

How to get small businesses along to seminars and workshops and avoid the stress and embarrassment of low numbers

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Tips on Seminar Promotion through Your Small Business Agency, Business Enterprise Centre or Local Business Group

Some managers are seasoned campaigners when it comes to promoting workshops and seminars. They have an established track record that has prospective participants thinking *“Well, I got a lot out of the last one I attended and they always put on practical stuff with good quality presenters.”* For other Centres, putting on workshops is an infrequent part of their role so the challenges are greater and the need for a thorough approach to gaining local support and involvement is essential.

Here are some pointers to consider when putting on workshops and seminars for local businesses. If you regularly run workshops some of these points will seem a bit obvious and not every point will be appropriate for you. So weigh up the pros and cons, only consider what is right for your situation and feel free to drop Jurek Leon an email at info@terrifictrading.com if you would like to discuss or debate them.

1. Why are you running the program? Have you had enquiries from businesses or come across situations that suggest that there could be a demand for the workshop?
2. What do you regard as the target market for the workshop?
3. Why do you think they will be keen to attend? There is a big difference between a need and a want. For example, there are plenty of retailers who need the selling, customer service, merchandising and display skills that are covered in the Retailing Today program we present on behalf of Small Business Centres in WA. That doesn't mean that they will be enthusiastic to attend. The first ones to register are invariably those who need it least. The others have to be won over.
4. In the planning phase have you identified local heroes and key influencers?
5. Prior to promotion have you got pre-commitments for 20% of the attendees? As an example, for the Retailing Today and Tourism Today workshop series we present I recommend having five names on the list before you even think of going out with a public promotion. This should be from one to one discussions with the committed few from Point 4 above. Then, when you talk to others, you can name drop that these people have already booked.
6. Have you prepared a list of 20 businesses you expect to attend? Contact these people personally or have your trusted lieutenant do so. If you don't have time to do this you certainly don't have time to spend on promoting a program that doesn't get off the ground due to lack of numbers.
7. Who will be involved in helping to spread the word and get people along? Are these helpers able to work within your time frame? Have they committed to

- follow up X number of people by Y date? Do they feel some sort of responsibility for getting a successful outcome?
8. Plan your promotional strategy. What time frames have you set for sending out emails, mail outs, letterbox drops, ads in the local paper, press releases etc?
 9. Emails: Plan for at least two emails to go out. Some Centres do well with three. One a couple of months in advance notifying them of the event and perhaps asking for expressions of interest; one about 3 weeks before the event; and one a week prior to the event with a 'last chance to register' theme. Don't rely on emails if you haven't been using this medium as a regular way of getting response in the past. You need to combine this with other approaches.
 10. Follow up phone calls increase the response rate. They are best done early rather than as a last resort two days before the event (though this has worked for some!). You have limited time, so if you delegate this give your helpers a script. They tend to be task focussed and, "*I'm just phoning up to see if you are attending next Wednesday's Tourism Today course*" is unlikely to get a positive result.
 11. Word of warning, particularly if you are not used to having retailers on workshops. Always phone around the day before the workshop or first thing on the day of the workshop (if its being held in the evening) to remind them that they booked and stress the start time, what food is being provided and what a valuable event it is going to be for them. Retailers, in particular, are notorious for forgetting or deciding at the last minute that they are too tired to attend!
 12. You know the businesses in your area. What are the key things that matter to them? Most people aren't interested in attending courses. But they do want their life made easier. They do want to make more money without having to work harder and longer. And they do want solutions to problems. Make a list of the 10 key things you believe local businesses will gain from attending and sell these benefits to them.
 13. Contact two or three other Centres that have run the same event or similar events by the same presenter. Ask about the feedback. Are there success stories, things that people have done since attending? These anecdotes and examples will add to information you are putting across. Create word-of-mouth. Get people talking about the workshops well before they are due to commence.
 14. Give information. Particularly with emails, mail outs and letterbox drops, give more information. Unless you have an excellent track record of running successful workshops, people need to know whether it is going to make a difference for them. Get them interested and then give them support information. Give them reasons why this opportunity shouldn't be missed in your area.

- 15.** Put in a system to generate referrals from those making early bookings. This could involve asking every registrant if they know of other business friends who would benefit from taking advantage of this opportunity. If they give you some names, ask if you can mention their name and say that they are also attending. Then contact prospects by email/letter/phone saying, *“Jo Jones has just registered for the RT/TT workshop series and mentioned that this may also be of interest to you. We would love to have you involved as it’s a terrific opportunity for local business people to focus on. ...By the way, Jo also registered two of her staff. This is something you may also like to consider. It’s a great way of getting quick results...”*
- 16.** Adapt and use Jurek Leon’s questionnaires to stimulate interest. On the next two pages you will find a questionnaire for Terrific Trading’s Tourism Today series of workshops. This is followed by a two-page questionnaire for the Retailing Today program.
- 17.** If you are brave and have the right relationship with your client group, adapt the ‘15 Top Reasons for Not Attending’ sheet and use it in your second mailing or emailing. If it generates a reaction it will have been worthwhile!
- 18.** Make it a priority to put in a system to follow up workshop and seminar attendees. Congratulate them for attending. Ask what they have done or intend doing as a result of their attendance and how they believe it will make a difference. This is valuable feedback and great ammunition when planning and promoting future events.

