PHONAK
life is on

A Sonova brand

Connecting with community.

Using community seminars to grow your business

Connect with your community

Proven, cost-effective ways to boost sales and build your brand

A community outreach program provides a high return on your investment. It's a low cost way to improve your business image, up visibility with prospects and reinforce loyalty with existing customers.

After all, people prefer doing business with people they know, like and trust. Community outreach enables you to interact with members of your community, casting your practice in the most positive light, which paves the way for future sales.

A popular form of outreach is a community seminar. Keep reading to discover why they can be so rewarding and learn some tips and techniques to ensure success.

Table of contents

Community seminar

Connecting with your prospects pays dividends

Introduction

A community seminar focusing on educating consumers on their hearing health is an extremely effective way to connect with prospects. Since selling is ultimately about building relationships and establishing credibility, a seminar provides a perfect opportunity to promote yourself and your practice.

Because your seminar is being offered as a community service, it says good things about you. And after you've wowed them with your expertise and empathy, your prospects (who you know are probably strong candidates for hearing aids) will know they can trust you with their hearing issues.

Four reasons why it works

Nothing beats face-to-face communication

It is estimated that 90% of how we communicate is through body language. Meeting a prospect in person offers them a chance to see your facial expressions and mannerisms, which help them see you are sincere.

That's why a community seminar — in which a knowledgeable, compassionate member of the community interacts with an interested audience — creates a unique opportunity to form that all-important personal connection. Plus, it makes an effective complement to your traditional marketing efforts.

The seminar not only lets you present your message personally to prospects, but also listen to their feedback and concerns, and respond effectively to those concerns.

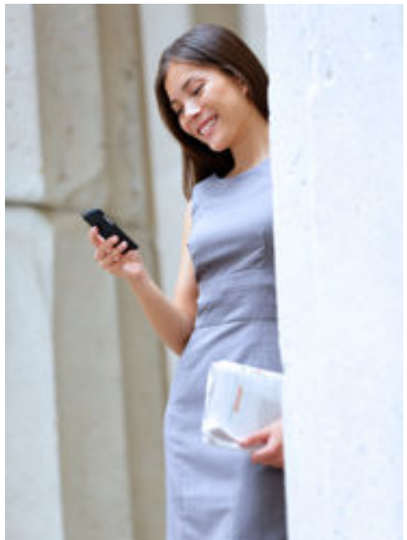
> According to a 2009 Forbes Insights survey, face-to-face interaction was most critical for persuasion (91%), decision-making (82%) and candor (78%).

Positive publicity in your community

Remember it's not just the attendees who can be positively affected by your seminar. Simply seeing or hearing your advertising for it will have an impact.

After all, people will notice you're offering something of value for free — rather than trying to sell something. That fact will add to your credibility as a serious and caring expert in the community; and distinguish you from your competitors.

It is a positive brand building event that will likely resonate with a prospect, if not today, then in the future.



Cost-effective ROI

A community seminar can be very cost-effective to run. Below is a sample expense/profit calculation. While individual costs and sales may vary, the sample numbers below are consistent with real-world results. And, it gives you an idea what to include when you do your own calculations.

Expenses
To determine cost, include the price of the venue, food, drinks, gifts, advertising and your time.

Average food and drink cost per guest:	
Approx. $20 x 20 people:	$400+ tax
Advertising expenses (such as direct mail, newspaper ads, in-office flyers, emails, etc.):	$3,000
Giveaways	$200
Total Cost:	Approx. $3,600

Return on Investment
On average, you can expect to schedule 50% of the attendees for a hearing test, and close 50% of those tests.

Sample calculation:	
20 attendees:	
50% schedule hearing test	10 tests
50% purchase hearing aids	5 people
80% binaural rate	4 people buy 2, 1 person buys 1
	9 total units sold x Retail ASP of $2,000
Total Sales	**$18,000**
Less expenses	**$3,600**
ROI	**$14,400**

(not including the cost of instruments)

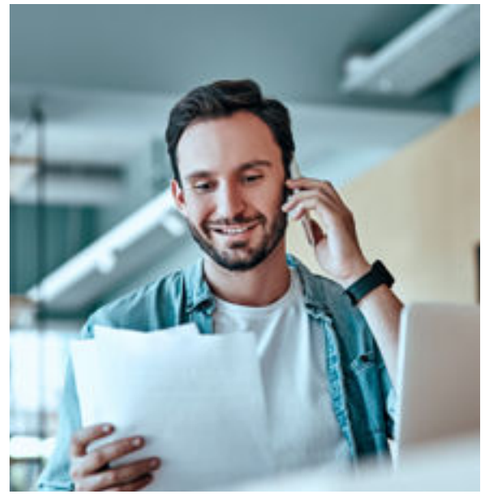
While any event's immediate ROI can vary, the seminar also provides additional hard-to-quantify benefits like growing your prospect list, boosting store traffic as well as keeping your name top-of-mind in the community.

