The Insider's GUIDE TO BETTER WEBINARS

Our top tips for becoming a webinar wiz, moderation maestro or presentation premier.

GoToWebinar

Gemma Falconer
Webinar Specialist,

Welcome!

As a marketer, I know what a vital role webinars play in today's content marketing mix.

Combining the right presenter and the right messaging with the right audience is a great way to establish thought leadership. Webinars tend to attract the kind of people who are moderately curious, have unmet needs or are actively searching for a solution to their problem — in other words, prospects!

But webinars aren't about selling; they're a means to inform, educate or inspire participants to take the next step and have a proper conversation with your business, one that can ultimately result in conversion.

Webinars are effective for a number of reasons:

- Time is a scarce resource and travel is expensive
- Webinars can help transcend geographical boundaries and time zones
- Even the smallest companies can punch above their weight with a top-notch webinar
- The webinar format can breathe new life into existing content, such as case studies, white papers and research
- Webinars can extend your reach to prospects with whom your business might not otherwise connect
- They're great for all-hands meetings where business leaders need to broadcast to the whole workforce

Why we've made this eBook

A badly run webinar is like a badly run meeting — a waste of everyone's time. So we're taking a stand against poor production, dull delivery and coma-inducing content that can give this great format a bad name.

I live and breathe these virtual events and often moderate or provide behind-the-scenes support to speakers and attendees. After canvassing my fellow webinar ambassadors and evangelists for their expert insights and tips, we've created this eBook to give you the recipe for the "secret sauce" you need to run impactful webinars that deliver your marketing objectives.

Pushed for time?
The top five takeaways from this eBook:

1	The three elements that can make or break a webinar are technical fluency, content and delivery style
2	When deciding on the topic and creating content for your event, always ask your self this: "What's in it for my audience?"
3	Planning and preparation are essential to ensuring that nothing goes wrong during your webinar — or that if it does, you can recover from any eventuality
4	Interaction, interaction, interaction — don't talk at your audience, engage with them
5	Timely follow-up is essential — thank your audience for participating and share the presentation and any other related content within 24 hours of your event

Contents

When webinars go bad 6

How to create the ultimate webinar from start to finish 10

Promoting your webinar 13

Producing your webinar 17

The essential webinar checklist for organizers 27

Drinking our own champagne 31

When webinars go bad

You know you're in a bad webinar — and we've all attended at least one — when you end up listening half-heartedly, catching up on email while the webinar rumbles on in the background or occasionally paying attention when someone mentions a chart or image. It's a really bad webinar when you don't even make it to the end.

There are three main factors that can make or break a webinar: technology, content and style.

#1: You have gremlins in the works

As a webinar pro, nothing makes my toes curl like technical hitches during other people's events — whether that's loss of audio or visuals, the Internet going down or the webinar software not working.

Of course, some circumstances are beyond the organizer's control, such as a power outage during a thunderstorm, but most glitches occur **due to human error or a lack of preparation**. Over the years, I've seen some right howlers, including:

- The presenter inadvertently closing the webinar window mid-event
- The speaker losing Internet connectivity during a presentation because an electrician turned off the power
- The speaker stopping mid-way through a presentation to answer his mobile phone
- The host presenting from an airport lounge, with all the background noise of a public place
- The speaker using a mic that provided audio quality nowhere good enough for a customer-facing event
- Police sirens wailing in the presenter's vicinity, clearly audible through an open window
- The constant "bing" of notifications and alerts on the presenter's PC throughout the webinar
- The moderator failing to rehearse, freaking out at the start of the live webinar, and putting down the phone

The other (preventable) show-stopping technical issue is when participants join at the last minute and discover they can't install the conferencing software. Maybe they have insufficient user privileges, or their company IT policy won't let them run Flash, Java or other third-party platforms. Either way, the technology you use should enhance the participant experience, not detract from it or throw up obstacles to joining.

Why do people abandon webinars?

A recent study by 1080 Group revealed that the top reasons people drop out of webinars early are (in order):

1. Content not as advertised
2. Boring presenter
3. Presenter reads the slides
4. Webinar run time too long
5. Presenter reads a script
6. Webinar begins with “about our company” content
7. Too much text on slides

#2: You present *War and Peace*

As social media shapes our multitasking skills, social interactions and ability to focus, the human attention span, or the amount time we can concentrate on a task without becoming distracted, is rapidly dwindling.

According to a 2014 study by the National Centre for Biotechnology Information, our average attention span is now eight seconds — yes, you read that correctly — which is down from 12 seconds in 2000. That's particularly shocking when you realize that the average attention span of a goldfish is nine seconds. Are you still with me, by the way?

So when it comes to a webinar, it takes a really compelling topic for an attendee to stick around for an hour-long presentation. And because your audience is remote, you'll have little idea if you've lost anyone's attention, especially if there's no Q&A or other form of interaction (unless you're using GoToWebinar, that is).

And while I'm on the topic of content, webinar participants want to listen and learn — not read slides. If all the information they need is on the slides, what is the point of having a presenter?

TOP TIP :

The GoToWebinar dashboard shows the percentage of attendees viewing the webinar screen, giving you an idea of attentiveness.

#3: It's your style (or lack of it)

Webinars are an experience, so the style is almost as important as the substance for creating an engaging event. There are generally three reasons why webinars miss the mark on style:

There's not enough going on.

A lengthy webinar with a single person speaking the entire time will not maintain participants' attention, unless you employ a wide range of engagement techniques. If there are no interactions or activities, such as polls, annotations or Q&A, participants will have a hard time focusing on slide after slide after slide.

