

SEMINARS AND CONFERENCES: Resource Bank for Researchers

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ABSTRACT

A conference is generally understood as a meeting of several people to discuss a particular topic. At a conference, innovative ideas are thrown about and new information is exchanged among experts. Its purpose can be many such as academic, business or trade. According to the purpose there are various benefits of the same for the attendants such as exchange of ideas, skill development, learning in new space and many more. Such type of gathering also provides opportunities for meeting the experts and influencers face-to-face and to get their valuable expertise and knowledge on our study. The present paper focuses on the explanation of the terms such as conference, seminar and workshop, and brings out the difference between these similar-looking yet different terms. This paper also attempts to bring out the benefits of such types of gathering to the participants.

Keywords: *Seminar, conference, workshop, purpose, researcher.*

INTRODUCTION

Conference is often confused with a convention, seminar or workshop. While a conference differs from the others in terms of size and purpose, the term can be used to cover the general concept. A convention is larger than a conference; it is a gathering of delegates representing several groups. There are various types of gathering:

- A **seminar** is organized to discuss a particular topic. They are usually educational in nature and attendees are expected to gain new knowledge or skills at the end of the seminar.
- A **workshop** is more of a hands-on experience for the participants with demonstrations and activities; the amount of time one speaker addresses the group is limited.
- A **round-table conference** is a get-together of peers to exchange thoughts and opinions on a certain topic, usually political or commercial. There are a limited number of participants who sit at a round table, so that each one can face all the others.

WHAT IS A SEMINAR?

A seminar may be defined as a gathering of people for the purpose of discussing a stated topic. Such gatherings are usually interactive sessions where the participants engage in discussions about the delineated topic. The

sessions are usually headed or led by one or two presenters who serve to steer the discussion along the desired path.

Purpose of a seminar

A seminar may have several purposes or just one purpose. For instance, a seminar may be for the purpose of education, such as a lecture, where the participants engage in the discussion of an academic subject for the aim of gaining a better insight into the subject. Other forms of educational seminars might be held to impart some skills or knowledge to the participants. Examples of such seminars include personal finance, web marketing, real estate, investing or other types of seminars where the participants gain knowledge or tips about the topic of discussion.

Of course, a seminar can be motivational, in which case the purpose is usually to inspire the attendees to become better people, or to work towards implementing the skills they might have learned from the seminar. For instance, a business seminar with a financial theme could be for the purpose of teaching small business owners how to pitch to investors or to write a solid business plan, and to motivate them to get started right away.

Sometimes, seminars are simply a way for entrepreneurs, or other like-minded people, to network and meet other attendees with similar interests. Such seminars provide opportunities for the attendees to make some potentially valuable contacts that can help them move to the next level in their careers or endeavors.

A trade seminar brings a wide cross-section of the community together, such as government officials, entrepreneur and the general public. Such seminars often consist of workshops and the presentation of papers. They are usually held for the purpose of networking with various vendors and making new connections.

Seminars VS Workshops

The main difference between seminars and workshops is that seminars are usually more academic and less hands-on than workshops. Seminars are events that are mostly geared towards educational topics and usually feature one or more experts on the subject matter. On the other hand, workshops are generally less formal and require more attendee participation than seminars. The main thrust of workshops is for the participants to gain new skills during the event under the guidance of the instructor.

WHAT IS A CONFERENCE?

A conference is generally understood as a meeting of several people to discuss a particular topic. At a conference, innovative ideas are thrown about and new information is exchanged among experts. It could be one of the following:

- An **academic conference** is a gathering of scientists or academicians, where research findings are presented or a workshop is conducted.
- A **business conference** is held for people working in the same company or industry. They come together to discuss new trends and opportunities pertaining to the business

- A **trade conference** takes place on a larger scale. Besides businessmen, there are members of the public who come to network with vendors and made new connections. Such a conference consists of workshops and white paper presentations.
- An **unconference** differs from the traditional conference, since it avoids the high costs, top-down organizational hierarchy and sponsored presentations. All attendees are equally knowledgeable about the topic and the discussion follows an open mode; usually without a single speaker addressing the gathering.