Grow your customer base

A big benefit of holding a community seminar is the boost it can give your prospect list. When taking phone calls, make a point of collecting names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses – not only for those making reservations, but anyone who asks for information. After all, they were interested enough to call, which makes them strong leads. Tell non-attendees that you'd like their contact information so you can let them know when you're holding future events they may be interested in. It's also opportunity to ask for referrals, which you should do every chance you get.

For attendees who don't schedule a test, make a plan to maintain the relationship by staying in contact. They may not be ready to take the next step yet, but by sending them periodic direct mail and emails, it:

- Keeps you at the top of their shopping list
- Gives you the opportunity to ask for referrals



> See pages 8–9 of the Staff Development/ Training Scripts section of the Planning Guide for tips on taking reservations.

How to run an effective seminar

If you're already a proficient public speaker, these recommendations may not be for you. But if you, or members of your staff, are not that experienced, below are a series of proven tips you can use to win over your audience.

Always remember – your immediate goal is to educate

Don't even think about selling; that comes after their hearing test. Right now your job is to educate your guests, and establish your credibility as an expert and caring hearing professional.

Forget sales for now. You're job is to...

- Educate people about hearing loss/technology
- Emotionally connect with your listeners
- Earn their trust (through your knowledge and empathy)
- Establish your credibility
- And Entertain, too!

Think of yourself as a messenger, not simply a speaker, and certainly not a salesperson. As a messenger, you are performing a service for your audience, rather than speaking for your own benefit.

Speak with the intent to move people to action. Know what you want your audience to do immediately after hearing your speech. If nobody does anything different than they would have done before you spoke – the value of your speech is zero.

You must present your information in a way that resonates with your audience's personal needs and goals. And you have to come across as genuine, believable and passionate about your job – helping those with hearing loss.

All that in a single presentation? Sounds daunting, right? But the good news is you're incredibly knowledgeable about your topic... and you genuinely care about people. You just need to show your guests that. And remember, your audience is already interested in your topic or they wouldn't be there.

So think of your speech from the audience's point of view. Dry presentations are rarely interesting... and sales spiels quickly turn people off. But an expert talking about a subject of real importance to a listener is almost always fascinating.

Setting the stage: What to do before your presentation

Here are some proven tips to deliver a crowd-pleasing presentation:

1. Know your material.
You're already an expert on your subject — your job is to convey that knowledge in an informative and entertaining way. Use humor, personal stories and conversational language.

2. Practice. Practice. Practice!
Rehearse out loud with all the equipment you plan on using. Revise as necessary. Work to control filler words (e.g., "you know," "um"). Practice, pause and breathe. Practice with a timer and allow time for the unexpected.

3. Visualise giving your speech.
Imagine your voice loud, clear and confident. Visualise the audience clapping — it will boost your confidence.

4. Know your room and equipment.
Arrive in time to walk around the area and practice using the microphone and visual aids.

5. Know your audience.
From information you've already gathered prior to the presentation, you should know whether you're speaking to hearing aid users, non-users or a combination of both.

Of course, current users are more familiar with basic information on how hearing and hearing aids work: they're considering an upgrade so are likely to be far more interested in learning about the latest technology. Acknowledge this by saying, "While some of you are already aware of how hearing aids work, please allow me to explain it for those who may not be."

6. Public speaking is an acquired skill.
Experience builds confidence and authority, which is the key to effective speaking. Take every opportunity you can get to speak (and listen to other speakers).

7. Share the responsibility.
You may want to divide the presentation among your team. It helps take the pressure off one person — and builds leadership skills within your staff.

8. Know your strengths and weaknesses as a speaker, and accentuate the positive.
If you have a great sense of humour, use it. If you're not a natural cut-up, don't try to be. Instead, focus on what you do best. Thoughtful and thought-provoking is every bit as powerful as dynamic and entertaining. Frame your speech around your message – and around who you are as a person.

9. Realise that people want you to succeed.
Audiences want you to be interesting, stimulating, informative and entertaining. They're rooting for you.