There's too much going on.

Sometimes, less is more. Overly frequent interactions, with polls every other slide or the moderator repeatedly interjecting with questions, disrupt the flow of the presentation. Busy slides with too many visuals look unprofessional and steal the audience's attention away from the narrative. And a live video throughout the entire presentation is distracting — especially if the speaker uses lots of over-the-top hand motions.

You're selling instead of educating.

Unless you specifically intend the webinar to be a product demo, nothing is more of a turn-off than a hard sell, especially if participants believe they are signing up for an educational webinar. Aside from initial dropout rates, being too pushy can result in lasting brand damage, so you should avoid it at all costs.

How we use GoToWebinar

Erica Maki

Title: Senior Marketing Specialist

Location: North America

Why do you use webinars? As a member of the webinar marketing team, I host webinars on behalf of customers. It's a great way to reach a large number of people at their convenience, and at a low cost.

How many webinars do you run per quarter? 12-14

How many attendees on average do you get? It varies according to the topic and format. "How-To" webinars tend to draw 350-400 participants, with 47% of registrants attending on average. Equally, I'm used to doing live demos to an audience of 800. But I'd say don't look at the numbers; it's always better to talk to your audience personally.

What methods do you use for webinar promotion? As these webinars are on behalf of customers, we do the promotion rather than using paid partners. That generally consists of email invites, with automatic reminders one day and one hour before the event, plus links to the webinar via our website.

What are the biggest challenges to running a webinar? Live webinars pose specific challenges, so a dry run is absolutely mandatory. Some speakers aren't keen to rehearse, but it's vital to test the session conditions on the day.

What are your top tips for a successful webinar? Plan in advance how the speaker would prefer to handle questions. If I'm presenting, I normally fly solo but with a large audience, I get someone to help me moderate the questions and flag the best ones so I can concentrate on answering them.

What is the strangest experience or biggest disaster you've had during a webinar? I've not had any technical issues yet. My mantra of plan, prepare, practice is clearly paying off!

Our Survey Said...

304 respondents in total from Europe say that:

30-minute webinars are the most popular, with almost **half of all respondents** saying this is the ideal length.

87% of respondents attend **one to three webinars per month** so competition for participants is high.

Despite the growing move to smartphones and tablets, **94 %** of people still **attend from a desktop** rather than a mobile device.

Almost **two-thirds of people** (61 %) **find webinars engaging**.

The **top five features** of a **good webinar** are:

- **Sharing content post-webinar**
- **Having well-designed slides**
- **Giving attendees action points**
- **Using interactive tools, such as polls and virtual hand-raising**
- **An animated presenter**

The type of **content** attendees find **most useful** is (in order of preference):

I. **Webinars**
II. **Infographics**
III. **White papers/ eBooks**
IV. **Video**
V. **Blogs**
VI. **One-page guides**
VII. **SlideShare presentations**

People are most likely to **leave a webinar** early if **the content is not what was promised/advertised.**

9

How to create the ultimate webinar from start to finish

Planning your event

Webinars appeal to a relatively specific audience looking for content that addresses their needs. There are different types of webinars you can use to capture prospects at different stages of the buying cycle. They include:

- Positioning or awareness webinars
- Educational webinars
- Sampling or demonstration webinars
- Sales conversion webinars
- Post-sale webinars.

But webinars are no different from any other marketing activity; you need to define your objectives, target audience, desired outcomes and success factors up front.

Have clear objectives

Be clear about what are you trying to get out of your webinar — whether that's positioning your business as a thought leader, raising brand awareness or generating sales leads. You should also consider these questions:

- What is your webinar's participant ROI, or the "what's in it for me?" factor, that will make attendance seem worthwhile in exchange for people's time?
- What topics will make your audience more likely to consider the webinar a must-attend event, rather than merely interesting?
- What will be your key messages and how much detail do you intend to cover? (This will dictate the length of your webinar and whether it needs to be serialized.)

PRO TIP FOR CREATING AN AGENDA:

We recommend a simple, easy to follow agenda that includes: Welcome, What to expect, Speaker introduction, Content delivery with interaction, Q&A, Wrap-up.

TOP TIP :

Consider staging two or three half-hour webinars rather than one long session.

Target the right audience

If you're talking to existing customers, ask yourself: Who am I talking to? What do I know about them? What are their priorities already? And if you're trying to reach prospects, consider:

- Which industries, functions or job titles you should address, and whether you are pitching C-suite, management or individual contributors
- What size of organization is your sweet spot in terms of revenue, turnover or headcount
- What your target geographies are, and if there are any other demographics that you can use to build a profile of your audience.

Determine desired outcomes and success factors

What is the call to action for your audience after the webinar? A few options include:

- Initiate a conversation
- Request a sales demo
- Start a product trial
- Download a white paper

You can't measure success if you don't know what success looks like. Depending on your objectives, there are multiple ways to track the response to your webinar, including:

- Number of registrants and attendees
- Number of sales leads generated
- Social media mentions of your brand or webinar hashtag

INSPIRATION FOR WINNING WEBINAR TOPICS

Stuck for ideas? Use this list as a springboard and adapt an idea for your next webinar.

What you need to know about <top prospect problem>.

How to take control of <your environment>.

Sneak peek at <product name>.

How to make your <business activity> up to <X%> more effective.

<X> secrets of winning <business activities>.

The <X> common mistakes most <prospect job title> make and how to avoid them.

The truth about <solution category>.

Maximum <top prospect benefit>: practical strategies for results.

New breakthroughs in <big prospect problem>.

How to evaluate and choose a <solution category>.

