

Chapter 1

Creating a Seminar Business

When I first wrote this book, I was a senior trainer for Xerox Corporation. In that capacity, I felt I had created a program that taught individuals everything they needed to know about corporate training. In fact, that might have been the case for a corporate trainer whose audiences came from within the corporation. However, it has now been over 25 years since I left Xerox to open my own training business. In those years I have certainly learned one simple fact about how to run seminars and workshops. If you can't populate a room with participants, you don't stay in business.

In the following chapters you will learn everything you need to know about how to grab an audience and take them for one terrific ride. In this chapter you will learn how to run a seminar business. Every speaking professional has his or her own way of doing things, and I'm a creature of habit as well. My goal is to provide you with choices and opinions that go along with those choices and then ultimately equip you with enough knowledge to let you decide how to run your own seminar business.

Branding Yourself

Before we start working on putting participants into the seats, referred to as "populating the room," you must figure out what these participants are coming to hear. The concept of branding yourself sounds a little rough, but not to worry. It isn't as bad as it sounds. You see, rarely are you the only person on the face of the earth who will be talking about the subject you profess to be an expert in. The term "branding" refers to how you will differentiate yourself within your industry.

For instance, there are many who lecture on selling, one of the topics I lecture on. Go to the bookstore and you will notice that there are a few people who claim to know as much, if not more, than I do. However, my branding has been threefold:

1. I teach a classic Xerox sales approach.
2. I teach from “repeatable, predictable processes.”
3. I teach the art of creating urgency.

This becomes my branding, or my niche. It allows clients to differentiate what I do from what others do. It might differentiate me into a job, or it might differentiate me out of a job. Clients can decipher what makes me unique.

What will be your branding? It may be one of the most important questions you ask yourself. Do not rush into a quick answer. In a sense, you may be married to this concept for quite some time. Whatever you decide, I suggest you follow a couple of simple rules.

RULE #1—THINK OUTSIDE OF THE BOX

That can be a tired phrase, but the fact of the matter is that many geniuses of today are working with ideas that have been around for quite some time. What initially makes them different and employed is the creativity they use to attract their clients.

One of my colleagues, Eric Hargens, works with salespeople as well. He’s spent time as a consultant and sales manager, and he struggled with this for a while. He wanted to focus on the initial conversation that goes on between client and salesperson. That doesn’t sound much like a branding, now does it? After a few long walks and a couple of cigars, he came up with a different way of articulating this concept. He calls it “the art of chitchat.” Now he has a simple way of explaining what makes what he does unique. That’s what I call thinking out of the box.

RULE #2—KEEP IT SIMPLE

I hear from many people working on their consulting businesses who are trying to brand themselves. When I ask them what they speak on, often the next sentence out of their mouths tells me all I need to know.

When I hear someone take five minutes to answer the question, there is a problem. If you can't explain it, how in the world are you going to sell it? Most people are not interested in hearing a dissertation or pieces of your seminar. They just want to know what you are going to teach them. My rule of thumb is simple: If it takes you more than five words to say it, it's not simple enough.

Please understand that "simple" doesn't mean "obvious." "Simple" means "easy to understand." My suggestion is to write out and practice little sound bites that would interest prospective clients.

RULE #3—DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE BASICS . . . JUST DON'T ADVERTISE IT!

Now that you will be thinking out of the box and trying to keep the concept simple, you are probably asking yourself, "How do I come up with the next hula hoop?" You don't have to. You need to put your own slant on your topic and surround it with solid presentation skills that you will learn in abundance as you read through this book. If it were me, I'd start with the basics.

When I left Xerox and started my consulting business, I felt I was on the cutting edge of every process that related to selling. During one of my seminars an individual came up and complimented me on how I was defining the art of selling. I wasn't that surprised because I felt this was one of the most unique definitions I had created.

He then told me he had seen a similar definition in a book he had read. I was flabbergasted and immediately challenged him to give me the name of the book. I had read plenty of books and had never seen anything close to my definition. The book he was quoting was *Salesmanship and Sales Management*, written by John G. Jones from the Alexander Hamilton Institute. Jones's definition of selling went this way:

Salesmanship, in its broadest sense, is essentially the selling of one's point of view—the ability to start with the other fellow's point of view and to lead his mind to the viewpoint of the seller.

I must apologize for the indifference to gender within Jones's definition, but that is how they referred to many things in 1917, when this passage was written. You see, this is not new information; this is information that *has* been around . . . it has simply been forgotten.

RULE #4—BE PASSIONATE

The quickest way out of the seminar business is to lack passion for the topic you are building your business around. Experience is very important, but experience can be attained. Passion cannot be attained. It must be felt.

What do you truly love to study and talk about? You and your topic are going to be together for quite some time; my suggestion is to think long and hard about this. You and your audiences will be a lot happier if you do!

General versus Closed Seminars

Now that you are branded, you have a second major decision to make. Will your seminar business run general sessions, or will you run closed seminars? The answer to this question will go a long way to determining how you go about marketing yourself. Let's spend a moment or two looking at the pros and cons of each.

GENERAL SESSIONS

A general session seminar is one that is put on for a mixed audience. Such seminars typically are attended by multiple companies and accommodate large audiences. If you have ever attended one, you'd know it. Frequently these seminars are held in hotels or facilities that hold large audiences.