How to run an effective seminar

Showtime: Proven tips to win over your audience

1. Mingle with your guests as they arrive.
Informally introducing yourself pre-talk will relax you and establish an immediate connection. They'll be pre-disposed to like and trust you. And, it's easier to speak to a group of friends than strangers.

2. Smile when you begin speaking.
Studies show it will actually help you to feel relaxed and confident… plus it will further reinforce a personal connection. Act like the content matters to you – if the audience doesn't feel it is important to you, it will be really hard for them to feel that it should be important to them.

3. Start with a grabber!
Do you enjoy hearing a speech start with "Today I'm going to talk to you about X? " Most people don't. So give them something memorable that will grab their attention – a startling statistic, a personal story, a new finding, surprising facts – something that takes a hold of your audience and gets them hooked and opens their mind to your message.

See page 12 for examples of icebreakers

4. Use humour, tell stories.
Break up your presentation by injecting relevant funny or touching anecdote(s). Give the audience a chance to see your personal connection to the topic.

5. Watch for feedback and adapt to it.
Keep the focus on the audience. Gauge their reactions, adjust your message and stay flexible. Delivering a canned-speech will guarantee that you lose the attention of or confuse even the most devoted listeners. Ask open-ended questions at appropriate times to keep listeners engaged.

6. Let your personality shine through.
Be yourself; don't be a talking head. You will establish better credibility… and your audience will trust what you have to say if they can see you as a real person.

7. Show your enthusiasm.
The more passionate you are about your topic, the more likely your audience will be engaged and act on your recommendations.

8. Don't read unless you have to.
Reading from a script or slide fractures the interpersonal connection. By maintaining eye contact with the audience, you keep the focus on yourself and your message. A brief outline can serve to jog your memory and keep you on task.

9. Never apologise for problems.
The audience will probably never notice it.

10. Close with a bang.
Conclude your speech with a summary and a strong statement that your audience will remember. Then end by asking for questions. Have FAQ slide(s) ready to get the conversation started if no one responds.

Key Tips:

- Have additional staff on hand to welcome and check-in guests
- Distribute a "goodie bag" and schedule a free hearing test
- Answer questions

Closing time: Schedule those tests!

You've finished your presentation. Thanks to you, your guests are now far more educated about hearing loss than they were before. And they know a lot more about you, too. They no longer think of you as just a salesperson, but a caring, knowledgeable professional.

Selling the benefits of a hearing test
Your guests certainly have questions about the condition of their own hearing (which they may or may not have already brought up), otherwise they wouldn't be there. You need to make it clear that the only way to get answers is to have a hearing test.

You can start by asking general, open-ended questions:

"What questions do you have?"

"Did everybody understand the…?" (choose subject…)

If people don't ask questions, have a slide prepared with FAQs that you can answer briefly.

After questions have been asked and answered, transition to selling the hearing test. Ask:

"So, what's the next step?"

(By communicating that there is to be a next step, you force attendees to consider a progressive decision.)

Answer simply and directly:

"The only sure way to find out about your hearing is to get a hearing test."

You can even compliment them while keeping the conversation going:

"You've taken the first step towards better hearing by coming in today to gather information. Wouldn't you prefer to know exactly how good your hearing is?"

Your job now is to reassure them that a hearing test is a smart decision, and doesn't commit them to anything else. No hard sell. Just give them the reasons:

"It's easy, fast, painless… and we do them for free."

Repeatedly hold out hope – maybe they've been worrying about nothing:

"You could very well not have any problem at all. It might just be earwax. Or you might have an infection that can be treated. We can find out."

Now that they're thinking it might just be something minor, add more benefits:

"And if it's not hearing loss, we'll get a baseline reading for the future. Then we can re-check periodically and will know for sure if there's any change in your hearing. Think of it like getting your cholesterol checked."

"Some hearing losses are so minor they don't need correction."

"We use a video otoscope so you see the inside of your ear."

