

# Engaging Your Webinar Audience

*Book 2 of a 3-part series*

## Why Interaction Is the Key to Lead Generation



# Introduction

Webinars are without a doubt the most powerful format in a content marketer's toolkit. They offer a unique opportunity to gather real-time data about your audience.

**Want to know your audience's challenges  
and pain points? Their business needs?**

A richly engaging and interactive webinar – with polls, hand-raises and Q&As – provides incredible insight into individual attendees for lead generation, which is simply not possible with ebooks, blogs or other content formats.

Remember that in the context of lead generation, engaging and interacting with your audience provides valuable individual response data, which is critical to moving them further along the sales funnel.

Of course, audience engagement is also essential for keeping your attendees interested and attuned to your message.

The late Steve Jobs was a master at this, able to engage and captivate an audience without fail. As one of the greatest communicators of our time, he created presentations that combined compelling storytelling, exciting content and stimulating visuals.

After all, creating and delivering a relevant, engaging and interactive webinar can be the difference between a high-impact event in which you generate many qualified leads and one that falls flat and leaves your virtual audience checking email or – even worse – exiting the webinar early.

On average, employees check their inbox 30 times an hour, according to Statistic Brain, so how can you break through all that distraction to engage people for an extended period of time?

### **We'll show you how.**

Our first ebook explained the keys to attracting your webinar audience for lead generation, including how to find a topic, create content and attract experienced speakers and panelists. In part two, you'll learn the tools and techniques to keep your webinar attendees hooked from start to finish.

### **We'll teach you:**

1. Why storytelling should be the focus of your webinar
2. How to ensure your webinar runs smoothly
3. How to interact with your audience for maximum impact

Erica Maki, webinar expert and senior marketing specialist, will once again provide her unique tips for making your webinar interactive and engaging. Having hosted hundreds of webinars, Erica knows how to capture an audience's undivided attention.

SECTION 1

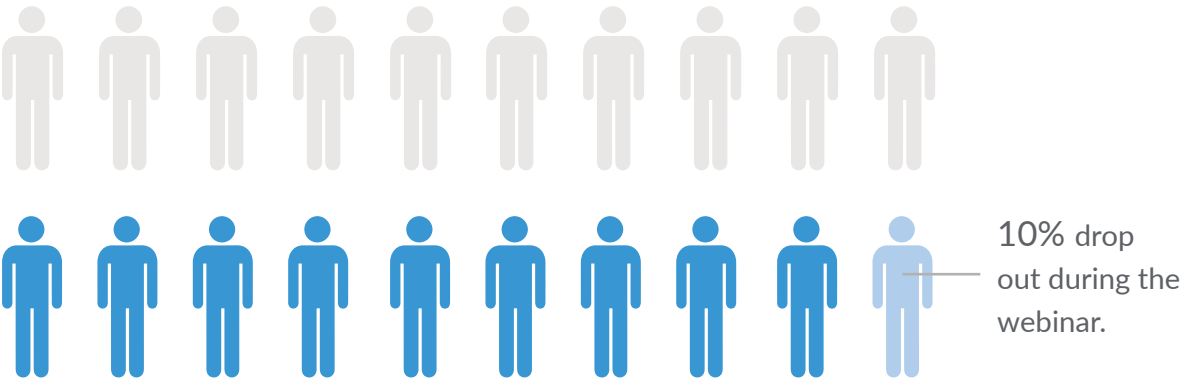
# The Power of Telling a Story

## 8.25 seconds

That's the average human attention span, which is shorter than that of a goldfish. Six years ago, that number was a full 12 seconds, but as we continue to be bombarded with a non-stop stream of content, our attention has waned.

Thankfully, webinars – unlike most content marketing formats – allow you to break through that noise and distraction by providing numerous opportunities to interact and engage in real time with your audience.

## Half of webinar attendees registered will tune in on the day.



\* Even getting your target audience to tune in on the day of the webinar is not easy. For B2B webinars, only about half of people registered will attend the live event.

\* Research has found that about 10% of attendees drop off during the webinar itself.

# How to ensure your webinar audience stays engaged



## Tell a great story

Storytelling is a hot trend, and webinars that tell a compelling story – and put a human element to marketing – have proven to be more successful, says the Content Marketing Institute’s Robert Rose.

Marketing firm Influitive stresses that even in the B2B world, listening to personal experiences shows there is a human being on the other side of the buying process and allows people to relate to you.

Making storytelling the focus of your webinar will increase your audience’s entertainment level. This will help spark higher levels of engagement, which isn’t possible in an infographic or ebook. As Rose says, content marketing now requires a more journalistic skill set, meaning marketers need to learn how to tell a story.

So at your next webinar, get the presenter to speak about a personal experience, talk about a client’s story or use a case study. Illustrate the story with photos, graphics, slides and even videos. This will help bring your webinar to life.

*“If you don’t engage the audience, they’ll ‘turn the channel.’ The webinar event has to be polished, entertaining and stimulating.”*

**Robert Rose**

Chief Strategy Officer  
Content Marketing Institute



## Follow the Steve Jobs storytelling format

Jobs started his presentations with a ‘why, how and what’ format. He didn’t waste time on long-winded background information about himself or Apple. Instead, he jumped in and said he would present Apple’s revolutionary new product. It immediately gave the audience a reason to care – the ‘why.’ The audience then wanted to keep listening to find out the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of the product.