The biggest strength of building a seminar business with general sessions in mind is profit. When I decided to go into the seminar business, one of the contributing factors was my attendance in a general session seminar. The program I attended was a one-day coping-with-conflict seminar, and the cost was a measly \$175. Of course, I wasn't the only one attending. My guess is there were more than 500 people in attendance. I'm not a math major, but I believe that represents a one-day total of \$87,500. There were other costs, like renting of the room, marketing of the seminar, snacks, and coffee, but any way you stack it, that was one heck of a day in the seminar business.

These types of seminars are typically marketed by utilizing key elements of social media, email blasts, and mass mailing flyers sent to selected mailing list clients. This list is determined by the topic. For

instance, the session I just described was marketed to human resources professionals. In the sales industry where many of my sessions are delivered, if I were to mass market, I'd aim for a mailing list of sales managers. If I were to put on a general session for training professionals, I'd mass mail to training managers and possibly human resources professionals where training often resides.

If the profit is so high, why would anyone ever want to create a seminar business with any other marketing approach in mind? The answer lies in the topic and the techniques you choose to deliver that topic. As you lean back and decide if this is an approach that you want to consider, ask yourself these questions:

- 1.** Is my topic generic enough to deliver competently to multiple customers?

When conducting a general session seminar, you may have well over 100 different companies represented in the room. Your topic has to be generic enough to provide examples that will be pertinent to all. Sometimes this isn't possible, and speakers begin to move to multiple industry examples. This is done by highlighting various industries represented by participants in the room, and providing direct examples that relate to them. Once you begin to do this, just be careful to have a wide range of examples to include as many different industries as possible.

- 2.** Will my message be lost in a large audience seminar format?

Delivering seminars to large audiences requires more lecture than many speakers would like. This doesn't mean there can't be small-group activities sprinkled throughout. However, some topics don't lend themselves to smaller group activities. I'm a little stubborn regarding this topic because I believe any size audience can participate in certain types of activities. However, your exercise has to be conducive to the topic. There's nothing worse than attending a seminar where a forced group exercise is inserted that doesn't add any value to the session.

- 3.** Are you prepared to dedicate your business to this marketing approach?

Populating a room of up to 300 strangers requires a lot of work and expense. If this is the type of business you will

choose, then prepare to be committed to it. This is a year-round marketing approach that will place you in large cities all across the country. Each year in business will allow you to reap the rewards of return customers and word-of-mouth attendees. It is essential that a professional handle the marketing. Personally, I wouldn't skimp one penny on professional marketing, because they are the ones who will get those rooms populated with attendees.

Listen and learn from the professionals.

The costs to put on open sessions can creep up on you. When you look at up-front costs that can include the marketing, mailing lists, hotel, travel, breaks, and AV support, it's not unusual to see a breakeven cost hovering around \$10,000 a seminar.

The profit is high, and it's an exciting way to conduct business. If you do choose to conduct your seminar business this way, you will have a head start in providing closed sessions based on specific requests from clients. You see, general sessions always have the potential to create leads toward closed sessions; however, closed sessions never create the potential for general sessions.

CLOSED SESSIONS

For many professional speakers like myself, general sessions can be a challenge because the application of what we teach is specific. My topic is not generic enough to deliver competently to multiple customers. When I teach people to sell, I need to know exactly what they sell to provide real-world examples. My techniques do not work generically. I also need to role-play clients on the techniques I teach. Although multiple role-plays can be conducted in larger sessions, if the participants don't understand each other's businesses, the exercise is useless. That's where the closed session approach to the seminar business comes in.

A closed session seminar is a program delivered to a singular client. This doesn't necessarily mean a singular environment, just a client. When I started my business, I quickly started accumulating clients in the financial industry. This both thrilled and worried me at the same time. I was thrilled because I began to quickly create a following within a specific industry. I was worried because I was concerned I might get

typecast, much like an actor, and lose my credibility in any other industry.

Closed session seminars generally are not marketed through mass marketing approaches. They are marketed slowly and methodically to specific clients. The sales cycle can often be years; however, the sale to a single client can easily represent a six-figure consulting fee. This is because these clients aren't looking for a generic message. These clients want someone to understand what they are doing and specifically to tailor the message to fit their industry and niche within that industry. In other words, they are looking for exactly what they cannot get from a general session.

The fees can be high because rarely are these companies looking for a one-day session with 300 strangers. They want to create a cultural change within their organization. To do this, they want a consultant who can map out a complete training program for all employees within their organization.

There is no set formula for this, but as your guide through the seminar world, I'd be happy to give you one man's approach. In its most simple form, my definition of truly training an organization consists of three basic programs.

- 1. Initial Training.** For most people who put on seminars, this is their bread-and-butter program. Depending on the client's commitment, this program can take various lengths of time to deliver. It typically runs between one to three days. Allow me to make one more recommendation. Clients request closed sessions to receive the direct feedback from the speaker. This means that these programs need to be highly interactive with exercises tightly monitored. For that reason, I rarely recommend a training session with more than 20 participants.
- 2. Follow-up Training.** Gone are the days when consulting companies could survive by delivering initial training programs and moving on. It's unfair to clients who have difficulties implementing the information they are learning in the programs they purchase. It's also foolish for the consultant who is clearly leaving money on the table. Follow-up training is not a repeat of the training that was initially offered but instead a program delivered to add on to whatever was initially taught. Sadly,

many companies never make it to the follow-up training because it was never implemented. That's where the third basic program comes in.