Kick off your planning properly

Ideally, you should start planning your webinar around eight weeks before your intended go-live date. Set up a project timeline and determine which people you need to help you deliver the event.

Kick off with a cross-functional meeting — either in person or virtually — led by a strong project manager who will also double as the webinar producer. Your agenda should aim to:

- Identify who needs to be involved internally
- Discuss key messages, working title and content ideas for the event
- Choose a webinar format — will you use a PowerPoint-style presentation, run a live demo or show something else on screen?
- Identify speakers, panellists and a moderator
- Commit to get speaker biographies, logos and headshots
- Confirm dates for rehearsals and the live event
- Develop the execution plan for nurturing sales leads after the webinar.

After the meeting, make sure you get commitments from speakers for specific dates and times, and set up a virtual repository for sharing project plans, presentations, images, biographies and other related assets.

Lastly, schedule your webinar through your event-management service, such as GoToWebinar, and choose your audio options, which are typically:

- VoIP (attendees use the speaker and mic on their PC or other device)
- Freephone numbers (you pay for attendees to dial in)
- Toll-based numbers (attendees pay to dial in)
- Use your existing conference call service

Podio is a great tool for making deadlines, responsibilities and goals clear for everyone.

Guess what? We recommend GoToMeeting!

PRO TIPS ON CHOOSING A SPEAKER:

Your webinar speaker should be a subject-matter expert, but ideally not from sales or marketing (unless the topic of the webinar is selling or marketing).

While luminaries, analysts and authors can be a draw, you don't need "rock star" presenters to elicit a good response. But you can boost attendance by harnessing a well-connected thought leader's credibility and social network to promote the event.

Promoting your webinar

Sitting through a webinar requires a bigger commitment than downloading a white paper, so the value of the webinar must be both important and clear to attendees.

With more and more webinar invitations landing in inboxes, there's more competition than ever for eyes and ears. We know from our research that people typically attend only a handful of webinars a month, so yours has to stand out from the crowd to be among the chosen few.

Formulate your invitation list

Attracting a targeted demographic will increase the likelihood that your audience consists of only those who care about what you have to say. Identify prospect list sources that match the profile(s) you drew up in the planning stage. Make use of whatever combination of data you can get your hands on, whether that's from in-house databases or lists from media partners, sponsors and brokers.

TOP TIP :

Don't have too many fields on the registration page — just capture essential intelligence.

THE NINE ESSENTIALS OF A SUCCESSFUL WEBINAR MARKETING PLAN ARE:

1. Specific audience and objectives
2. Wide promotional plan
3. Marketing highlights/benefits
4. In-house, friendly lists
5. Title and content draw target
6. Effective registration page
7. Multiple touches
8. Compelling webinar invitation
9. Auto reminder sequence

Craft an email invite

Next, you'll need to develop a compelling invitation that induces "fear of missing out" among your target audience. There isn't a hard-and-fast template for this, but to maximize your chances of success, you should have:

- An attention-grabbing **webinar title**
- The **date and time**, plus **time zone of your event** (even if your audience is local, certain members may be travelling at the time of your webinar)
- A one- or two-page **benefits-led description** (leave out the product pitch and focus on learning)
- Three to five bullets summarizing the **key takeaways**
- A brief **speaker biography** or list of credentials
- A few bullets describing who should attend, so invitees know if it's relevant for them
- A conspicuous **call-to-action button** for invitees to "register now" (the CTA link should ideally appear two or three times throughout your invite for maximum exposure).

When it comes to describing your webinar, you should be honest, accurate and realistic. The top reason people leave webinars is because "content was not as advertised."[1]

Develop your landing page

Next, you'll need to develop an appealing landing page, which has the sole objective of **getting people to register**.

Don't pepper your registration-page form with too many fields, or people will abandon it. Just capture essential items: name, email, phone number, company, job title and industry. To help evaluate your proposed content against participants' expectations and make any adjustments necessary before the event, consider an additional field also asking: "**What would you like us to cover in this webinar?**"

[1] *Source: 1080 Group, 2013*

PRO TIPS FOR BOOSTING REGISTRATIONS

While your first-touch email should be a branded HTML, consider switching to plain text emails for subsequent broadcasts if your delivery rates are below expectations. This will help them avoid getting caught in spam filters.

If your open rates are low, change the subject line to something that will compel recipients to open and click through.

Tell the world about your event

You need to start promoting your webinar around three weeks prior to the big day. A well-timed series of email invitations works wonders. Try this set of three touch points for better exposure:

T-3 weeks: initial invitation

T-1 week: follow-up with a reminder to register

T-1 day: last chance to register/reminder to attend

Of course, **social media** offers a major venue for promotion, so publicise your webinar on all the channels where you're active, as well as among your network of affiliates. Make sure your email invite and registration page include buttons for social sharing, and consider using a customized hashtag to raise awareness of the webinar and tie it in with any in-person events. Live tweet the event to engage attendees during the event, and encourage participants to continue the conversation afterwords on **Twitter** and **LinkedIn**.

Your **website** and **blog** provide obvious opportunities to draw attention to your webinar. But don't overlook other free exposure opportunities. Include a link to the webinar registration in your company's **email signature banner**, so your sales teams can spread the word effortlessly.

See who's coming

Track your registration metrics in the days leading up to the webinar and tweak your strategy as necessary based on click-through and registration rates. Don't forget that webinar registrations are affected by email deliverability, open rates and conversions on the landing page. Realistically, attendance on the day of the webinar will be around 30%-50% of total registrants, but you can bump up the total viewings by another 10%-15% if you make the live broadcast available as an on-demand recording after the event.

