Creating Your Own Personal Daily Plan
6. Secrets for a Successful Personal Daily Plan
7. Quick Tips for Making a Personal Daily Plan Work
8. A Personal Daily Plan for Children
9. The Rewards and Benefits of a Personal Daily Plan

As you can see from this example, the modular design approach makes building

a comprehensive and effective seminar a simple process. With practice you too can master this modular approach and create your own seminars quickly and easily.

## **CHOOSING A WINNING TOPIC (OH-5)**

A winning topic includes four critical features:

1. ***Choose a topic you are passionate about.***

What topic do you find fascinating? What valuable information would you love to share with others? The eminent educator Dale Carnegie once said, "You never achieve real success unless you like what you are doing." This becomes critical when choosing your topic. It must be a topic you can get excited about. The reason? No one else will get excited about your topic until you do. When you get excited, your excitement will become infectious and then you are in a position to motivate participants. The ability to motivate is an essential trait for any seminar leader and makes the difference between receiving good evaluations and excellent ones.

When you love your subject you will naturally want to stay current and well informed about it. When you are well informed, you will deliver your seminar in a more relaxed and confident manner. This results in a group that will be truly inspired by what you present. Remember, however, it is ultimately participants who decide if the topic you have chosen is a good one or not, not you.

2. ***Choose a topic that provides hard-to-find information which can be applied quickly and easily.***

We live in an age where information is dispatched with speed through television, e-mail, and cellular phones. People are willing to pay huge sums of money for immediate answers and instant relief to problems.

One requirement for the subject you choose is to answer the question: Do people need and desperately want the information you have chosen to present? If you don't know, do some research. Are there similar seminars currently being presented on this topic? Have seminars been presented on this topic in the past? Is it a topic of current interest that is receiving media attention? If it has been successfully presented in the past, it can likely be presented again with similar success. If it has never been addressed before, your seminar just might be a winner!

3. ***Choose a topic with a specific focus.***

There are two ways you can select a focus: either by topic or by audience (or both). Let's say that the chosen subject is self-worth. This is a broad topic. To focus by audience you might choose self-esteem for women. A more focused approach might be the self-worth of divorced or widowed women. You could take that a step further by focusing on the self-worth of divorced or widowed women under the age of 35 who have young children.

4. ***Choose a topic that provides specific rewards.***

People spend the greater portion of every day, whether they are conscious of it or not, in attempting to gain rewards and avoid punishment. People do not want *seminars* themselves. They are after the benefits that seminars offer.

The rewards people are after might include:

- Love
- Security
- Success
- Saving time
- Recognition
- Health
- Living comfortably
- Self-worth
- Increased pleasure
- Social acceptance
- Having fun
- Improving self

Punishments people try to avoid are:

- Sickness
- Wasting time
- Insecurity
- Loneliness
- Death
- Wasting money

The real secret in designing a successful seminar is in correctly identifying the benefits any given audience might want and then providing them with the benefits they are searching for.

## BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A DYNAMIC SEMINAR

A winning seminar must include several essential elements:

### A. Content (OH-6)

A successful seminar doesn't happen by chance. A seminar leader must do her homework first. This means identifying the needs of the participants first, and then thoroughly researching your topic. There are three primary sources of information. The first source is your own experience, which provides credibility; the second, speaking with experts to get first-hand perspectives; and third, researching books, articles, and the internet. Content should include one or more of the following types in order to give credence to your topic:

1. **Statistics.** Your content can be made more solid and interesting by using figures and statistics. Statistics give credence and support what you are saying.
2. **Research.** Research gives credibility to your content.
3. **Facts.** Facts support your topic. For example, in a marriage seminar the couples might be asked to give their mate a 10 second kiss. They would then be told that they are getting off easy because the *Guinness Book of World Records* has recorded the longest kiss at 419 hours and they were only asked for 10 seconds!
4. **Definitions.** Define any terms your audience may not be familiar with. Definitions help to clarify meanings and can be used to open a seminar or a module of a seminar and thereby focus the content more effectively.
5. **Anecdotes and examples.** Anecdotes or stories provide the opportunity to make content intensely interesting. Everybody loves an engaging story. Collect stories related to your topic. The same applies to concrete examples as participants learn to apply the content of your seminar to their own situation.
6. **Case Studies.** Case studies can be used to help participants transfer the information into their own experience.
7. **Expert Quotes.** Something you have just said can be reinforced by citing an authoritative source. But rather than saying, "an expert has said..." give your source a name and title. Choose your authorities with care and make certain they are perceived as a real authority.

## B. Visual Aids (OH-7)

Visual aids are important to include, but will not be discussed here since it was thoroughly covered in Level One of the Leadership Certification course. Here is a list of popular visual aids that you can use:

- Flip charts
- Marker boards
- Overhead projectors
- PowerPoint presentations
- Video tapes

## C. Participation (OH-8)

There's an old axiom that says:

What I hear, I forget;  
What I see, I remember;  
What I do, I understand.

Participants need to be involved in order to learn. More important, research into adult learning has proved that adults retain more when actively involved. Therefore, every seminar leader wants to keep her seminar dynamic and lively. She must create effective, exciting, and fun ways to involve her audience.

Tactics for obtaining audience participation:

1. **Quizzes.** Short tests are especially effective when they test participants' knowledge or skill level on a topic. You can also include riddles or brainteasers that open the door for discussion or participation.
2. **Questions.** One of the easiest questioning techniques is to ask for a show of hands. "How many of you have ever experienced a day when...?" Posing an open-ended question provides an opportunity for involvement. This works best in groups with fewer than 30 but can be used with any size group.
3. **Brainstorming.** Asking the group for a quick reply to a word, issue, or problem is another method of involving them in a topic. Their responses can be recorded on a blackboard or flip chart.
4. **Pairs or triads.** Any size group can be broken into pairs or triads for an activity. After teaching listening skills in a parent seminar, the group can be broken into pairs or triads and asked to practice the skills just learned.

5. **Small groups.** Breaking a large group up into groups of 5 - 8 can be effective when you want each group to work on a specific issue and report back to the entire group.
6. **Skill practice.** Two or more participants can act out or role play any given situation. This allows the group to internalize a situation from a different perspective. Video tapes can also be used.
7. **Games.** Many games can be used to illustrate a point. Awarding a simple, inexpensive prize adds excitement and interest.
8. **Props.** Allowing your audience to touch something will get them involved.
9. **A question and answer period.** Be sure to allow a period of time for question and answers at the close of each module you present, or at the end of the seminar.
10. **Music.** A song or a few words from a song can be used to illustrate a point or to stimulate thoughts on a topic.

#### D. Handouts

Generally speaking, any material distributed at a seminar is referred to as a handout. Handouts are usually free to those attending. Although people attending come to hear you speak, handouts can contribute to the overall success of your seminar. You are more likely to get a good evaluation if your handouts are well done and supplement what you have said. And those who have attended seminars before expect to receive handouts. If they don't get one, they may be disappointed.

Should you run low on time and your handouts are comprehensive, you can refer participants to the handouts if you wish to skip a particular module. Furthermore, handouts provide people with help after they leave the seminar. Make sure that your name as well as contact information appears on all your handouts. This allows people to contact you after a seminar.

Handouts often include combinations of the following: **(OH-9)**

- **Outline.** An outline summarizes the major points of your presentation. It follows the flow of what you are saying, module by module. Space should be left on the handout for note taking.
- **Fill-in-the-blank.** This type of handout encourages audience participation

by requiring them to write in an answer. Often people will even make a game of trying to guess what word goes in the blank.