- 3. Implementation Training.** One of the most common questions I'm asked when I complete the initial training for a company is "When will you be back to follow up?" My answer is "Tomorrow if you would like. As a matter of fact, I'd be happy to come back on a weekly basis. However, I don't think that's a very good cost-effective solution." I then add, "Why don't I spend some time teaching you how to implement this program? That way you can protect your investment. Then, when I come back in six months to a year, we won't have to conduct the same seminar. We can simply add to what has already been implemented." My suggestion is when you put together a seminar or a workshop program, make sure you are putting a program together that will help management use job aids, feedback models, and implementation benchmarking. That way you'll be creating a client for life.

Another important decision that anyone who speaks for a living needs to make is how long he or she intends to speak. Let's take a moment and look at the two most common types of presentations.

Keynotes

When people think of professional speakers, often they think of keynote speakers, who give presentations that are typically delivered in an hour-or-less time frame, and often to larger audiences. With larger audiences and that short of a delivery time, it's pretty difficult to create change on a deep, cultural level. Often the expectations of these types of audiences typically can be summed up this way: "If I can learn one or two good ideas from this presentation, I'll be happy."

When I first left Xerox, I swore I would never conduct a keynote presentation. After all, I came from what I had always felt was the Green Berets of speakers, Xerox—the greatest trainers on earth. We didn't necessarily walk into a room to speak to teach you one or two good ideas to motivate or make you feel better. We taught repeatable, predictable techniques that required fairly lengthy workshops. To talk to a group for an hour and call it training was ridiculous in our eyes.

My first year in business, I frequently was asked to deliver keynote-type presentations. I declined. There was no way I was going to give in and compromise my materials. Then one day a new client successfully persuaded me to deliver such a presentation by asking me what I normally got paid and offering to double it. A keynote speaker was born.

It didn't take me long to fall in love with this style of delivery. Not only was the money good, but the wear and tear on my body was a lot less. Which would you prefer: spending a couple of days on the road and speaking for eight or more hours, or getting up early, blowing into town, taking a limo to and from your speaking site, and making it home for dinner? I fell in love with this rock star existence, and who wouldn't? Then in 2002, the stock market corrected, the economy turned, and the speaking industry changed with it.

Those speakers who made a living giving keynotes and *motivating* audiences for an hour suffered, with many going out of business. In a sense, the herd was thinned a bit. Those speakers who remained in business were forced to adapt to a new way of working with clients, and keynote-type deliveries fell out of vogue. Within a few years the industry crawled back to life, and in 2008, as the market dropped, the herd thinned once again. The industry came back to life once again within a few years, and so it goes.

Does that mean you should never deliver a keynote? Of course not! Just understand what a keynote is and is not. A keynote is not a seminar. It's not a workshop, and it will not create the cultural change many companies are looking for. However, keynotes will do something else that makes them very valuable. They sell seminars.

My clients call the one-hour speaking engagements that I deliver "keynotes." I call them "sales calls." When I introduce myself to an organization and the company also gets to know my company and my services, I can add value to that company. That's a home run. In my mind, the keynote becomes the appetizer to creating a more realistic approach to training and to establishing a long-term relationship.

Seminars and Workshops

When you move away from the keynotes and toward a longer delivery, with fewer participants, you are now delivering a seminar or workshop.

Whether the delivery lasts three hours or three days, you are no longer there to motivate, inspire, or introduce people to your services. You are there to teach.

Personally, I try not to deliver a seminar to more than 20 people at a time. This size limit allows you to circulate among the small groups you create, listen to role-plays, monitor case studies, provide individual coaching and feedback, and bond with your participants. If a client wants to put more than 20 participants in a seminar, I often bring a second trainer with me to make sure we get the coverage we need. This obviously affects the pricing of the seminar.

Most speakers in the seminar industry seem to commit to one type of delivery or the other—either general or closed. I'm of the opinion that anyone who enters into the seminar business should never deliver in only one format and exclude the other. It might mean a little more development work, but it will be well worth it.