TOP TIP :

To determine audience preferences for time of day, just ask via the survey or polling feature of your webinar platform.

How we use GoToWebinar

Shobit Khanna

Title: Marketing Campaign Specialist

Location: Asia Pacific

Why do you use webinars? We use webinars to get contacts into our funnel and deepen engagement, as well as drive adoption among existing customers.

How many webinars do you run per quarter? Around 20. We also get our sales team to run mini webinars.

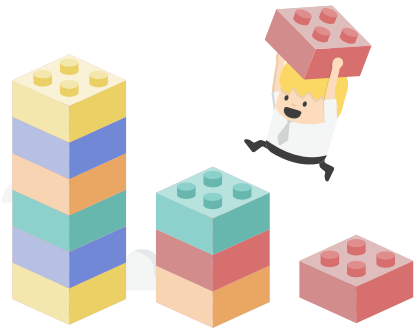
How many attendees on average do you get? Typically around 300-500 attending out of 1,000-1,200 total registrations, although it's not unusual to have an audience of 700-800. The narrower the focus of the topic, the lower the dropout rate.

What methods do you use for webinar promotion? Email is always king. Here in Australia, we have very strict opt-in laws. We do sponsored partner webinars. They use GoToWebinar, source an independent expert speaker, and provide sponsorship dollars. We don't mandate how they should promote the event. And while we provide pro forma copy, they can customize it with their brand and tweak as they see fit.

What are the biggest challenges to running a webinar? Working with speakers who are new to the webinar medium can be a challenge. They have great content and delivery, but they're often not prepared for the two-way nature of a webinar. A lot of people attend webinars for the Q&A. They want to interact with an expert, not listen to a keynote speech! The worst that can happen is the speaker losing the Internet completely. That's why it's vital to have a back-up plan and keep the audience in the loop. Don't try and cover up a technical hitch. If you're using international speakers, make sure they're clear about the time difference and have their mobile number handy in case you need to get them out of bed!

What are your top tips for a successful webinar? I like to send speakers a webcam and headset, so I know they're using tried-and-tested technology. It's really important to do a sound check in the actual location the speaker will be presenting from. One-off webinars don't get such good traction, so think two to three webinars ahead and give the series an identity. We have a really successful one at 10:00 AM on a Monday called "Latte & Learn."

What is the strangest experience or biggest disaster you've had during a webinar? One presenter ended up running the webinar from a different location and hardware than had been agreed. The PC tower and webcam were positioned under the desk, so we were greeted with a view of him in his underpants. Quite coincidentally, we have a hugely popular entrepreneurial series on how to run a global empire in your underpants, called "Undie Empire."



Producing your webinar

Get the format right

Time of day

You should set a start time based on how convenient it is to your audience — not you, not your guest speaker. If you're running a global webinar and you need to see what time would work best for your attendees, use a tool such as a timezone converter to see the time across a number of different locations.

Keep it short

Since your participants' physical separation from the event invites their minds to wander, the length of your webinar is key to keeping them engaged and attentive.

So remember that once you factor in the welcome and speaker introduction, audience polls and Q&A session, the actual presentation should account for no more than 30-35 minutes of the total run-time in an hour-long webinar.

But according to our survey, most people prefer 30-minute webinars. So take that hour and create two focused half-hour webinars — with 20 minutes each of presentations plus 10 minutes' Q&A — to keep your audience engaged.

For niche topics, tightly storyboarded 15-minute webinars are very popular since people can easily watch them at the start of the day or while they are eating lunch.

TOP TIP :

Avoid using "About Our Company" slides at the beginning of your presentation — the audience is there to listen to your content, not your corporate history.

Have the right format

Audiences universally prefer a dialogue to a speech. If you're presenting solo, engage your moderator in discussion at the top and bottom of your presentation. While two speakers are better than one, don't have any more than that; it's a huge challenge to facilitate a seamless, effortless flow of conversation among a panel of three or more speakers.

Make killer content

A high-performing webinar is not (seriously, NOT) about selling. It's about stimulating intellectual curiosity, teaching your audience something new and inspiring them to have a conversation about it afterward.

Start off with a strong hook, such as a fact, short story, personal anecdote or familiar challenge, to grab their attention and set their expectations for a high-impact webinar.

You must have relevant, timely information and demonstrate business or personal value. Popular presentations formats include: a cohesive story with a beginning, middle and end; an authentic use case or tutorial; or an argument for a new way of thinking. Be willing to share insights that took you or your business years to acquire the hard way; these gems will pay dividends. Focus on real-life examples, best practices, lessons learned, tips, tricks and techniques that speak to your audience's daily challenges.

Structure your story

People retain structured information much more reliably and accurately than information presented haphazardly. So make your point or tell your story with clear purpose using these formats:

- Past, present, future
- Compare and contrast
- Cause and effect
- Problem, solution, benefit
- What? So What? Now What?

TOP TIP:

Revisit your promotional copy and make sure that your presentation delivers what you promised.

TOP TIP:

Make it personal. Of course you need to be businesslike, but conveying emotion in a presentation will help your point resonate. Check out one of our most popular blog posts: **How to make your presentations memorable**.

Produce stellar slides

Presentation slides aren't just something for people to look at while the speaker is talking — they're also a way of managing the audience's expectations and bookmarking the delivery to make sure everything runs smoothly. We recommend the following placeholder slides form the bones of your presentation.