- *Tests, quizzes, and self-evaluations.* All of these encourage participation in a non-threatening manner.
- *List of resources.* Participants can be given a list of organizations where more information can be obtained on the subject you presented.
- *Reprint of articles.* An article you may have written or one that is relevant to your seminar also makes for a good handout. Be sure to obtain copyright permission should it be required.
- *Bibliography.* Some in your audience may be sufficiently motivated on your topic to consult other books and articles. A bibliography on your subject is almost always welcome.
- *Extra paper.* If you want participants to take notes or write something down, consider using blank unlined or lined sheets as your handout or with your handout.

## E. Handout formats

For the most part, the length of your seminar determines how many handouts you distribute. A three-day seminar requires more handouts than a one hour seminar. Your handouts should be assembled to correspond with the order in which you present your seminar. The simplest and least expensive way to bind handouts is with staples. Staples work best when there are less than 20 pages.

A variety of paper folders is also available in various styles into which loose pages may be inserted. This gives your material a professional look and still allows for flexibility. Or a three-ring loose-leaf binder may be given to each participant. This also allows for flexibility and is advantageous when presenting a seminar with many modules since you can make changes easily within a module and delete or add a module at will. It does, however, increase the cost factor.

Handouts can be passed out at the door as people enter or distributed when they are needed. Loose pages can be passed out quickly by pre-counting your handouts and putting them into piles according to the number seated in each row or at each table. Then ask an assistant or a few participants for help in passing out materials.

## F. Successful Advertising (OH-10)

***Identify your target audience.*** Identifying your audience is the key to successful advertising of a seminar. Defining your audience will assist in making decisions regarding site selection, handout design, fees (if any), refreshments, advertising

methods, brochure style, and almost everything else. By using your target

audience as a reference point, you will automatically make smart choices.

It becomes easy to design a concise and efficient advertising plan based upon your target audience. Let's use the *Get Organized Seminar* for example. Because of the nature of the seminar, it will appeal primarily to younger women—women who currently are homemakers as well as those who work full time outside the home. With this information in hand, you can now make educated decisions for advertising the seminar. Some criteria to define your audience might include:

1. **Sex.** Identify the ratio of men to women. To advertise a *Get Organized Seminar* in the sports section of a newspaper would be ludicrous. The Lifestyle section of the newspaper would be a better choice.
2. **Age.** What age are the majority of women who want to learn to get their lives organized? Certain words and phrases mean different things to different age groups. What might be perfect for women in their 40's could be totally ineffective with the generation that followed.
3. **Place of residence.** Where do these women live? If your audience is mostly city dwellers, putting up posters around town might be effective. Posters in the city will be less effective for women who live in suburbs or rural areas.
4. **Occupation.** If your seminar targets nurses, for example, putting posters in hospitals would work. You must also consider the hours nurses work, the hours of professional training that nurses need annually, as well as a site nurses can get to quickly.
5. **Education.** Although you may possess a Ph.D. from a prestigious educational institution, your target audience may not. Your advertising strategy may break down entirely if you do not speak the language of your target audience.
6. **Income level.** Designing a seminar to reach the wealthy is difficult because few people in this income group attend public seminars. If you want to reach these people you'll have to go where they go. For example, to country clubs or high-priced health spas.

In many cases, one or two of these factors will weigh more heavily than others. But whatever you do, identify your target audience.

## G. Selecting a Date (OH-11)

It is crucial that you select the date and time for your seminar carefully. Timing will have an immense impact on the attendance of your seminar. Here are some broad guidelines when planning dates:

1. **Avoid holidays.** This includes both national and religious holidays, as well as vacation periods that normally fall around them. People get involved in preparation for holidays, which becomes a major distraction, or they travel to visit relatives during holidays. For example, it would be almost useless to plan a *Get Organized Seminar* the weekend before Christmas. Better timing might be two weeks after the New Year when people are thinking about resolutions. (On the other hand, in some countries weekends with national holidays are the best time to have your program. Choose what works best for your country.)