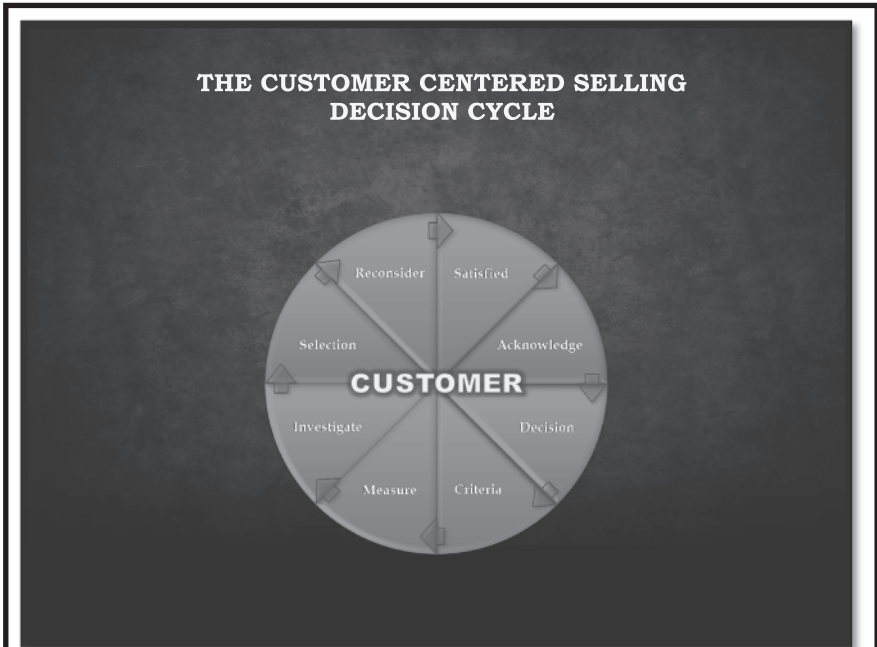
SEMINAR MATERIALS

Regardless of the type of presentation you deliver, the seminar materials you provide in your sessions will say a lot about who you are and the work you do. Often keynote presentations provide little to no handouts, and I can't figure out why. Your materials add credibility to your message and help participants follow your presentation. From a marketing standpoint, materials provide participants with a way to contact you.

For keynote presentations, I do not recommend building a participant guide, but I do recommend a handout. Most people use PowerPoint presentations during their delivery. My recommendation is to keep it simple. Provide the notes and tools available within the PowerPoint program. There are two approaches that I like. The first is fairly simple and requires that you insert text below each slide you deliver. Audience members see the slide on the screen in front of them but have a smaller slide in their handout, with the text you provide. They will look something like what is shown in Figure 1.1.

This approach requires some development from your end. If you want to distinguish yourself from other speakers, these handouts certainly will go a long way toward doing just that.

If you prefer to let your clients take more notes, the second option would be to simply print your slides using the Handouts section of the



The Decision Cycle

1. **Satisfied Stage:** The customer is totally content perceiving no problems with his or her current situation.
2. **Acknowledge Stage:** The customer is aware that problems exist within his or her current situation, but feels no sense of urgency to do anything about it.
3. **Decision Stage:** The customer, feeling “fed up”, resolves to fix his or her existing problems.
4. **Criteria Stage:** The customer shifts the focus away from problems and attempts to determine what his or her buying criteria will be.
5. **Measure Stage:** The customer better defines his or her list of criteria.
6. **Investigate Stage:** The customer begins to compare various solutions to address his or her criteria.
7. **Selection Stage:** The customer chooses the solutions that best addresses his or her criteria.
8. **Reconsider Stage:** The customer reevaluates the decisions that were made.

With a few variations, this repeatable and predictable process is the same from customer to customer, product to product, and industry to industry. Therefore, sales success is not solely determined by the salesperson’s ability to convince the customer, but rather, relies on the salesperson’s facilitation of this decision process.

FIGURE 1.1 Sample slide and handout

Slide 1: A circular diagram with "CUSTOMER" in the center. Eight segments radiate from the center: Research, Selling, Knowledge, Success, Ethics, Values, Attitude, and Beliefs.

Slide 2: A circular diagram with "SELLER" at the top and "CUSTOMER" at the bottom. A "Research Stage" wedge is positioned between the two circles. The "SELLER" side has segments: Research, Beliefs, Attitude, Values, and Success. The "CUSTOMER" side has segments: Research, Beliefs, Attitude, Values, and Success.

Slide 3: Text titled "THREE RULES FOR USING BACKGROUND PROBES".

- Use Open Questions
- Avoid Problems
- Play To Your Strengths

FIGURE 1.2 Presentation software slides with notes page

print screen within your presentation software. Then go to the section marked “Slider per page” and select “3.” By doing this, you will provide your participants with both copies of your slides and a convenient place to take notes. The resulting handout will look something like Figure 1.2.

For seminars and workshops, the materials change dramatically. The intent is no longer to allow participants to follow along or to take some stray notes. The intent is to teach, and the document you provide needs to be created with that intent in mind. Here are a couple of guidelines to think about as you develop your participant materials.

- Remember that the materials you provide are participant guides, not books. The guides should be created not as teaching tools but as participant tools. That means the materials should be designed with directions on various exercises you intend to cover, worksheets that will allow participants to become involved in your material, and plenty of room to take notes. As far as text is concerned, just list the facts. Remember, it's not a teaching guide. It's a *participant* guide.

Individual Exercise:
Closed and Open Questions

Instructions

Read the following questions. After each, try to determine if it's a closed or an open question and circle the appropriate response. If it's a closed question, use the space below it to rewrite it as an open question. If it's open, leave it alone.

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| 1. Do you have any major problems? | Open | Closed |
| | (Circle one) | (Rewrite below) |

- Move your font size up to 13 or 14. The guide should be easy to read and easy to follow. A larger font not only accomplishes this task, but once again, it moves the text away from looking like a book and toward looking like a participant guide.
- Put a copyright symbol on every page you produce. This symbol will remind anyone who sees it that your materials are not to be reproduced without your permission. Unethical people will do strange things, but the key here is to not allow that unethical behavior to be justified or to go unnoticed.

How to Change Minds

4. Make sure you have your contact information in the guide. Be sure to put your contact information behind the cover page and on the last page of the participant guide. I can't count how many times I've been contacted by a participant who took a program from me years ago, held onto the participant guide, and used the guide to track me down.

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AFTER THE SEMINAR

I used to think that I had the perfect system for finishing a seminar. I'd make myself available for hours before a session, but after the session, if you blinked, you would miss me. During more seminars than I would like to mention, I would start packing my laptop bag during the last five minutes of delivery. That meant I could finish and catch a flight booked with a tight connection.

