



# How to sponsor a successful Gorski workshop.

Developed By

Terence T. Gorski  
President - The CENAPS Corporation

## **Based on The CENAPS® Model**

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The CENAPS® Corporation is located at 6193 Deltona Boulevard, Spring Hill, Florida, 34606-1000. Phone is 352-596-8000 and fax is 352-596-8002. Websites: [www.cenaps.com](http://www.cenaps.com) and [www.tgorski.com](http://www.tgorski.com) or e-mail: [info@cenaps.com](mailto:info@cenaps.com). Contact us to discuss the arrangements necessary to organize a successful event.

***The Most Advanced Clinical Skills Training Available***

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## **Guidelines for Sponsoring-Successful Workshops**

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Sponsoring a successful training event requires both skill and planning. Over the past eighteen years, we at The CENAPS Corporation have sponsored hundreds of training events. The following pamphlet has been developed to assist you in benefiting from our experience.

Co-sponsoring a training is an important option to consider. Never underestimate the power of networking. By identifying appropriate co-sponsors such as Counselor Associations, Mental Health Associations, Treatment Facilities, and EAP Organizations, etc., the attendance at a workshop can be greatly increased. Co-sponsors can cross-promote the workshop to maximize the effort. Co-sponsors can provide great resources for providing names for the mailing list, sharing postage fees and other promotion costs, and offering a meeting space or an education center. A co-sponsor can expect to have its brochures and other agency or organizational literature incorporated into the workshop handouts/binders.

### **Step 1: Planning**

Effective planning is the most important component in managing a successful workshop. We have found the following guidelines to be helpful:

1. **Choose Date:** Before a date is finalized, make sure that there are no other workshops scheduled that will compete with your training. Nothing is more frustrating than having most of the work completed toward a workshop and then finding out that another workshop is being offered in the same area on or near the same dates. To avoid this problem, call The Counselors' Certification Board, The State Psychological and Social Work Associations, the state and local mental health associations, any local councils on alcoholism and any major universities in the area to determine if other workshops have been planned.
2. **Develop Timeline:** It takes at least three to five months to properly plan a workshop. This is the minimum amount of time necessary. Putting things off to the last minute will guarantee frazzled nerves and low attendance. Include deadlines for space acquisition, program and collateral development, and direct mailings, etc. in order to avoid any discrepancies.
3. **Appoint Conference Coordinator:** It is important that one person be in charge and have the authority to manage all the details of the workshop. Remember if two or more people are in charge - no one is in charge. Our experience has shown us that when authority is poorly delegated, vital details are neglected.
4. **Assign Support Personnel:** Provide the coordinator with ample support. Secretarial and marketing assistance is needed to manage specific aspects of workshops such as direct mailing and registration.

### **Step 2: Site Selection:**

The selection of the training site is very important to a successful workshop. The following should be considered:

1. **Location:** The training facility should be centrally located in the area you are marketing. There should be easy access from nearest airport and expressways. Out-of-town participants appreciate being close to restaurants and hotels. Most hotels will offer conference discounts if a minimum of 15 to 20 workshop participants register for rooms. Providing participants with a listing of nearby hotels and restaurants and their price ranges adds to the overall satisfaction of the workshop participant and the desire to return to future workshops that you offer.
2. **Parking:** The overall satisfaction of participants with the workshop is often based on seemingly unimportant details such as the ability to park close to the training facility. Make sure that parking is easily accessible and free or low cost.
3. **Training Room:** The room should be large enough to allow participants to break up into small groups for discussions and educational exercises. As a general rule, if you are planning on 100 people, the room should be large enough to accommodate approximately 120. Always plan for at least 20 to 25 percent more room than needed. This will allow you to accommodate last minute walk-ins and assure comfortable seating.
4. **Sound System:** An adequate sound system with a good microphone is also integral. The microphone should have plenty of lead cable so that the presenter can easily move around. A sound-check should be conducted with appropriate engineering representative to ensure proper levels, etc.
5. **Distraction Free:** The conference facility should provide a conference room that is isolated, soundproof, and free from distraction. Many of our clients who previewed an empty conference room with no other activities going on in adjacent rooms were surprised on the day of their event to discover a wedding taking place complete with loud music booming on both sides of room. It is to your advantage to question the conference center about the soundproof quality of the room dividers. If possible, visit the facility when there are conferences in session in the adjacent rooms to confirm that the soundproofing is adequate.
7. **Contract Details:** Get it everything in writing. Often times a hotel or conference facility planner will show you the nicest training room available leading you to believe that your event will be scheduled there. You will then be asked to sign a general agreement that assures "a training room" but does not specifically guarantee the specific room that you were shown. Then, on the day of the training, you show up and find that the hotel or conference center has assigned you to another room that doesn't meet your needs. To avoid this, insist that your contract include an exact room assignment.