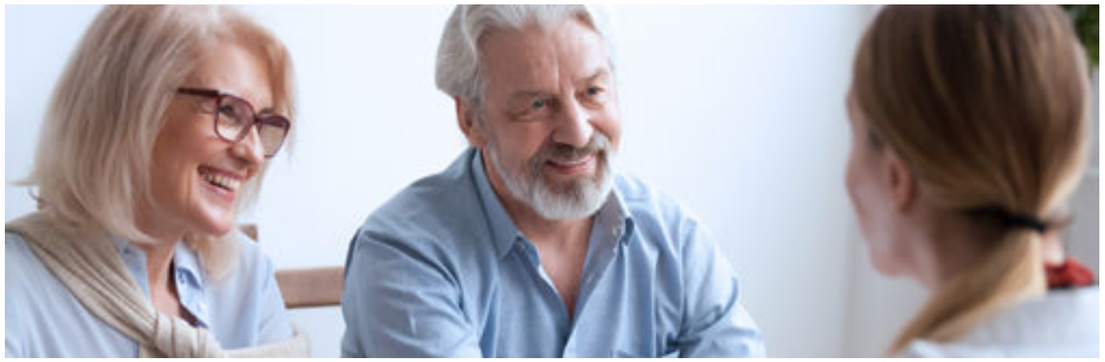
"Again, it's free and you'll know for sure, rather than guessing."

"And at the hearing test, I'll be happy to discuss the results with you and answer all your questions."

"We are ready to schedule today at your convenience."

"(The first names of your staff) will come around and answer any more questions and schedule your appointment."

How to run an effective seminar



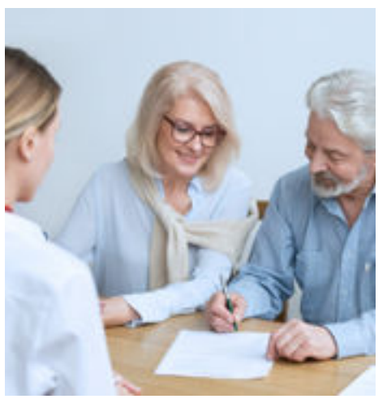
Your customer's state of mind

In general, people love to buy things, but do not like to be sold things. When dealing with a "sales pitch" that is too aggressive, people have a natural tendency to push back, become suspicious and often not make a decision that would benefit them.

But, when someone feels they are being guided by a confident and competent professional — who understands and truly cares about their needs — people will follow their lead. Your main task is to lead them towards a decision that benefits them — and later, you.

Power of positive thinking

You've earned the right to have positive expectations. Assuming your prospect sees the benefits you've presented them gives you a distinct advantage. While your assumptions could be wrong, your confidence can be contagious, which also helps ensure your prospect goes along with your recommendations.



Getting to "yes" — the assumptive close

Since you know in your heart that a hearing exam is truly good for your prospect, but you may still sense hesitation, try using an assumptive close – that is, act and speak as if the attendee has already made the decision to schedule a test, and simply needs to be given the opportunity.

"After the test, you'll know for sure how your hearing health is. So, let's look at our calendars now and set up a day and time that's good for you."

Notice how you don't give the customer a choice of whether or not she wants the hearing test. With this assumptive close, the customer just needs to decide when they want to come in.

Assumptive language places you in a position of leadership and authority. You've made an undeniably sensible case, and any smart customer should go along.

For more information on the psychology behind closing a deal, see

https://blog.hubspot.com/sales/closing-phrases-seal-sales-deal

Publicising your community seminar

1. **Current patients**
   - Call current customers that are ready for an upgrade (anyone that has owned their instruments for 1-1/2 years)
   - Email current customers; suggest they pass the information to a friend who might be interested
   - Call anyone that has been in the office for a screening, but did not buy
2. **Newspaper ads in the local paper**
   - 3 weeks prior to the event and 1 week prior to the event
3. **Direct mail to prospects in your area if budget allows**
4. **Flyers (or copies of the direct mail piece)**
   - Bulletin boards at community centre, libraries
5. **Post the event on your website, Facebook page, Twitter and other social media**
6. **Facebook sponsored ads**
   - As an Admin of your page you can develop an ad for the event and target by age and geographic location. You can also pick your budget.
7. **Facebook groups**
   - Search for senior groups in your area and message the Admins of these groups to ask if you can post your event on their page. Because you are offering a free seminar, they will more than likely give you approval. (If not, it never hurts to make a new connection, especially one that is in your target audience.)
   - No cost to you
8. **In-office promotion**
   - Place flyers at your desk and waiting room tables. Hang posters in your window.
9. **Content to include in your advertising**
   - You are the hearing care expert providing a community service
   - Promote free lunch
   - Use "spaces are limited" to prompt urgency
   - Bring a friend or family member

Audience engagement tactics

Ice Breakers

Quizzes and Games

An easy, fun way to make your audience part of the event. You could even award gifts to those who answer question(s) correctly. Keep them fairly brief (5 minutes or less) – long enough to lighten the mood without disrupting the flow of your talk.