Have a structured list of placeholder slides

- **Pre-webinar:** Give attendees that join the webinar early something interesting to look at, or even something to do, such as a quiz
- **Agenda:** Let the speaker and audience know exactly where they are along the presentation. Put a few bullets at the beginning for the basics, but why not really grab attention by providing a visual map of your webinar's content instead?
- **Title:** Create a slide for each speaker with the presentation title, date, speaker's name, job title and company (but not their biography – this isn't the time or the place)
- **Housekeeping:** Explain the different features and tools of the webinar platform that the audience can use, as well as any social information, such as a hashtag that people can follow
- **Poll placeholder:** These will act as handy prompts for you to launch polls at the right points during the webinar
- **Q&A:** Kick off the question and answer session and include any necessary contact information
- **Wrap-up:** Summarize the key takeaways from the webinar and include the call to action
- **Thank you:** Include a final slide to signify the event is over and thank the audience for participating

How we use GoToWebinar

Clare Kemp

Title: Senior Campaign Manager

Location: Northern Europe

Why do you use webinars? We use webinars as part of our lead nurturing strategy, and also internally for global meetings.

How many webinars do you run per quarter? Between 20 and 25 per quarter.

How many attendees on average do you get? It depends on the topic and the objective of the webinar. For thought leadership and "how-to" webinars, we tend to attract 500 attendees or more, but for more product-specific webinars, the numbers are lower. Of course, while it's great to have a big audience, quality rather than quantity is what counts.

What methods do you use for webinar promotion? We typically email our own database, and promote webinars through our website, blog and Twitter. We also partner with a couple of institutes.

What are the biggest challenges to running a webinar? Speakers who aren't properly prepared. It's so important to invest the time in rehearsing with the speaker and making sure the slides are engaging. There's no point having slides full of bullets, as people will just read what's on screen instead of listening to the speaker.

What are your top tips for a successful webinar? Having the right content is key, but it's also important to have an engaging speaker. You have to keep the audience uppermost in your mind, and what they're going to get out of attendance.

What is the strangest experience or biggest disaster you've had during a webinar? I haven't had any disasters to date, except a fire alarm going off during the welcome address! If you plan properly, you'll always be prepared if anything does go wrong.

Keep primary content slides short

To keep the momentum going during your presentation, try to spend no more than one minute per slide (even less is better!). If you need longer to cover a point, split it into two or three slides.

We try to discourage the use of bullet points in favor of more visual slides. Use pictures and diagrams with a clear purpose to illustrate your point. But don't clutter them up with too much detail. If you must use text, limit yourself to just a few key words and make them BIG AND **BOLD**! And if you really feel that bullets are best, use absolutely no more than three or four per slide.

Wrap things up with a summary of your main points and a clear call to action. The audience should have no doubt about what you want them to do next.

Use visual aids properly

Visual presentation tools such as Keynote, PowerPoint and Prezi can help you get your point across. But remember these tools are merely aids and not the substance of the presentation itself. Don't let fancy slide transitions and animations distract or detract from your expertise.

Use a webcam to add live video to your webinar, but don't turn the entire presentation into a series of talking heads. Simply use the video as a way to bring a human face to the introduction, Q&A session and closing address to connect more personally with your audience.

TOP TIP :

To really connect with your audience, smile when you're telling your story and keep your voice animated — no one wants to listen to a monotone voice for an entire presentation.

Make the presentation interactive

Your audience doesn't want to be "talked at" for a half-hour solid, so interactivity is key. Polls with multiple-choice questions provide a welcome opportunity for audience participation, although two or three in a one-hour webinar is plenty.

Don't forget to make use of the questions pane in your platform to encourage audience interaction. And toward the end of a presentation, you can gauge information recall by throwing down a challenge and incentive. For example: "Earlier in this presentation, we identified the single biggest challenge to [webinar topic]. The first person to correctly tell me what that is gets a [*free trial, copy of your book or whatever you have up for grabs*]."

You can also ask the audience to virtually raise their hand and get them to take a photo of something relevant and post it on Twitter using your webinar hashtag.

If you have reserved the last 10-15 minutes of the webinar for Q&A, you don't want to run the risk of embarrassment by having no questions to answer. To avoid this, prior to the event, solicit two or three seed questions from the speaker, producer or other stakeholders. These prevent "dead air" and getting the ball rolling can inspire or encourage shy participants to venture their own questions. Unless you're flying solo, have a plan in advance for the moderator to handle live questions and pose them to the speaker.

Have the right delivery style

Lead like a tour guide

In any webinar, the content is the hero. So don't open with a long-winded introduction to your company or speaker credentials — get straight to the good stuff. Set expectations of where you intend to lead your participants, so they're confident of the value to come and are willing to follow. Help your audience stay with you with these transitioning techniques:

- Paraphrase your previous point before moving on: "Now we've seen how our competitors do this…"
- Ask a question that hints at what's coming next: "So how can we go beyond what our competitors are doing?"
- Use an agenda slide with your current position highlighted to visually indicate where you are in the presentation.

RES Software triples audience engagement with HDFaces for GoToWebinar

Customer: RES Software, provider of automated delivery and return of IT services.

Challenge: RES Software had previously been using online meetings to hold internal catch-up sessions, but needed to be able to handle a greater number of participants in external-facing events.

How GoToWebinar is used: With GoToWebinar, RES Software can now hold market-facing video conferences with up to 500 participants at a time. Multiple webcams allow the firm to co-present with partner organizations to boost credibility and audience reach.

Benefits: Since using HDFaces to enable the audience to see the webinar presenters, RES Software has seen attendance triple and attention soar. The organizer's control panel reveals fewer participants "switching off" and more frequent audience interaction through hand raises.