Gone are the days when professional speakers could take to the stage, wow an audience, shake a few hands, sign a couple of books, and leave. The days of flying clients to beautiful locations, sending in internal speakers to educate the clients, sprinkling in a couple of professional speakers to hold the meeting together, and marching clients to golf courses after lunch no longer exist. Remind yourself that each delivery is a blessing.

My suggestion is a simple one. Book the later flight, and do not run out of the room when you've finished your delivery. Quite possibly the best selling time for additional seminars takes place the moment you finish that seminar. You owe it to your client and yourself to spend as much time as necessary to sign books, answer questions, and let the audience get to know you.

Marketing Your Programs

Whether you conduct open session seminars or closed session seminars, keynotes or actual seminars, you still will need to market your services.

Nothing else matters if no one attends your seminar. We call the populating of programs BITS, or “butts in the seats!” Fortunately, regardless of which type of program you choose to deliver, the marketing basics will not change. It all starts with your book.

WRITING THE BOOK

Like it or not, books build credibility. It might not seem fair, but that’s the way it is. That means if you are going to run seminars and workshops, you better start working on that book now. I suppose all authors create their masterpieces differently. However, you’re stuck with me as your mentor, and I’m going to tell you how I do it.

Step 1. Create an Outline. The most brutal moment for any author is the day the first word goes into that computer. It’s brutal because it’s a little like starting to run up a mountain path that’s 100 miles long. The first couple of miles seem as hopeless as the first couple of words—that is, unless you’ve created an outline. That’s the first step in this process.

A book outline allows you to create a blueprint for the work you will be creating. It would be rather hard emotionally to put your hands on a keyboard and start typing away without an outline. When I create my book outlines, I usually try to wait until I have a nice environment to be inspired. It may very well be one or two hours of the most critical time of the project, so I recommend you pick your environment carefully.

In 1992, when I started to create the first edition of this book, I’ll never forget where that outline came from. I was traveling to Cairo, Egypt, to conduct a Train-the-Trainer course for Xerox Egypt. It was the first of many trips I would take to that wonderful city, but I knew I was going to want to come back with an outline. I checked into a hotel called El Gezirah Sheraton Hotel. When I got to my room, I stepped out on my balcony and nearly lost my breath. Fifteen stories below was the Nile River calmly breaking around the small island my hotel was on. I could look up the river for miles. Between the melodic calls for prayer from the mosques, the boats, and the beauty, I was entranced and

inspired. With my trusty notebook and pen in hand, and in what was probably less than 30 minutes, I had a 15-page outline in front of me.

Each page represented a chapter. Each chapter consisted of bulleted points. When you are outlining, you are in what I call “expansion mode.” This means that this is not the time to evaluate what you are writing. Rather it is the time to simply write . . . and keep writing. While you are writing, make sure you leave some space in between those bullets of yours, because you will fill in the space shortly.

I’m assuming you will be writing about something you’ve spoken about before. At first, these bullets should flow in a logical sequence. However, information can be moved at any time, anywhere. Don’t obsess too much about sequence. In between those bullets should be one- or two-word reminders of the stories, analogies, or other creative ideas you intend to make a part of your chapter.

Before you know it, phase one of the outline is complete, and you have yourself a loose skeleton of a 12- to 15-page outline. Never underestimate the empowering feeling of holding that outline in your hand. Along with it will be the first sensation that you actually have enough information and really can write this book!

Step 2. Adding to the Outline. With your trusty outline in hand or on your computer screen, you’re on your way to the next step, which is to add to your outline. The idea now is to allow your mind to wander morning, noon, and night. Keep adding thoughts to that outline. These thoughts might be a story, a better way to explain a concept, a creative way to display something, or countless other ideas. Just turn your mind loose.

My suggestion is to use the record feature on your smartphone or invest in a small digital recorder.

Remind yourself, no matter how obscure the idea or how positive you are that you will remember it, to put it on the recorder. This is particularly important at night. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve fallen asleep swearing I’ll remember a certain idea in the morning, only to wake up remembering one thing. I’ll say to myself, “I had an idea. Now what the heck was it?” It’s a lot like trying to remember a dream; sadly, most of the time you just won’t remember.

Step 3. Writing. Now, it’s time to get started writing. The first couple of pages are the toughest. You might want to prepare this writing around an

event; maybe you have a long train ride, you are flying cross-country, or you have a vacation planned. What you are looking for is three to five hours of uninterrupted time alone.

Personally, I've always loved to write on planes. It doesn't hurt that I travel a lot, but the planes create an environment that suits me to a tee. There are no phones ringing, and the humming engines create a type of white noise that works wonders for me. The few minutes of waiting to load, waiting to push back, waiting to take off, and waiting to reach 10,000 feet and open that laptop allow me to focus on my topic at hand.

I've never actually seen what I look like, but you'll recognize me if you ever see me travel. I'm the guy who usually appears somewhere between being lost in thought and daydreaming before the flight begins. Then I look like I was shot out of a cannon once the flight attendant makes the "cell phones and laptops can now be used" announcement. I'm also the guy who sends absolutely no signals to the person sitting next to him regarding the remote possibility of a conversation. Let me apologize in advance. My time at home is for conversation with family and friends. My time on the road is to write.