Questionnaire – Are you getting your fair share of the tourist dollar?

Quickly go down the page and honestly answer these ten questions. We've answered the first one for you and you may well know all the answers to the other questions. Go on, it will take you less than five minutes....and it could make a huge difference to your business.

1. Is your business in the tourism industry?

If some of your income comes from visitors and people passing through, then YES, no matter what you do, you are in the tourism industry.

For example, two of the businesses represented at the first series of Broome Tourism Today workshops were a local pest control business and a local panel beater. In both cases, directly or indirectly, a lot of their business was dependent on tourists. They were smart enough to realise this. They were also two of the most switched on, enthusiastic participants who picked up heaps of ideas and examples to apply in their businesses. It pays to take opportunities when they come your way.

2. Does it feel like you get almost as many calls from people selling advertising as you do from potential clients?

3. List some positive, low cost steps to change that and get the best return from your limited advertising budget?

- a.....
- b.....
- c.....
- d.....

4. Describe your three main customer types and what percentage of your business comes from each?

- a.....
- b.....
- c.....

5. How would local people describe your business to potential visitors? Are you clear about how they judge you?

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-
-

6. How would one-off customers 'passing through' describe your business?

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7. What system do you have in place for gathering customer feedback? (If you don't have an existing system write down the one you will implement at the workshop)

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8. Identify at least two ways to make your business stand out in your customers mind and have these customers become walking, talking ambassadors for your business

a.....
b.....
c.....

9. Do you and your team know how to turn enquiries into bookings or sales? What do you say? Is it happening consistently?

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10. Would you like to get inspired with motivating case studies on video, plus practical examples and ideas to stimulate your business and generate more dollars in your local community? Circle the appropriate answer.

Yes, Yes, Yes Most definitely I'd be crazy not to Tell me more

If you have spaces left on these two pages then you owe it to yourself to attend these workshops. It's an opportunity that is unlikely to come this way again for quite some time. Simple, cost effective ideas – and you won't forget them because they are recorded right here. Keep these pages handy and implement the ideas anytime in the next couple of months – you'll soon notice the difference.

Now, check out the information on the Tourism Today workshops developed and presented on behalf of the Small Business Development Corporation and the Small Business Centres by Terrific Trading.

To find the contact details for your local Small Business Centre in Western Australia go to www.sbdc.com.au.

PS. Don't delay. You deserve this opportunity.

Questionnaire – Are you getting your fair share of the retail dollar?

Quickly go down the page and honestly answer these thirteen questions. Go on, it will only take you about seven minutes...and it could make a huge difference to your business.

1. What are three of the key reasons people choose to buy from your store?
 - a.....
 - b.....
 - c.....

2. Describe your three main customer types and what percentage of your business comes from each.
 - a.....
 - b.....
 - c.....

3. How would regular customers describe your business to potential customers? Are you clear about how they judge you?

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4. Do you have a promotional calendar with specific objectives for each promotion? List three objectives from a recent promotion. Did you achieve them?
 - a.....
 - b.....
 - c.....

5. What are the two most important factors in making any ad' work effectively for your business?
 - a.....
 - b.....

6. Do you and your team know how to turn lookers into buyers? What do you say? Is it happening consistently?

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7. Are you and your team comfortable handling price objections? If so, what works well for you?

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8. Do you and your team know how to expand the sale without being pushy? What do you say? Is it happening consistently?

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9. Do your window displays make people want to come in?

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10. Do customers tend to shop the whole floor or do they miss certain areas?

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11. List three of your hot spots. How are you using them?

a.....
b.....
c.....

12. What steps do you take with slow moving merchandise?

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13. Would you like to get inspired with a motivating case study on video, plus practical examples and ideas to stimulate your business and generate more dollars in your local community? Circle the appropriate answer.

Yes, Yes, Yes Most definitely I'd be crazy not to Tell me more

If you have spaces left on these two pages then you owe it to yourself to attend these workshops. It's an opportunity that is unlikely to come this way again for quite some time. Simple, cost effective ideas – and you won't forget them because they are recorded right here. Keep these pages handy and implement the ideas anytime in the next couple of months – you'll soon notice the difference.

Now, check out the information on the Retailing Today series of workshops developed and presented on behalf of the Small Business Development Corporation and the Small Business Centres by Terrific Trading.

15 Top Reasons for not attending. Please make your selection

If you are unable to attend or register staff please help us with your feedback by ticking one or more boxes below. By doing so you will go in the draw to win the prize listed below the checklist.

- This doesn't apply to my business.
- I'm going to be away and don't have staff who would benefit from attending.
- I don't believe it will give me value for money.
- I already know that and I'm making the profits to prove it.
- I'm far too busy to attend.
- The topic doesn't interest me.
- It's on at the wrong time of day for my business.
- It's being held on the wrong day of the week for my business.
- My favourite TV program is on that night.
- I'm already supremely successful so I don't need to learn anything else.
- My staff aren't committed enough to my business to attend.
- It's being held at the wrong time of the year for my business.
- Ill health in the family prevents me from attending and/or sending staff.
- I don't think the presenter will excite or interest me.
- Other (Please advise)

By completing and faxing back this form to 5555 5555 by XYZ date you will go in the draw to win the following prize..... (eg the '7 Habits of Highly Effective People' by Stephen Covey).