



Seminar Pitches

You may have received a letter or seen an infomercial promoting a seminar or conference that promises to help you make a lot of money. Seminar hucksters say they will give you valuable information about how to invest successfully or operate a profitable business. Their “success stories” and testimonials seem to show that anyone who attends the seminar can make money from the investment and business program they are selling. Some promoters may even claim to have gotten rich from their own investment in the program.

Do not be rushed into buying anything.

If you attend one of these seminars, you will hear a series of sales pitches for a variety of business opportunities and investments. Consumers who invest in these “opportunities” frequently find that the payoff is not as promised, and that they cannot recoup their money.

Claims to be wary of

The Bureau of Consumer Protection wants you to be aware to the secrets of the seminar squeeze. Be wary of promotional materials or sales pitches that make these claims:

- You can earn big money fast, regardless of your lack of experience or training.
- The program or business opportunity is offered for a short time only.
- The deal is a “sure thing” that will deliver security for years to come.
- You will gain financially by working part time or at home.
- You will be coached each step of the way to success.
- The program worked for other participants – even the organizers.



Before you agree

Promises of quick, easy money can be a powerful lure. If you buy into a business opportunity at a seminar, you may find that the products and information you purchased are worthless and that your money is gone. To avoid this from happening:

- Take your time. Do not be rushed into buying anything at a seminar. Avoid high pressure sales pitches that require you to buy now or risk losing out on the opportunity. Remember, solid opportunities are not sold through nerve-racking tactics.
- Be skeptical of any seminar that “sells the dream” rather than providing useful information on how to make that dream real. It is easy to get caught up in the atmosphere of a seminar, especially if your attention is being focused on a flashy goal you might never reach.
- Carefully read everything you sign. A promoter might have you fill out (and sign) an “application” for their program, which turns out to be an enforceable contract. By the time you realize it, any contract cancellation rights you may have had are already gone. The extra time might also make it more difficult for your credit card company to assist with a chargeback.
- Investigate the business you are considering investing in. Talk to experienced business people

and experts in the field before spending your money.

- Be wary of “success stories” or testimonials of extraordinary success. The seminar operation may have paid “shills” (someone pretending or making up a story in order to lure onlookers into participating) to give glowing stories. A promoter might have a celebrity shill – keep in mind that even celebrities might be duped by the scam, or be in on it themselves.
- Be cautious about purchasing from seminar representatives who are reluctant to answer questions, or who give evasive answers to your questions. Remember that legitimate business people want to give you information about their investment or sales opportunity. Only scammers will tell you to pay now or risk losing out on the opportunity offered at the seminar. Solid opportunities aren’t sold through nerve-racking tactics like rushing and high pressure.
- Ask about how much money you need to qualify for the investment or sales opportunity, and get all policies in writing. Keep in mind that you may never recoup the money you gave to an unscrupulous seminar operation, despite their stated refund policies. Taking precautions before you invest is much easier than trying to get a refund after the investment is made.

exact time of phone calls made, even if you cannot get ahold of anyone. If you have made reasonable efforts to contact them, and still have not heard back after two business days, immediately call your credit card company and dispute the charges. The more precise your information is, and the sooner you contact your credit card company, the better the chances of a refund.

For more information or to file a complaint, visit our website or contact:

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture,
Trade and Consumer Protection
Bureau of Consumer Protection
2811 Agriculture Drive, PO Box 8911
Madison, WI 53718-8911

Email: DATCPHotline@wi.gov

Website: datcp.wi.gov

PHONE: (800) 422-7128 TTY: (608) 224-5058

SeminarPitch218 (rev 10/23)

Refund tips

Get the promoter’s refund policy in writing.

- Know that some promoters will purposely make it almost or completely impossible to comply with their return policies.

For example, say you purchase a set of training materials at a seminar, to be shipped to you in the future, and the promoter has a 30 day return policy. If the promoter claims you “bought” the materials at the seminar, but you do not receive them in the mail until after 30 days later, your 30 day return period may already be over.

- If you wish to refund the product, keep detailed records of all contact with the promoter. Keep copies of all letters/emails, and note the date and