2. **Avoid major national events.** Such events may be of no interest to you personally, but they may preoccupy the minds of those in your target audience. For example, a political convention or the football World Series may be of little interest to you personally, but you must consider the needs of those in the community or area where the seminar is to be scheduled and your target audience. However, a good weekend for a *Get Organized Seminar* might be a Sunday with a big sporting event when most men are attending or watching the match on TV.

3. **Avoid major local events.** It is difficult to compete with major local events such as fairs, festivals, and local sporting events. For example, one speaker was scheduled months in advance to present a marriage seminar in Watsonville, California. The organizers called her several weeks in advance saying that the seminar was inadvertently scheduled during their annual Garlic Festival weekend. It was useless to work against this local event that involved the entire community. Furthermore, no hotel rooms were available for her stay. This weekend which had been scheduled a year before had to be rescheduled.

4. **Consider weather conditions.** Winter months, especially in certain regions, pose threats to the success of your seminar. Areas where snow storms can cripple travel threatens attendance even of those who may have pre-registered as well as any who choose a last-minute registration.

5. **Choose days of the week wisely.** In some cultures Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday are generally very good days to offer seminars of any kind. The primary reason for avoiding Monday is that it is a get-

back-to-work day, full of stress and very busy. Friday is an excellent day to

present business seminars. However, many people take Fridays off for a three day weekend. Sundays are not good days for the general public because Sunday is usually considered a family day or day of rest.

**6. Choose the best time of day.** If you plan an evening seminar traffic patterns must be considered. If your audience consists of homemakers with children, 9:00 a.m. would likely fit their schedule. Half day seminars should be scheduled between 8:30 and 12:30 or 1:00 and 5:00. Full day seminars should start no later than 9:00 a.m. and end before 5:00 p.m. About 4:00 p.m. the audience gets fidgety regardless of how good the seminar is and may begin to leave. Evening seminars should be scheduled between 6:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.

It is always preferable to reduce the number of days for which a seminar is scheduled and increase the hours if necessary. Many participants find it difficult to find an extended block of time to keep returning for a seminar.

**7. Personal development seminars are best taught during evening hours** or over a weekend to avoid conflicts with work. Avoid however, multiple evening seminars on consecutive nights as there is an increased chance that participants will have schedule conflicts. Use same day or evening seminars on consecutive weeks.

## **H. Brochures/Fliers (OH-12)**

Regardless of the type of seminar you are presenting, a printed promotional announcement of your program is necessary. There are two ways of handling brochures/fliers. You can create your own and send master copies to the sponsoring organization or allow them to create their own. I highly recommend that you create your own brochure/flier and provide the masters. This will give you control over what is being promoted about your seminar. Remember, your brochure/flier represents you to your audience. Whether the promotional brochure/flier is well-done or poorly-done can make a huge difference in who will attend your seminar as well as how many attend.

You can save money and reap benefits in creating your own brochure by studying the brochures other professionals have produced. Successful seminar companies have developed their brochures as a result of many years of trial and error and by spending thousands of dollars on market research studies. Collect as many of these as you can and study them, carefully noting the color, type of paper, typeface, size, graphics, content, and style.

When designing a brochure you must once again consider your target audience.

If your seminar is on a health topic, designed specifically for women who cannot afford a registration fee, the brochure must reflect this. If, however, you are offering an expensive seminar to a select group such as physicians, it would be appropriate to develop an expensive, high-quality, multicolor brochure.