"We quickly noticed that, when the cameras were on, people would pay closer attention. We now turn them on as a matter of course."

Sean Donahue,
Chief Evangelist, RES Software

Read the case study in full

Vary your delivery

One of the most important elements in delivering a webinar is your voice. Vary volume, tempo and inflection to give your voice authentic energy and avoid the monotony that will otherwise cause your audience to tune out. If you're not used to speaking for long periods of time, you may find you need to use muscles you didn't know you had! If that's the case, build up vocal stamina and regulate your breathing by reading out loud for 10 to 15 minutes a day. This will also help you find your natural tempo and rhythm. It may help to record a few sessions to play back, so you can hear what you sound like objectively and make adjustments to your style as needed.

Focus on attention and retention

Without some form of audience involvement, you're effectively delivering a monologue. One way to make a webinar interactive is to ask your audience to do something, such as answer a poll, submit a question or comment via the chat function.

However, you don't want to break the flow of your presentation with too many diversions, so apply simple neuro-linguistic techniques to keep your audience engaged. Use analogies to describe a challenge to activate mental constructs and enable faster information processing and better comprehension. Or get your attendees to mentally participate by asking them to imagine, remember or picture a scenario in their mind's eye, rather than just listening you to describe it.

And keep your topics a two-way conversation by focusing back on participants' pain points. If your attendees are in a particular industry or line of business, underscore why the point you just made is especially relevant to their interests.

CABLE & WIRELESS

Cable & Wireless educates employees and prospects alike with GoToWebinar

Customer: Now part of Vodafone since its acquisition in 2012, former Cable & Wireless Worldwide continues to provide critical communication networks and services to global enterprises.

Challenge: Cable & Wireless was looking to use webinars for a broad range of learning initiatives, with the aim of delivering a high-quality user experience via a robust platform.

How GoToWebinar is used: Cable & Wireless first implemented GoToWebinar to deliver training programs to internal audiences. However, the company has extended that use to customers, and it now offers educational web events on its products and services. Post-session reporting shows how involved participants were and how they responded to polls and questions.

Benefits: The success of GoToWebinar has been evidenced by a dramatic increase in demand for webinar programs, with series such as Management Matters and Perfect Pitch becoming strong brands in their own right.

"GoToWebinar offers the ideal channel to provide information and training to widely differing audiences, leading to long-term knowledge and skills improvement across the whole business."

Mike Booth, Learning Technologies Manager, Cable & Wireless

Read the case study in full

Figure out logistics and technical requirements

Much of your credibility and competence in delivering a webinar relies on being able to run a technically flawless and fluent session, so don't even contemplate winging it. You should be familiar and comfortable with the technology you're using, but you'll need to ensure you have a Plan B in case of a technical problem. Ideally, you should have:

- Copies of slides so the show can go on if your computer crashes
- Your webinar software log-in credentials, dial-in number and access code written down on paper, in case your Internet or landline connection goes down (having a mobile phone as back-up is also worthwhile)
- The support number for your webinar software provider written down in case of support issues
- Your presentation saved on two computers so you can easily switch presenter if needed.

And make sure your speakers have the moderator or producer's mobile number in case of difficulties before or during the event.

Check your sound quality

Think of your webinar as a radio show with pictures: it needs broadcast quality. Find out where your speakers intend to physically be on the day, in case their location or choice of equipment is likely to affect sound quality.

Remember, if you can hear it, the microphone can too! Poor sound from open mics and PC speakers can detract from your webinar, and you should avoid using speakerphones or any wireless or battery-operated devices. Presenters should avoid breathing directly into their mic, or they'll end up sounding like Darth Vader!

TOP TIP :

However you connect, have a high-quality headset, for either VoIP or landline, and a working USB microphone.

Prepare in advance

Test your technology ahead of time to understand the features available and get any speakers or panelists to do the same. Show them how to mute themselves in case they have a sudden coughing fit or other unanticipated background noise.

If at all possible, have speakers rehearse their presentation in the presence of a remote audience and record it. That way you can play it back, objectively review the delivery and identify any snags or areas for improvement.

If you have multiple speakers, things can get a little more tricky, so it's best do a table read a couple of weeks beforehand. This should include:

- Reviewing the agenda
- Introducing the speakers to one another and the moderator
- Covering housekeeping issues
- Sound checks
- Reviewing each presenter's slides
- Agreeing on whether the host or speakers will share their screen and be in control of the presentation
- Rehearsing the session
- Practising cues and transitions between slides to eliminate awkward silences.

How we use GoToWebinar

Sharin Gattung

Title: Senior Campaign Manager

Location: Central Europe

Why do you use webinars? We run webinars for lead nurturing purposes. We offer thought leadership on topics of interest to our audience, and then we demonstrate the solutions to warm prospects.

How many webinars do you run per quarter? Around 20.

How many attendees on average do you get? Depending on how much budget we invest in promoting an event, we'll typically attract between 400 and 700 registrations, with between 35% and 45 % of registrants attending.

What methods do you use for webinar promotion? We use media partners to promote the webinars to their subscribers. We also promote the webinars through Xing, a business social network here in Germany. We highlight the event on our website and in our email signature banners as a postscript, plus we get our sales teams to spread the word via email.

What are the biggest challenges to running a webinar? I'd say the biggest challenge is ensuring the speaker is prepared — they should be familiar with the webinar solution, and they must have VoIP, the right headset and a good internet connection. We also check that the content is up to scratch. We don't let in old-school presentation slides with dozens of bullets.