## Add drama with your voice

Your voice reigns supreme in webinars, so be expressive and speak passionately. Former U.S. President Bill Clinton was a master at this, using his voice to capture his audience’s attention while delivering his key messages.

Listen to him closely – he has no fear of dead air, and he uses frequent pauses to add drama and grab attention.

Observers also feel Clinton speaks in “a human way” rather than reads from notes.

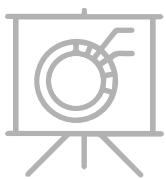


## Have a conversation – talk with them, not at them

U.S. President Barack Obama is another talented orator because, rather than giving a speech and speaking ‘at’ his audience, he speaks ‘to’ them, as though he’s having a conversation.

So at your webinar, try to speak as though you are chatting to only one person at a time.

Also, having more than one speaker during a webinar will boost the level of engagement. Remember how easy it was to drift off when a teacher would talk for an hour in a monotone voice? Try to vary tone throughout your webinar.



## Tell the story visually

Slide decks, colorful graphs, YouTube clips and beautiful images with cool fonts stimulate the eye. In his Virtual Presenter blog, Roger Courville suggests conveying just one idea on each slide. Spend no more than one minute on each, and use tools such as Prezi, SlideRocket and Keynote. Include an event Twitter hashtag and a call to action on the final slide.





## Create a little suspense

A raffle or prize draw is an extra incentive for the audience to not only sign up, but also to stick around. Perhaps tell attendees you'll ask questions about the content at the conclusion to win a prize. This keeps the audience hanging on.

The first 10 correct answers win a prize, such as tickets to a show, a weekend away or a signed copy of the presenter's book. George Washington University used this technique to great advantage for a recent webinar on mindfulness, in which those who signed up and attended had a chance to win a Fitbit.



## Excite with multimedia tools to maintain engagement

Never dismiss the power of video to capture an audience's attention, or to re-engage them if their attention appears to be waning. Research has found that 38 percent of webinar attendees are more engaged when they are given "interesting and relevant content" such as a link to a video.

Use the chat tool to post live links to a video, TED Talk or sources you are referencing. This helps to gain attention and excite the audience. Ask attendees to open a new browser window to watch it.

## Steps to stimulating storytelling

Michael Katz, a professional storyteller and speaking coach, says:



### **Show passion:**

If you show an interest in the material, your audience will be able to pick up on it. More than one-third of people report feeling more engaged if there is a passionate and energetic speaker. Conversely, a lack of enthusiasm will not excite the audience.



### **Know the material:**

Have a thorough understanding of the material so you can speak naturally. Don't try to memorize a script. Be comfortable with the knowledge you have.



### **Keep it simple:**

Stick to the storyline, and don't add needless information. A meandering plot can derail a movie.

## SECTION 2

# Prepare to Launch Your First Webinar

You're almost there – you have your content, your speakers and the tools to engage your audience. Now you need to make sure the actual event runs smoothly.

Test out all the technology you'll be using beforehand. Don't wait until the day of your webinar to find out your headset doesn't work.

Even so, sometimes things don't go exactly to plan, especially during a live event. But with a few preparatory steps, along with plenty of practice sessions, you can relax knowing you have contingency plans in place.

### Webinar tips

- Have a second phone available in case one stops working.
- A headset will work, but a tabletop mic sounds better.
- Have a 'technical difficulties' slide prepared in case you lose audio.
- Have a co-organizer to moderate questions, launch polls and encourage interaction.

## Erica's tips: Reap the magic of an early start

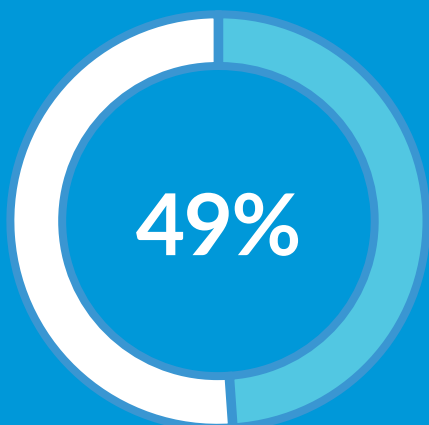
- Turn on your webcam five minutes early to informally welcome attendees and remove any jitters you might be feeling.
- Make it personal and interactive from the start. Ask attendees: "Where are you dialing in from?" or "What are you looking to get out of today?"
- Ensure the audio works, and show a photo of your location.

## Know your audio: Tips to ensure clear sound

Use a USB headset or USB headphones and a standalone tabletop microphone connected to your computer. Digital is ideal. As best practice, do not use the microphone and speakers built into your laptop or USB webcam.

## Best days to host a webinar

Tuesday or Wednesday, a survey from marketing agency Bulldog Solutions found.



A GoToWebinar survey found 49 percent of respondents stated that their preferred webinar duration is 30 minutes.

