

## **TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS SEMINAR OR MEETING**

The lighting, seating arrangement, sound system and overall climate of the room can make a big difference in the way a presentation is received. You may not think you have much control over these items, but think again, because you do.

First always get to the meeting room as early as possible. No meeting or seminar goes off with a glitch, no matter how well you've planned! Double check the room set-up to make sure it is as you wish. Check every aspect of the audio visual system and be prepared with back-up equipment if at all possible. If possible, bring a hand-held microphone, a portable cd player and an extra digital camera with you as back-ups.

There is no such thing as being overly prepared and arriving in the meeting room way ahead of the scheduled begin time allows enough time to do something about any problems you may encounter. And if you can bring an assistant, or friend along – you'll be glad you had that extra hand to run an errand or make a phone call.

### **Create an Atmosphere Conducive to Interaction.**

Keep the room lights at maximum intensity unless showing slides or a video projection. The speaker's effectiveness is drastically effected if the audience can't see him or her. . It is easier to for the speaker to establish a bond with the audience if they can see each other, and also aren't presenting from behind a lectern. If lights must be dimmed, arrange to have a soft light on the speaker.

Take care of your audience's basic needs. Three hours is too long to go without a break. Schedule short breaks and you'll avoid audience members interrupting the presentation every few minutes for restroom breaks.

## **SEATING**

Seating arrangements are a critical part of any successful presentation and are especially important for business presentations. Both audience safety and comfort must be taken into consideration.

Semi-circular and straight theater style arrangements have one advantage; both these arrangements have audience members sitting very close together. This togetherness means reactions to the speaker pass immediately from one person to the other.

Audience comfort is another advantage of semi-circular seating. The room can be set to face each chair directly toward the area where the presenter will be standing. This is much better than straight theater style where the audience members at the end of a row must turn their heads sharply to see the presentation. This creates an uncomfortable audience member in a very short time. An uncomfortable audience member is less likely to pay attention; more likely to tune out all together. If the bulk of the presentation consists of looking at a screen you could point all the chairs at the screen instead of where the presenter will be standing. Do whatever it takes to keep your

audience comfortable.

### **Additional Seating Tips**

When possible set presentation to the long side of the room so the last row is as close to the presenter as possible. Avoid long narrow rooms which put audience members far from the presentation as if they were in bowling alley. People prefer to sit by aisles.

Avoid chairs next to walls. Audience members will feel trapped. Aisles should get bigger as they get nearer the exits because they must accommodate more people.

Seat for least distraction--no audience member should have to cross more than six people to get to a seat.

Make people sit as close as possible to the front. Force them to front with reserved signs on back tables or keep chairs stacked until all front rows are full. Don't tip chairs up to reserve seats or force people forward because they may trip over the legs of the chairs.