What are your top tips for a successful webinar? Rehearse! Make sure the rehearsal mimics the conditions of the actual webinar. And always have a moderator if you can — it saves you having to multi-task. But more importantly, it makes for a more personal, conversational atmosphere, which keeps the audience attentive. One of our regular webinar speakers says running a webinar is like learning to drive a car — initially, you have to really concentrate, but the more you get used to it, the more relaxed you become

What is the strangest experience or biggest disaster you've had during a webinar? I've never had a disaster, but I have had a speaker try to do a rehearsal via his mobile. You can attend a webinar through your smartphone, but never present!

Know what you need the day of the event

Double-check that your crucial supporting infrastructure — phone lines, Internet connections and so on — is available. If you haven't done so already, designate someone to be responsible for any technical challenges that might arise, so the speaker can focus on the presentation without skipping a beat. Make sure whoever is sharing a computer screen disables all pop-up notifications and sounds.

After a sound check to confirm volume levels and optimise equipment settings, you're all set to go!

Immediately following your event, have attendees rate the webinar using an exit survey so that you can gather feedback while the content is fresh in their minds. You can even get insight for future events in this space by asking what topics they might like you to cover in future webinars, or whether they'd like a free trial of your product.

Keep your webinar working after your event

Make your webinar on-demand

Get long-term value by putting a recording of the webinar online in an easy-to-view format, such as a Windows Media Player file. To keep the run-time down, you may also want to edit out content that isn't relevant to your on-demand audience, such as housekeeping or details on how to vote in a poll.

Say thank you

Sustain the momentum you've worked so hard to build by sending out thank-you emails to all registrants, both attendees and no-shows, that include a link to the webinar recording. Add any extra resources, if you have them, including white papers or eBooks, to further reward the audience for their interest. Make sure you do this as soon as possible — certainly within 24 hours — while the event is still fresh in attendees' minds.

ifb group supports team spirit with GoToWebinar

Customer: Consulting company, ifb group, specializes in business and IT architecture for financial and risk management to industrial, commercial and service companies.

Challenge: ifb group already used GoToMeeting in team conference calls, but was looking for a webinar service to enable events with up to 1,000 attendees.

How GoToWebinar is used: GoToWebinar is ifb group's tool of choice for internal training and large meetings, such as its international summer convention. The fast transmission speed and low-bandwidth requirements make it ideal for consultants who don't always have the best connectivity while in the field.

Benefits: GoToWebinar supports the company's team spirit, as international employees can participate remotely in large internal conferences, management keynote presentations and other important meetings.

"GoToWebinar provides valuable features for engaging with the audience and reports to evaluate the success of the event."

Rolf Loevenich, Head of IT, ifb group

Read the case study in full

Follow up with leads

Assume that registrants are probably in the market to buy what you sell. So follow up with those who watch the recorded version in exactly the same way as you follow up with live attendees. However, it pays to single out highly engaged attendees – those who not only registered and joined but who showed signs of sustained interest throughout, whether by participating in polls, hand-raising or asking questions. They're likely to be your hottest prospects.

Analyze key metrics

Analyze registration, attendance and performance to determine whether you met your event and business objectives. And don't forget to check the exit survey results. These statistics provide valuable insights that you can apply to your next webinar. Send a thank you note to all speakers and the moderator and let them know how the webinar performed so everyone involved can do even better in future. And finally, identify and segment sales-ready leads from those that need longer-term nurturing.

How we use GoToWebinar

Caroline Bell-Luehrs

Title: Marketing Specialist, Demand Generation

Location: North America

Why do you use webinars? I use webinars for the entire sales funnel, from top to conversion. Our top-of-funnel webinars can cover anything from thought leadership to neuroscience and cool topics that people are genuinely interested in, a bit like TED Talks. Then we do more how-to presentations, such as webinar delivery skills or how to design a successful webinar. Then at the point of conversion, we do two to three product demos using an internal speaker or product specialist.

How many webinars do you run per quarter? Around eight webinars per product, per quarter.

How many attendees on average do you get? That depends on the speaker and topic. For the top-of-funnel webinars, we partner with media powerhouses like Harvard Business Review or MarketingProfs and use high-profile speakers to deliver a topic such as office politics. We can get anything up to 8,000 registrants, with an attendance rate of around 30%-45 %.

What methods do you use for webinar promotion? We use as many channels as possible. Our primary source of registrations comes from email, including paid email blasts, house emails and those from our webinar partners. We also have an employee advocacy program we've been developing over the past few months, plus we're all over social media.

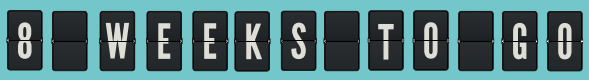
What are the biggest challenges to running a webinar? For up to 1,000 attendees, we use GoToWebinar, but for audiences beyond our bandwidth, we use GoToWebcast, which is designed for keynote presentations rather than as an interactive platform. We put an entire team behind the moderation to handle thousands of questions coming in at once.

What are your top tips for a successful webinar? Hope for the best, but prepare for the worst, and give yourself some grace if there's a hitch.

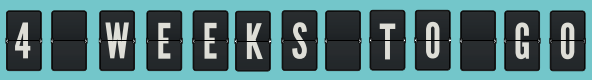
What is the strangest experience or biggest disaster you've had during a webinar? Actually, my experiences are overwhelmingly positive. I really enjoy working with speakers from all over the world, and bringing out the best in them. Our program is mutually beneficial as they get the chance to be heard by thousands, while we get to stay up to date on trends and the latest content.