## SECTION 3

# How to Interact with Your Audience for Maximum Impact

**“Change gets attention,” said psychology professor Daniel Willingham.**

And so it is with webinars, Erica says, admitting it’s a challenge to keep a faceless audience hanging on your every word, especially with a multitude of distractions like Facebook and Twitter just a click away.

Erica says it’s imperative to invite audience participation early and often – at least every three to four minutes ideally. But how?



*“If you fail to invite participation early and often, inertia sets in and your audience will likely be less motivated to engage.”*

**Matt Abrahams**

Stanford Graduate  
School of Business  
Lecturer and Author

Having hosted hundreds of webinars, Erica recommends using these virtual engagement techniques:

- Greet a few attendees by name. Use the 'sort' feature to show who has arrived or joined first.
- Give the audience a valuable takeaway in the first five minutes. For example, talk about a personal experience relevant to the topic of your webinar.
- Keep the engagement going with a call to action on the closing slide or in a follow-up email.
- Try to limit the “housekeeping” and speaker introductions to three minutes.
- Post documents in the chatroom to spark attention and add takeaway content.
- Keep your webcam at eye level and make sure to keep eye contact as much as possible with the camera.

Also, don't overlook the power of the post-event promotion – it too can drive leads and help continue the life cycle of the content.

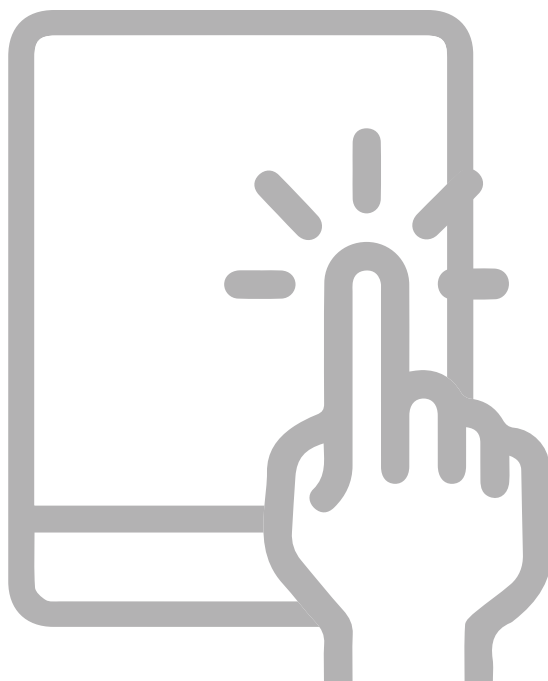
Make sure the webinar is available on-demand immediately after your presentation ends. Brainshark found 49 percent of attendees review content after a live webinar, and 34 percent email it to their colleagues.

## How to use audience behavior for lead generation

An interactive webinar provides B2B marketers with valuable information about prospects.

Data on viewing duration, questions asked, content downloads and poll results can then be shared with your sales department.

In ebook three, we'll explore in great depth how to use this insightful information about your audience to nurture leads and convert them to sales.





*“The participation opportunities you afford your audience, such as a Q&A session or poll, are an abrupt transition from monologue to dialogue, from presentation to facilitation.”*

**Matt Abrahams**

Stanford Graduate  
School of Business  
Lecturer and Author

# Conclusion

Webinars remain one of the most valuable content marketing strategies for generating and engaging leads across the entire buying cycle.

**By using a suite of interactive and effective tools throughout your presentation, you are well on your way to delivering a dynamic and high-impact webinar to a wide and dispersed targeted audience.**

Not only that, but you will be armed with a wealth of information about your individual attendees. The rich data you have now gathered from their behavior and participation – including attendance, polls, hand-raises and Q&As – enables marketers to start a conversation with prospective customers and qualify leads.

As you prepare to present your webinar, we also want to remind you that the benefits go beyond a single presentation.

A webinar is not a one-off piece of marketing content, but opens up a world of opportunities that you can use to create a winning content formula. A question forum to an expert during the webinar could be repackaged into a Q&A article, a SlideShare from the webinar could be presented as a standalone asset and numerous blog posts might be generated from polls and audience participation.

The first two ebooks in this series covered how to attract your webinar audience, how to keep them engaged and why a high level of interaction offers a unique opportunity to gather valuable data.

Stay tuned for our third and final ebook where we will reveal the most crucial part of the webinar journey – how to analyze the data you have collected, put a plan in place and work with your sales team to convert your attendees into loyal customers.

**Now it's time for the main event  
– where all your hard work comes to fruition.**



Erica Maki has years of customer and technical support experience. Since joining GoToWebinar in 2010, Erica has managed over 200 webinars, reaching more than 60,000 attendees and helping customers in a variety of industries ace their online meetings, webinars and trainings.

GoToWebinar is the easiest-to-use, do-it-yourself event tool that projects your message to up to 2,000 online attendees. With GoToWebinar, you can reduce travel costs, generate more qualified leads at a lower cost and enhance communication with customers, prospects and employees. Host unlimited webinars for one low flat fee and give attendees the option to join from a Mac, PC or mobile device. To learn more, visit [www.gotowebinar.com](http://www.gotowebinar.com).