Wherever you choose to write, my suggestion is to try to do it consistently. If you want to get up and write early in the morning, do it every day. If you want to put the kids to bed and write from 9:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., do it every day. The key is consistency. The longer you adhere to a consistent writing schedule, the easier it is to fight off the doubts that will haunt you.

I've always treated my writing projects like training for a long race. As a former triathlete and marathoner, I used to train pretty hard. I wasn't crazy, but I was consistent. I used to set distances to run not by the day but by the week. For instance, I might set a month or two of training with a goal of 30 miles a week. In a sense, I didn't really care how I got to those 30 miles. I'd log my daily workouts and plan my normal daily activities to ensure I got them in.

Some weeks were much easier than other weeks. I might have some free time and take a few long 10-mile runs. That certainly took the pressure off the rest of the week. I never liked running in the rain much. If you ever saw me slogging by, it was usually later in the week. That meant I did not have my miles in, and I had no choice but to get wet.

Have you got the analogy yet? I recommend you handle your writing the same way. Set a weekly goal. I like 10 pages, but it's up to

you. If you are like me and have a trip planned, you might do your writing then. You may not need to write at home at all. Maybe it's a short trip week, so there will be a little writing on the road and a little writing at home. Maybe you won't be traveling at all, so there will be a week of writing at home.

As for slogging away, running in the rain, occasionally you might have to cancel plans and be a little miserable on a Sunday getting those last couple of pages in. The most important thing is, once you start, you mustn't allow yourself to miss a week's total. Perhaps it's just my way of thinking, but once you let your mind get away with justifying failure, the next failure becomes infinitely easier to accept and justify.

With every new book I write, and I've written six, I strategically buy an old-school calendar. Once the project begins, almost ceremoniously on Sunday night I write in my page total for the week. Ten pages a week is my goal, but I almost always try to get a couple of extra pages in. This allows me a little cushion in case I have a week of rain. It also introduces a little bit of mystery. After a month or two, I don't really know how many pages I've written in total, and I like it that way. That is a reward I allow myself at the end of each month. At that time I add that month up and the other month or two that precedes it to the total. It's a terrific feeling when the number crosses over the first 100-page barrier.

Allow me one last suggestion that will help you to get to that first 10-page barrier. Don't micromanage your writing. That means don't edit your work. That's for another stage, but not right now. Your job is to write. There will be a time and a place to edit and fix. That's not happening until you bring this writing project in for a landing. That "landing" used to be around 215 pages, but this too has changed over the years. Most business publishers are looking for books in the 150- to 175-page range, with many looking for even fewer pages.

Step 4. Editing Your Book. Want to know one of the best feelings in the world? It's the first time you print out your manuscript and actually hold it in your hands. I'm not much of a cigar smoker, but I usually keep a cigar somewhere near my computer while the typing is going on. Once I hold that manuscript (and I mean the whole thing), I usually light up that cigar. Often it's a bit dried out from sitting by my computer for so long, but it tastes great to me.

There are two editing options now for you to consider. The first is to edit the manuscript yourself, and if you can do that, you are a better person than I. I have a real problem reading my own words for any significant length of time. What's more, I'm a bit sloppy because I know what I'm trying to say and will assume anyone can follow me. You'll save some money here by doing the editing yourself, but personally I don't think it's worth the possible savings.

The editing option I recommend is to find a third party to do this for you. I usually find a retired English teacher or someone who edits material for a living. The costs are usually around \$500 and well worth it. You'll have to train your editor, but most of them know what to do. Their job is not to agree or disagree with what you've written. You are the expert, and that's why you've written the book. Their job is to concentrate on grammar and syntax. I know for me, my editor needs to look for a repeated story here or there. Remember, this project may well have been written over a four- or five-month period of time. It's very easy to tell the same story or to use the same analogy two or three times.

Keep in mind that whoever decides to publish your book will have their own editor look over your book and suggest changes. The goal here is to have not only a great book but a well-written book as well. With a small investment in an editor, that's just what you'll have.

Step 5. Getting Published. With manuscript in hand, it's time to get a publisher. Once again, there are two ways to go here. You can try to find a publisher or publish yourself. There are books written on this subject alone, but allow me to cut through the rhetoric a bit and lay out both sides of this equation for you. If you want to avoid self-publishing your book, you can lay out the ideas you have for your book, write a sample chapter, get that proposal together, and see what happens. Not me.

Many speakers—and by many I've heard numbers as high as 95 percent of professional speakers—self-publish their books. Self-publishing means the authors pay the publisher to publish their work. Their books are printed and bound beautifully. The publishers they use leave no trace of the fact they were paid to do the work. Companies like Amazon now self-publish for no charge, and e-books obviously require no binding.

You can spare yourself the time and trouble of creating a proposal because the self-publishing companies will be selling *you* to allow them to do the work. Why not? They are not taking any risk whatsoever. It is purely business. Most print on demand, and some will save you a few extra dollars and print as many as you would like.

Wait. There's more. For each book you sell, you now stand to make five to six times more money. More money per sale, no begging a publisher, not detectable by your average reader, and quicker to market are some pretty powerful selling points for self-publishing. So, what's the catch?

The catch has to do with distribution. With conventional publishers, you become partners with their marketing team. By self-publishing you are your own marketing team. Some self-publishing companies offer a marketing program, copyediting, graphics, and other options, but if you avail yourself of these services, your costs will rise dramatically.