### **Step 3: Setting The Training Fee:**

Setting an appropriate fee is vital toward achieving a financially successful workshop. Charging too much will reduce the number of people who register for the event. Charging too little will attract more people but may lose money for the workshop in spite of the larger attendance.

The following steps are recommended in appropriate fee setting:

1. **Establish a Budget:** The budget should take into account the cost of the facility, the speaker's fee and his/her projected expenses, the cost of meals and refreshments, (if they are included in the workshop fee) the cost of purchasing mailing lists, the cost of the brochure development and mailing, and the cost of staff time necessary to create a successful workshop. These amounts should be tabulated in order to establish the participant fee.
2. **Determine a Break Even Point:** Once the expenses are determined, pick various registration fees and determine an average break even point, i.e., the number of paid registrations that will meet all basic workshop costs. A break-even point should be achieved at between 35 and 40 persons to assure a successful training event.
3. **Effect of Fees upon Registrations:** Registrations at a workshop can be adversely affected if workshop fees are too high or, surprisingly enough, if workshop fees are too low. An extremely low fee can convey the message to the consumer that the workshop is not worth very much.

#### Step 4: Promotion

Perhaps the single most critical area in sponsoring a successful workshop is promotion. Promotion can be broken down into the following areas:

1. **Collateral Development:** A brochure should be developed that is typeset, professional and has an attractive cover design.
2. **Mailing List:** The mailing of the brochure is also of vital importance for the success of the workshop. Mailing lists should be gathered not only from your own personal and professional contacts, but also from other professional organizations on both a state and a national level.
3. **How Often and When to Mail:** For the mailings to be effective, they need to occur at least twice before the workshop. The first mailing should occur a minimum of twelve weeks before the scheduled workshop event. The second mailing should occur six weeks before the scheduled event. To economize, most facilities mail their brochures at a bulk mail rate. It must be realized, however, that bulk mail is considered low priority by the postal system and may sit in the post office without being delivered for several weeks. As a result, mailing early is vital if bulk rates are being used.

If you use bulk mailing, you will need to apply for a bulk mail permit. Once your application has been processed by your local post office, you will be issued a bulk mail permit number. This number will need to be designed into your brochure at the time the brochure is developed.

4. **Expected Results from Direct Mail:** The good return from a direct mailing campaign is between 1 and 3 percent. If you want to have 100 people attend your training event, you will have to mail out a minimum of 2,000 brochures to a well targeted and maintained mailing list. Don't fall into the trap of being overly optimistic with the results from a mailing campaign.

5. **Public Service Announcements:** Most radio and television stations routinely handle public service announcements. The presence of a workshop for alcoholism and drug dependence typically meets the criterion of a public service announcement and will be aired on local radio and television stations if a brief and concise news release is provided to them far enough in advance.
6. **Calendar Items and News Releases:** The presence of such a workshop may, in fact, be news in your community. By writing a simple announcement and releasing it to local radio, television and newspapers, considerable free coverage can be achieved. Remember, it is important to link the presence of the workshop to a newsworthy event and to highlight the speaker and the impact that this conference will have on the community. News releases can also be submitted to the trade magazines dealing with alcoholism and chemical dependency to publicize your event. Most magazines will need the announcement a minimum of three months in advance.
7. **Personal Contacts - Word of Mouth:** The most effective way to market a workshop is through personal contacts with potential attendees. Directors of major addiction treatment centers in the area should be personally contacted as should the officers and board members of the local Counselor Association or other interested community groups.
8. **Special Discounts:** In order to encourage attendance from organizations with large numbers of members or employees, special discounts may be offered. For example, offering one free registration for every five people who register from a large treatment agency can have extremely positive results. By offering a discount of 10 percent to members of a Counselor Association in exchange for promoting that event in their newsletter can also yield a dramatic result.