Appearance guidelines to consider:

- *Type of paper.* Paper comes in a wide range of thicknesses, colors, and styles. Standard bond (regular typewriter paper) is the least expensive and works well in most cases. Special papers, including glossy, will add a considerable amount to printing costs.
- *Color of Paper.* Copy paper comes in a wide variety of colors. Think through what color might attract your target group. If you are targeting both men and women, pink would likely not attract men.
- *Ink Color.* If you intend to use one color and have graphics, it is preferable to use only black. Whenever possible, however, use two colors. Using two or more colors can be very effective, but each color added increases the cost of printing.
- *Size.* The size should be standard paper size for the country in which you reside or will be presenting. Again, the cost will play a big part in your decision. You must also take into consideration whether the brochure will be used as a one-page flier with no folds, folded in half, a tri-fold, or any other configuration.
- *Typeface.* There are literally hundreds of type styles. Choose one that is simple and easy to read.
- *Graphics.* You have two choices. Hire a professional or choose graphics yourself. With a little research into your topic and the multiplicity of graphics in the public arena today, you should be able to find graphics that can create a straightforward message. Remember, a picture is worth a thousand words!

Current technology now allows you to have a professional brochure designed by a printer and produced on disk which can be sent in advance or e-mailed for the sponsoring group to print from.

#### I. Guidelines for text: (OH-13)

- ***Make the wording short and snappy.*** People do not think in complete sentences. The purpose of the brochure is to persuade people to attend your seminar. Study the short, precise style you see in all the brochures you have collected. Use this style as a model for your brochure.
- ***State the benefits.*** Participants will receive information that will help make their lives better. Regardless of how eloquent your speaking skills are, they

are not interested in hearing you speak. Attendees are after the benefits you offer.

- **Use powerful, action-oriented words.** You can put together dynamic phrases by combining words from the brochures you've collected. For example: *create effective attitudes, achieve intimacy, and master communication skills.*
- **Choose a title that is clear and direct.** A title that starts with "How to . . ." works well in a variety of situations. If possible, include a benefit in your title. For example, the *Get Organized Seminar* offers "Seven Secrets to Sanity for Stressed Women." The subtitle clearly delineates the benefits and provides a "hook" to get people to the seminar by promising "secrets to sanity."
- **Provide date, time, and location.** A brochure without this information is useless.
- **Restate the benefits throughout the brochure.** Put the benefits derived in every place you can think of. Start in the title and continue throughout the rest of the text. People must be reminded about how much better they'll feel, or how much their personal life will improve thanks to your seminar.
- **Delineate who should attend.** Identify the exact audience that will profit from your seminar. This lets readers know the program will be geared to their particular needs. For example, the *Get Organized Seminar* is geared particularly for women, but clearly stated on the brochure is that the program is open to men. The *Highly Effective Marriage Seminar* is primarily for couples, but clearly states on the brochure that the program is open to singles, the separated, divorced, or widowed men and women interested in learning about the differences between the sexes, and how they can better relate to the opposite sex.
- **State what participants will learn.** Some advertising agencies build the information in their brochures around the personality presenting the seminar. That is an ineffective approach. People want to know what they are going to learn and how they will benefit. Work diligently to produce catchy titles and phrases to tweak the interest of people. For example, in the *Highly Effective Marriage Seminar*, the flier states that people will learn:
  - How to Live With an Imperfect Person
  - Why Can't My Partner Understand What I Say?
  - Why A Woman Can't Be More Like A Man

Catchy phrases and titles like this arrest the attention and curiosity.

## J. Room Set Up

The ideal setup for a registration area is just outside the door to the seminar room. If you expect more than 50, have two tables: one registers those whose last names begin with A - L, and the other table handles M - Z. If the registration table

is inside the seminar room latecomers may disturb the seminar already in progress.