Most conferences have one or more keynote speakers who will deliver the keynote speech. These are common at academic and business conferences. The speakers chosen are eminent personalities in the related field and their presence is meant to attract more people to attend the conference.

Beneficiary outcomes of attending public conferences, workshops and seminars

A public conference, workshop or seminar has a lot of beneficiary outcomes for the attendances. Some of these are as follows:

1. **To present your ideas and work to others** This is one of the more obvious outcome for attending conferences. It's good practice in talking about what you do with a variety of people from similar, related and/or completely different areas of study. Presenting will make you more confident about the work that you do, and gives you new perspective about your work as people may ask questions that make you think about your project differently. At a conference you have the opportunity to get feedback on your work from people who have never seen it before and may provide new insight.
2. **Sharpen your skills** You will hear a lot about things in your field that will be new to you. These could be new techniques, new types of equipment, unpublished data, or learn from thought-leaders that you may not have previously heard of. You will get to keep onto of the research of some of the biggest names in your field, in addition to some of the newest faces in it. Conferences give you the opportunity to talk to these people one-on-one about what they are working on, and they may even give you advice on how to enhance your own work. You have the opportunity to ask presenters questions about their work and the rationale behind it, which you can't do when reading journal articles.
3. **Explore new ways of working** Get hands-on information that is specific to your business, directly from the experts. A well run conference will help you curate new ideas to help improve your approach. Even though there is lot information on the web, conferences will cut through the clutter to deliver the best content specific to your industry
4. **Professional Network** A big reason for going to conferences is to meet with like-minded people and industry peers. Conferences bring together people from all different geographical areas who share a common discipline or field, and they are a great way to meet new people in your field. At a conference you will be able to get together with people from a wide range of backgrounds, of whom you may not encounter at your home workplace or institution. As you build your professional

network, conferences can become a good place for meeting with people in your field that you haven't connected in a while.

5. **Learn in a new space** Such gatherings allow one to take a break from the routine life. Sitting in the same chair, in the same office or in the same environment, can keep you from fresh thinking and new ideas. Breaking out of the office, sitting in a new space, can help you uncover new approaches that will grow your business.
6. **Learn beyond your field or interest and break out of your comfort zone** This is a two-fold benefit of attending conferences, since not only may you learn things outside your field about other areas of research in your discipline, but conference attendances also have many sessions for professional development and career advice. Chances are, when you go to a conference the attendees are united by a single broad topic but they have many different sub-fields of study, and many projects will be multidisciplinary. Breaking out of your comfort zone is just the type of action that is necessary to break out of old ways of thinking.
7. **Meet experts and influencers face-to-face** Seminars and conferences provide the opportunity to meet experts from your field. Face-to-face interaction with the influencers fill you up with the enthusiasm that will certainly help you in your work.
8. **Grow** Conferences provide a unique convergence of networking, learning and fun into a single package. A good conference forces you to grow and challenge yourself. It is an investment in yourself, your career and your company.

There are other benefits of attending conferences such as finding a new job, recruiting skilled people for a position, getting out of the office for a few days and use the time to visit a new city, gain continuing education credits via attendance etc.



CONCLUSION

To conclude it can be observed that the academic conferences and seminars are the right place to meet the researchers working in the same area. This is the right place to learn how to present a research work to an audience who can help them by giving comments and asking questions. The researchers can know about the Future Research trends from the Invited Talks and Keynote Addresses. Some conferences have the provision for Tutorials for the benefit of the Researchers. For some universities it is a must to publish paper in Conferences. The conference proceedings give the researchers a big storehouse of research papers. To conclude it can be observed that from such gatherings not only researchers but entrepreneurs, students, technicians, managers and society at large enjoy their benefits.

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