### **Step 5: Accommodating Out-of-town Registrants**

If the workshop is advertised in a regional, statewide or multi-state area it is important that out-of-town guests be accommodated.

1. **Convenient Location:** The conference center should be near hotel accommodations (preferably meeting within the hotel, itself). If this occurs, the Conference Director should assure that conference discounts are available from the hotel.
2. **Training Facility Directions:** Out-of-town guests need to have clear directions detailing how to get to the training facility from the airport and when driving. Simple maps that are incorporated into the workshop brochure can help people see that transportation will not be a problem
3. **Social Opportunities:** Remember that out-of-town guests are strangers in a strange land. They often feel isolated and have nowhere to go for evening activities. A social hour immediately following the workshop can give out-of-town participants an opportunity to meet one another and to establish plans for an evening dinner or an evening social activity. This can greatly enhance the workshop experience.

## Step 6: Conference Management:

The management of the conference is very important. The following areas require attention:

- 1. Room Set-Up:** Getting the room appropriately set up is crucial. The presenter should be contacted approximately one week prior to the workshop to determine the exact room arrangement desired based upon the estimated number of registrants. The workshop coordinator will need to meet with the people at the conference center to assure that tables and chairs are appropriately arranged (classroom-style is the most preferable room set-up).  
  
A visit to the workshop area the night before the conference to talk with the people directly responsible for setting up the room often saves many avoidable problems on the morning of the workshop.
- 2. Advanced Registration and Payments:** The most effective policy for handling advanced registration is to require full payment in advance of the workshop. This minimizes people arriving at the door and standing in long complicated lines on the day of the workshop. If people are not required to register and pay in advance many people won't show up. Many people will verbally register for the event and then fail to attend. This makes it very difficult to plan for luncheons and table set ups. An advanced registration policy should be stated very clearly on the workshop brochure. There should be a cut-off date after which refunds will not be given.
- 3. Registration on the Day of the Conference:** It is typical to have walk-ins arrive at a conference. The brochure should state that there will be limited space available for walk-in registrations, depending upon the size of the conference. There should be some availability to take registrations on the day of the conference.
- 4. Provide Participant Lists:** Workshop participants often like to network with people they have met at the workshop. It is desirable to provide a total participant list to all persons who register for the workshop. This enhances the appearance of professionalism of the conference and also provides a viable networking option to all participants at the workshop.
- 5. Sale of Books and Educational Materials:** It is important that the skills training workshop be profiled in a way that encourages the participants to actually implement and utilize the skills that are being taught. Resource material should be made directly available to the participants. The CENAPS Corporation works with Independence Press in providing both educational books and educational tapes that reinforce the content of the presentations.  
  
The availability of these materials greatly enhances the credibility of the speakers and the professionalism of the conference itself.
- 6. A Materials Display Table:** There should be a materials display table for selling books, tapes and other materials. Next to the materials display table there should also be a table provided for treatment agencies to place brochures and other promotional materials. It is important that this display table be supervised

at all times and that careful controls be placed upon "for sale items." It is not uncommon for sponsors who do not supervise materials to lose significant monies in unaccounted for or missing books and educational items.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

The presentation of skills training workshops can play a vital part in community and professional education programs, as well as, in establishing contact with the referral community. If properly planned and executed, these skills training workshops can be profitable for the sponsoring organization and can be highly regarded by the participants. By following the simple steps in this brochure, sponsoring a workshop can be an exciting and rewarding event for the project management committee and can provide a very meaningful experience for the participants.

Good luck in the planning and execution of your workshop!