1. The seminar facility should be open one hour before the seminar begins and 20 minutes ahead of each succeeding session.
2. Where there are movable chairs, have the chairs set up so that adequate viewing is provided for all and no one sits directly behind anyone else's head. This will promote a feeling of informality and warmth within the group. Try to create an informal atmosphere to help people relax as they enter the room. Fixed seating with straight rows symbolizes formality and rigidity. Foster an atmosphere where learning can be encouraged in an informal manner and where best viewing of the speaker and visuals can be achieved. Where there is fixed seating, rope off back seats in an effort to get people to move forward.
3. One six-foot table will be needed in front for the computer, projector, and other materials. Two tables will be needed at the rear of the room: one for book sales and another if refreshments are served.
4. A large screen will be needed on which to project the PowerPoint or overhead program.
5. A microphone will be needed for groups of over 40 - 50. It is better to use a stand or lapel mike than a hand mike. Please have the system set up and checked out in advance. If the mike is not working properly or needs to be adjusted during the seminar, please attend to it immediately.
6. Recorded music playing softly at the beginning and end of each session helps set a relaxed mood.
7. A hot room will hurt the seminar. The more people crowded into a room the warmer it gets. If there is a choice between a hot or cool room, choose cool. Ideally the temperature of the room should be between 66 and 72 degrees. If it is warmer, your participants will get drowsy. If it is cooler, they may turn blue! Watch the room temperature during the seminar and turn the thermostat down if the room becomes too warm.
8. At the beginning and end of each session straighten chairs, pick up papers, and see that the room is left neat for the next session.

## **FINAL POINTERS**

## Before the Seminar

Get to the seminar location early. This means at least one hour before the scheduled time to begin. This gives you time to check on all last-minute details and see if the instructions you have sent in advance have been followed. You will especially need to arrive early if you are using PowerPoint presentations in order to make sure all electronic equipment is working properly. Locate restrooms. Check the room temperature. Arrange furniture or tables to your liking. Make sure your handouts are there.

All these details need to be cared for prior to the first person arriving to hear you speak. You will be watched with a critical eye the minute the first participant arrives. You need time to appear relaxed and in control. You may wish to circulate in the room and meet people as they arrive. Informal chat will help you and they relax. Show the people that you care! Just prior to going before the group, meet with support staff and sponsors to review the agenda and have prayer.

## Rules for Getting Your Seminar off to a Good Start (OH-14)

1. ***Begin on time.*** Don't wait for latecomers before getting started! This encourages people to come late and penalizes those who come on time.
2. ***Begin by showing energy.*** If you demonstrate energy as you begin your enthusiasm tends to energize the group. This attitude sets the tone for the entire seminar.
3. ***Thoroughly prepare your opening.*** Whatever technique you choose to begin it should be thoroughly rehearsed and delivered with few notes, but with much eye contact. A carefully tested joke or a sense of humor can get you positive responses from the first minute if well delivered. This puts you in control, where you need to be for the duration of the seminar, and gives people confidence in you and what you are about to present.
4. ***Make your introduction brief.*** Whether you are introduced by someone else, or you introduce yourself, make it brief. Communicate to your audience immediately that you are glad to be there, that you are delighted they are there, and that you care. Your audience is more likely to respond positively to you if they know you care.
5. ***Name tags.*** The sweetest sound to anyone's ears is his or her own name. Name tags are usually a valuable asset in creating a relaxed atmosphere. In some seminars you may want to use name tags with first names only

since you may have well-known people present who may want to blend into the crowd and not have people whispering behind their backs that so and so is here.

6. **Breaks.** You should schedule breaks every hour to hour and a half. Breaks do not necessarily need to be 20 to 30 minutes. Sometimes you can just ask participants to take a "standing break" where they do some stretching exercises. Should you announce a ten minute break, keep your word. Begin speaking in ten minutes to those who are back even if the room is only half full. Once the group learns you mean what you say, they are more apt to return on time.

### WHEN TRANSLATION IS NECESSARY (OH-15)

Should the seminar and the topic you present be seen as so vital that others outside your immediate sphere of influence may benefit, you might be invited to present in an area where translation into another language may be necessary. This is especially true if you write a book on the subject. Authors are seen as authorities on the subject about which they write. When translation is necessary here are some pointers to remember:

1. **Avoid idioms.** Idioms are difficult if not impossible to translate. For example, take the English idiom, "*Well, that was an off-the-wall remark*" meaning that the remark was not an appropriate remark to make. You and I may be familiar with such an idiom, but a translator will usually not be and may try to give it a literal translation which will make no sense to an audience and sometimes end in much laughter or confusion.
2. **Speak in short phrases or sentences rather than paragraphs.** The longer you speak before waiting for translation, the greater the possibility that your translator will forget something that was said. This increases the possibility for error and misunderstanding.
3. **Use common language rather than technical terminology.** Even though your translator may know the English language well, this doesn't mean he/she will know or understand difficult or little-known words. As much as possible, deliver your presentation in common, everyday words.
4. **Encourage your translator to go over your notes in advance.** This allows your translator time to look up any words or phrases not known or fully understood and gives both of you more confidence that your message can be delivered with ease and easily understood even in a different culture.

5. ***Be careful with humor.*** Something that is funny in your country may not be funny in Ukraine or Japan. It is often wise to check with your translator in advance when telling jokes or telling anecdotes or stories.
6. ***Send PowerPoint, overheads, and handouts to the organization in advance*** so they can be prepared in the language of the people.

#### (OH-16)

7. ***Get your timing right.*** Do not try to talk over your translator. Wait until your translator has finished speaking before beginning. However, do not let your presentation lag.
8. ***Stay focused.*** You may find that while your translator is translating what you have just said, that your mind will wander. Suddenly the translator falls silent and you recognize that it is your turn to speak again, but you can't remember what you said last! Losing your train of thought and stammering is hardly professional. Stay focused, holding onto the last thought you expressed so that the minute your translator stops you can deliver your next thought without missing a beat.
9. ***Cut your presentation in half.*** Translation often takes more words to clarify points. Therefore, you cannot present all points within a module. It may become necessary to cut your presentation almost in half.
10. ***Ask your translator to stay with you following a presentation.*** People may want to question you following your presentation. If you do not speak the language, it will be impossible for you to respond to questions.
11. ***Check in advance to see if there are any cultural differences*** that need to be taken into consideration before you speak, or any sensitive issues you may need to avoid.
12. ***At the close of the seminar, thank your translator publicly.*** Many times translators receive no remuneration for their services. You may wish to present your translator with a small gift.

#### TO END A SEMINAR (OH-17)

Make certain as you end your seminar that you **summarize the major points**. Before you sit down, remember to thank those who sponsored your seminar or assisted with details. Also extend thanks to those who attended the seminar. Without them you would have had no seminar!

One of the most important things to do is **deliver a challenge** that places the responsibility for change on the attendees.

Your objective as you close the seminar is to **have everyone leave feeling good about their experience** with you and what they've learned. You can use humor, wit, a thought-provoking or humorous quote, or a success story—anything that will make them feel good. Carefully prepare this part of the seminar. This closing should be well thought out and specially designed to bring about positive results.

Last, but certainly not least, **end on time**. An effective seminar presenter begins on time and also closes on time. Those attending have arranged their schedule around announced times. Finishing late is a discourtesy to those attending. After closing the seminar, feel free to linger and talk with people personally or to respond to questions.

At the close of your seminar you will likely feel like you are on a "high." And you should. An effective seminar presenter is very much like an actor on a stage. You have delivered your best. Any positive feedback you receive feeds into this high. In addition, you have made a positive contribution to the lives of others which has taken an incredible amount of creativity on your part. Constantly attempt to update your information while you experiment, modify, and attempt to improve your skills. Presenting seminars offers incredible rewards as you endeavor to improve the lives of those who attend.

## **EVALUATION FORMS**

The evaluation form may be included with whatever type of handout you are using, but it must always be a separate sheet since it is to be returned to you. Through a well-designed evaluation form you can get the information you need so you can improve your seminar. When reading through the evaluations look for similar comments. If several people tell you in one way or another that they could not read your visual presentation, you know that area of your seminar needs improving.

Do not allow negative comments to destroy you, which can easily happen when you have worked diligently on preparing an effective seminar. This person may just be having a bad day. Ask people to sign their evaluation but don't demand it. Participants are usually kinder when they sign their names.