The essential webinar checklist for organizers

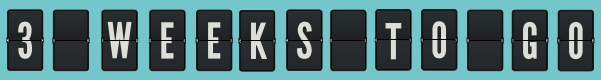
Before the webinar



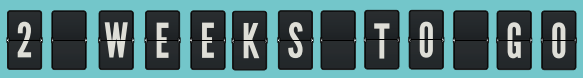
- Start planning your webinar
- Decide on the title and content
- Set a rehearsal date as well as the date of the webinar itself
- Confirm speaker's availability for both the rehearsal and the webinar and send invites



- Prepare email invitations, registration page, confirmation emails and follow-up emails
- Set up any poll questions and exit survey questions
- Prepare opening and closing slides



- Send out HTML invitations
- Add the webinar to your website and blog, and start talking up your event on social media right up until the big day
- Ensure you'll have access to two computers so you have a back-up option if one goes down during the presentation
- Allocate another computer so the moderator can see the Q&A, polls and chat panes and dashboard



- Send out HTML or plain text invitation.

- Send out a reminder to register
- Send joining details to the speaker(s) and/or moderator

- Send out a reminder to attend

- Open the webinar in “practice mode” to communicate and practice with your speakers without attendees arriving early
- Welcome your speakers and have them warm up
- Give everyone an update including the expected number of attendees
- Perform a final sound check
- Confirm everyone is using the correct equipment and remind them not to use speakerphones or open mics
- Disable email alerts and any other pop-up notifications or sounds
- Give presenter controls to those who need to advance the slides or show their screens
- Re-confirm the format of the webinar (intro, presentation, poll question, Q&A, wrap up, etc.) and who is responsible for what
- Make sure mobile phones are on silent or Do Not Disturb
- Send out a reminder to join

30 MINUTES TO GO

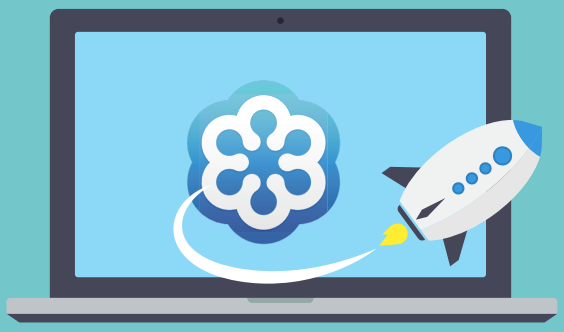
- Put a sign on your door with something like: “Live webinar session on air – do not disturb”
- Have water handy in case of a dry throat or coughing fit

5 MINUTES TO GO

- Show your screen (or ask the presenter to share theirs if they are hosting the presentation on their device)
- Allow attendees to join and view your pre-webinar slide
- Enter a welcome message to the audience in the chat box, along the lines of “Thanks for joining! We’ll begin in 15 minutes”

1 MINUTE TO GO

- Make sure all speakers are muted except the person speaking
- Turn on webcams
- Start recording
- Start the event and bring attendees off hold



During the webinar

- Welcome the audience and begin the show
- Display the agenda, title and housekeeping slides
- Send out a chat message to speakers advising them of the time remaining
- Ask the speakers for any final comments about three minutes before the end
- Tell the audience that you'll send an email with a link to the on-demand recording and ask them to take the exit survey
- End the webinar on time and thank speakers, sponsors and audience for attending

After the webinar

- Have a separate virtual session to hold a five to 10 minute debrief with speakers and organizers
- Agree who will handle any unanswered questions
- Archive the webinar recording
- Send out thank you emails to all attendees and no-shows within 24 hours
- Share performance metrics on total registration, attendance, retention and number of questions asked
- Give yourself a pat on the back for a well-executed webinar and relax!

Drinking our own champagne

It probably won't come as a complete shock, but we recommend GoToWebinar as the best way to orchestrate high-impact webinars with minimum effort or risk, so you can concentrate on killer content and maximizing audience reach. That's because we've built it to work exactly the way we and our customers want it to.

- Full-service registration makes scheduling a webinar a simple matter of completing a short online form. That's all there is to it.
- Promotion couldn't be easier: GoToWebinar automatically creates a hosted registration page and email, which are customizable with your own logo and branding, together with post-event follow-up emails. It's a campaign in a box!
- APIs make it easy to integrate GoToWebinar with your existing email automation systems, such as Marketo or Eloqua, or your CRM solutions, including Salesforce. With automatic syncing of webinars, registrants, performance and polls, campaign managers can focus on driving results instead of importing spreadsheets and deleting duplicate leads.
- Built-in audio conferencing supports phone and VoIP audio, as well as an integrated Freephone option, or you can use your own conference call service.

- Add an interactive dimension to your webinar with annotation and spotlight tools and HDFaces high-definition video.
- Provide a simplified and frictionless experience for attendees, with self-service registration, automated reminder emails and Outlook calendar integration. Attendees can join instantly just by clicking a link in their confirmation or reminder email, or Outlook calendar entry.
- Maximize your reach with one-click webinar recording, including all phone and computer audio. Simply post or email a link to allow recipients to watch it on demand.
- Attendee surveys streamline the capture of post-webinar feedback, while built-in reporting details all poll, Q&A and survey data, attendee interest levels and registration information, so you can easily measure your success.

We're intimately familiar with the benefits of GoToWebinar because we've run thousands of our own and client events with it, so we're continually putting the software through its paces for the most demanding events.

GoToWebinar

Host virtual events for up to 1,000 attendees

Get your free trial version: 1 888 646 0014
www.gotowebinar.com

For more tips and insights - visit our **blog**!

©2017 LogMeIn, Inc. All rights reserved. 498503/WP/2015.05.22