There are wonderful stories of authors who could not get published, self-published their manuscripts, sold a lot of books, and then got picked up by publishers. Those are wonderful stories. Unfortunately, they are few and far between.

If your goal is simply to make money and gain credibility within your seminars, self-publishing may be the way to go. However, if you want to tough it out and take a shot at creating a book that can find its way into anyone's hands, the traditional publishing route may be for you.

Whatever decision you make, my suggestion is to write the book—now. The sample chapter and proposal idea is a good one. I just think it's the primary reason why 99 percent of the people who want to write a book never do. Once you write that sample chapter and send off that proposal, guess what usually happens? The publishing business chews it up, and you never write the book.

Write the book. In fairness to the publishing industry to which I personally owe so much, it's not all its fault. Imagine being an editor sitting in an office and having dozens of book proposals land on your desk on a daily basis. Tunneling through, here comes another proposal. It looks interesting, and then you get to the experience part: "Never written a book before and has 18 pages written for a 200-page book. Next."

Write the book. When I wrote my first book, I decided to treat the book proposal much like a real estate proposal. It's not the price that holds up so many of these contracts. In fact, it's the contingencies. Sometimes it's a home inspection. Sometimes it's a contingency on the sale of the buyer's house, but one thing is for sure. The more contingencies that are attached to the contract, the worse your chances are of closing the deal.

Write the book. My theory is a simple one. When it comes to writing and selling your book, get rid of the contingencies. The first one to get rid of is the contingency that dogs both you and your publisher. "This person has never written a book before, and I've got to try to believe that with no track record, this person can hit every writing deadline and get me another 125 pages. Hmm . . ."

Write the book. If you do this, you get rid of the biggest objection and contingency your publisher may have. It's easier for you to sell and easier for your publisher to buy. The only negative might be that your publisher will want the book but will want you to change certain things. It might mean more rewrites than you would like. However, if you have a publisher that wants your book, nothing else really matters.

The most important thing to do is to write! Nothing else matters if you don't write! That's why when I work with new authors, I always have them print out this quote and place it where they intend to do most of their writing. It reads like this:

Planning to write is not writing. Thinking about writing is not writing. Talking about writing is not writing.

Researching to write, outlining to write—none of this is writing.

Writing is writing.

—E. L. Doctorow

What happens if you write a great book and can't find a publisher to take it on? Simple, you publish it yourself. There are those in the seminar business who swear by this approach to publishing. Their arguments are good.

Royalties Publishing a book yourself can allow you to move from a 7.5 to 15 percent royalty, to a 90 to 100 percent royalty. Remember, you are paying to publish your own book, so most of the sales belong to you.

Distribution To me, distribution is the biggest downfall of publishing a book yourself. You will be able to get your book on a bunch of Internet sites, including Amazon.com, but the rest of your distribution is up to you. Self-publishers are working their way through this problem by offering their marketing services to you . . . for a price. It's not inexpensive, but the larger self-publishing companies have effective marketing departments. If I were to go the self-publishing route, I would engage their marketing programs. Remember, if you write a book and no one sees it, the book is not doing you any good other than establishing a perceived sense of credibility.

Pride Funny that I should include the word "pride" as a factor to consider, but in fact I have a lot of pride surrounding the publishing of my books. I sold them myself and affectionately refer to them as my children. In theory, anyone can have a book self-published, but not everyone can find a publisher.

I have gotten into some pretty interesting debates with others in the industry over this publishing argument, so let's settle it this way. If you think you can sell more than 1,000 books a year yourself within your seminars, it might be cost effective to self-publish your book. You will certainly make more money that way. Of course, remember this: If within your proposal you can commit to selling more than 1,000 books a year by yourself, plenty of conventional publishers will sit up and listen.

Step 6. Selling Books. So how do you go about selling 1,000 books a year? Well, there are two schools of thought. The first is to deliver seminars and to offer books at the back of the room at the end of your seminar. That's the conventional approach, and, boy, do I dislike it!

To me this says to your audience, "I hope you enjoyed our work together. Now, if you really liked what I had to say, for a few dollars more, I'll help you learn it." If you are conducting general sessions, it might make sense to do this. Personally, I'd add the cost of your book to the tuition and make it a part of their seminar package.

If you are conducting closed-session seminars, it's a little tougher but well worth your effort to make the sale of books a part of your training routine as well. In seminars that are a half day or longer, it should not even be a topic of discussion. Any client who wants a half-

day program or longer is saying to you, “Help us to make the cultural change you are teaching us.” That means the client needs participant guides and books—period.

For keynote deliveries, it’s a little bit tougher. When you are speaking to 500 people for an hour, it’s tough to add the cost of 500 books to the proposal without the client protesting. However, let me tell you a quick story of how I recently sold 650 books for a one-hour keynote presentation.

When I first approached the client with the idea, they immediately said, “No.” I mentioned I *never* charge a client more than the cost that I pay for the book. Even at \$9.10 a book, the answer was still “No.”

My contracts typically allow me to fly business class. My next move was to offer to bump that \$2,000 ticket down to an \$800 coach ticket. I now had the books down to about \$7.25 each, but the answer was still “No.” Finally, I offered to pick up the airline ticket myself. When you are in the seminar business, you accumulate airline miles. With more than 1 million miles in my United Airlines account alone, this was an easy thing to do. This brought the cost to about \$6.00 a book. Most companies that bring in large groups of clients to meetings often put gifts in the hotel rooms each night. One of those nights became Rob Jolles Night, and the attendees found an autographed book of mine waiting for them in their room.

