

INCREASING NON-DUES REVENUE: COURSES, PART 1

How can you help your members develop professionally and increase your component's non-dues revenue? Sponsoring continuing education courses can be a great way to do both! Before deciding to create a course, your component should consider the following:

- What is a reasonable market price for your program?
- What are the costs associated with the execution of the course?
- How many participants are necessary to recoup expenses?
- Is your component able to make an initial investment in the development of these programs and to risk having to absorb the costs if enough participants do not express interest?
- What marketing and administration expenses need to be considered?
- What timeframe are you willing to accept in the development of a successful program and in recovering expenses?

When asking these questions, components also may want to consider the wide variety of continuing education formats that are now available. In this fax, we will consider live courses and distance learning.

On-site courses remain the most popular type of continuing education course. Participants gather to hear a live speaker and may participate in labs. This type of course allows for more interaction between participants and speakers than distance education, but there are more logistics to consider as well, including coordinating a site, food, supplies, possible equipment rental, handouts, audiovisual needs, speaker travel, and marketing costs. (You may wish to solicit sponsors to offset some of these costs.) Chapters and sections are encouraged to work together to gain valuable exposure for their courses. Also, if a live course is recorded, it can become another resale opportunity – perhaps a home study module.

Teleconferencing seminars are another popular option. Participants are provided materials and instructions prior to the call, along with a toll-free access number. These seminars are typically held in real time, but pre-recorded sessions also may be made available for purchase after the initial conference. The seminar is conducted primarily in a listen-only mode, followed by a live Q&A session that is moderated by the speaker. Polling features may be included to survey participants. Teleconferences are often supported by live Web feed, often consisting of a PowerPoint type presentation. A major benefit of teleconferencing is low overhead, as many people can participate at a single location without speaker or participant travel costs. Primary equipment needs include a speakerphone and, should you wish to utilize presentations via the Web, online access and an LCD projector for group viewing. If your component decides to go through a conferencing company, there also will be fees associated with their services.

Another example of distance learning is **Web-based courses**. Because these are not typically live sessions, activities can be completed anywhere one has access to the Web and e-mail. Lessons are provided online, with the participant able to work within their own timeframe. The instructor acts as moderator via e-mail to participants.

Home study modules are educational courses in a print- and/or CD-ROM-based format that are accompanied by a standard exam and evaluation form, which is submitted for review upon completion. These also are popular because they are convenient and allow participants to set their own pace.

Additional information on courses and other educational revenue generators will be included in next month's fax.