1. Which of the following celebrities wears hearing aids?
a. John Howard
b. Halle Berry
c. Stephen Colbert
d. All of the above

2. What do Howard Hughes, Thomas Edison and Rob Lowe have in common?
a. They each had a bulldog named Larry
b. All were born in their respective state capital
c. All were deaf in either one or both ears

3. Which animals hear, but don't have ears?
a. Snakes
b. Turtles
c. Fish
d. Birds
e. Spiders & cockroaches
f. All of the above

4. What creature has only one ear?
a. Praying mantis
b. Earthworm
c. 17-year Cicada

5. How does a snake hear?
a. Through vibrations on its skin
b. Through vibrations on its jawbone
c. Through vibrations on its nose

6. What is the quietest place on earth (according to the Guinness Book of Records)?
a. Microsoft research lab, Redmond Wash.
b. Orfield Laboratories, Minneapolis
c. Washington's Olympic National Park

7. How many people in the world are affected by hearing loss?
a. 77 million
b. 162 million
c. Over 1.5 billion

8. What are the top 3 most prevalent health issues in older adults (in order)?
a. Diabetes, arthritis, osteoporosis
b. Arthritis, cancer, diabetes
c. Hearing loss, cataracts, refractive errors

9. True or False:
In older people, a hearing loss is often confused with, or complicates, such conditions as dementia.

10. The sound of the ocean in a seashell is caused by?
a. Echo of your blood rushing through the blood vessels of your ear
b. Air flowing through the shell and out
c. Ambient noise from around you resonating inside the shell

"Identify the sound" game.
Over the sound system or on your computer, play several sounds and ask the audience to guess what they are. You could start with a few well-known sounds and finish with one or two esoteric ones.

There are websites that allow you to download sound files: https://strangesounds.org/

Answers
1. d / 2. c / 3. f / 4. a / 5. b / 6. b / 7. c / 8. c / 9. True / 10. c

Demonstrate products and services

Bring hearing aids and accessories (or non-working models) to display and/or pass around:

- When you're mentioning the small size
- When you're talking about the different styles

Also, a display provides an incentive for people to stick around after lunch, giving you another opportunity to engage with your guests.

Remote support services

Talk about and demonstate how your telehealth service works and showcase Remote Support via the MyPhonak App.

Questions

Open-ended questions will also encourage participation and break the ice.

A. "Does anybody want to tell us what motivated them to come today?"
An invaluable sales tip, not only does this question help your guest recall the reason they chose to attend, other audience members can relate to the answers they hear.

B. "How many of you use (or know anyone who uses) hearing aids?"
(From the initial phone call with audience members, you already know the answer to the first part of the question.) This helps your audience feel more comfortable when they realise they share similar knowledge sets with other attendees. And non-users will know there are people who wear them who they can ask questions of later.

C: If there are users, ask: "Do your hearing aids work with your smart phone?"
This question gives you the opportunity to (briefly) talk about an innovation that will certainly impress (and may surprise) your guests – sending the message that hearing aid technology has radically changed.

Follow-up

When the seminar is over, your follow-up efforts begin

Promote it extensively as a success (focusing on how you are helping members of your community). For example:

- Add seminar photos to your website, Facebook and Twitter accounts (don't forget to tag)
- Publicise through emails, direct mail or newspaper ads
- Add photos in your office

It's an effective way to keep attendees, current customers and prospects engaged after the event ends.

Most importantly, maintain contact with attendees

All attendees should receive a customised "Thank you for attending" letter.

Focus on attendees who have not scheduled hearing tests. Remember, these are probably strong prospects who are considering, but, for whatever reason, weren't quite ready to commit to a hearing test.

Keep your practice top-of-mind by:

- Following up with regular emails, mailings and phone calls
- Remind them that hearing tests are free
- Consider adding special offers

Just as with the seminar, your purpose first and foremost is to get them in for a hearing test.

General information

Where should you hold your event?

In addition to restaurants and hotels, you may also want to consider these venues:

- Senior centres
- Nursing homes
- Churches
- Local park
- Community centres
- Fitness centres
- Libraries
- Local fairs
- Hospitals
- Health fairs

Make sure your venue is senior-friendly, with ample parking and private rooms on the first floor.

Don't forget the FREE stuff

Remember people love giveaways. In addition to the Phonak materials provided, consider offering take-home bags; set them at each guest's chair or hand them out when they check-out for the "wow" factor. Include logo'd items (e.g., coffee mugs), gift cards and company brochures.