Six other professional speakers spoke at the meeting I’m writing about. Each set up a little table in the back of the room and hawked books at the end of their seminar. From what I could see, each sold five or six books.

One last comment on buying books and selling them to clients. I strongly recommend that you find a distributor you like, develop a relationship, and set up a distribution channel. The reason for this is a simple one but often is overlooked by those who conduct seminars.

It’s wonderful to be published but even more wonderful to make your book a best seller. If you buy your books directly from your publisher, your discount will be deep. Depending on quantity, it could be as large as 50 percent. However, every single book that you buy will not be counted toward any best-seller list.

If you buy your books from a distributor, your discount usually will not go higher than 45 percent. So why use a distributor? Use a distributor because book sales can count toward these best-seller lists.

Let me tell you how these lists work. When a book makes a best-seller list, it doesn't necessarily mean it has sold more than any book of its kind. It means it has sold more than any book of its kind *from the major book chains that make up the count*. It's almost like watching television from a TV with a Nielsen box on top of it. Those ratings don't track how many TVs are watching a certain program. They track how many TVs with Nielsen boxes on them are watching a certain program.

What you potentially give up in book sales, you make up in seminar fees. When a book hits the *Business Best-Seller List* or the *New York Times Best-Seller List*, it is the equivalent of receiving an Academy Award. When an actor is nominated, the cost of hiring that actor goes up. When an actor wins the award, the cost goes up even higher. You do the math. When you are marketing your services, which sounds better, "Please welcome author Glenn Faulkner" or "Please welcome best-selling author Glenn Faulkner"?

Write the book. Ultimately, it's your decision whom to sell your book to and whom you buy your books from. For me it's an easy decision. I strongly recommend you try to sell your book to a publisher. If your selling is unsuccessful, you can always move to self-publishing. There are plenty of stories of those who self-published their book, had it sell well, and then had a publisher offer to publish and distribute their book.

Most important, write the book.

Speakers' Bureaus

Once you have your book in hand, another marketing approach you might want to consider is establishing a relationship with various speakers' bureaus. You won't be the only speaker they represent. However, the easier you make it for them to sell your services, the more seminars they will sell for you.

The speakers' bureaus will want that book of yours, and they'll want a clear sense of your particular branding. There's also one other thing they will want, and that's a speaker's tape. They will want that tape because it will be their primary tool to help sell your services.

For years I avoided creating a speaker's tape because I felt it was a terrible way for me to sell my services. Eleven years later I still believe

this. Almost all the seminars I sell for myself are sold based on an existing relationship, someone who has seen a seminar I've delivered, or on a referral.

However, in the world of the speakers' bureaus, almost all their sales of speakers go to clients who have no idea who you are. That means they have to see you in action. Clients who call speakers' bureaus looking for speakers are already prepared to receive links and watch YouTube videos of the speakers they intend to contract.

Speaker's tapes are not inexpensive. They often cost between \$10,000 to \$15,000. Just remember this: The first sale made as a result of the first-class video your client sees pays for your video. This is not an expense you want to try to avoid or skimp on. Speakers' bureaus tend to move collectively in similar directions regarding the types of materials they are looking for, and this has created a slight change in what they want to see on speaker's tapes. Currently bureaus are frowning on overproduced tapes with voiceovers, flying graphics, music, and more. Instead they are looking instead for 10 to 15 minutes of uninterrupted speaking for an actual event. You still will need at least two cameras on these shoots—one of you and one on the audience—but the cost of production has come down a bit.

My suggestion is to find the most reputable speakers' bureau in the marketplace and ask it for help. The big ones have their own departments that create speaker's tapes. Again, they are not inexpensive, but they are worthwhile. With a turn-key approach to delivery, the bureau will contract and organize live videotaping of your presentation, graphics, editing, and packaging of your video. Remember, speakers' bureaus are in the business of selling speakers. They know what sells on a speaker's tape.

Third-Party Marketing

My final suggestion regarding the marketing of your seminars is a little out of the ordinary but has worked well for me over the years. Often you will find that you are delivering seminars to an industry that is competing for business the same way you are. For example, the financial industry is famous for lavishing amazing gifts on its prospective clients. When watching an NBA game, have you ever wondered who those people at courtside are and what lottery they won to be

privileged enough to get those seats? Often the answer is that they are someone's clients, and they are there as a "value-added incentive" to do more business with whomever bought those tickets.

Tickets and tee times were very popular approaches to generating new business in the 1990s, but we are living in a new era now. Most companies that are being courted would rather pass on the courtside tickets. Instead, they would prefer doing business with a company that can take care not only of their immediate needs but can help in other ways to make them successful.

This is where you come in. In many situations, you will find that the seminars you offer may fit beautifully with your client's customers. Now you become the value-added incentive that your client can offer, and that means you have just adopted a new sales team that can offer your services. I'd venture to guess that, over the years, this might very well be the most successful approach for me since I went into the consulting business.

Summary

Whatever type of seminar or workshop you deliver, and whatever type of audience you deliver to, it's my hope that you now have a clearer understanding of how to run your seminar business. From branding to book writing, and from marketing to material development, you now have a bird's-eye view of the decisions you need to make. Armed with this information, it's time to look at the delivery side of this most wonderful occupation.