



Winning The **GAME OF TRUST**

How interactive webinars differentiate your brand and win moments of trust at every stage of the buyer's journey.

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Introduction: **Winning the Moment of Trust**

May I have your attention?

Do I have your trust?

The answers often are not the same. And yet marketers often conflate these two questions. It used to be that getting a buyer's attention for any length of time could be seen as a proxy for "engagement," or deepening trust. But of course, this just isn't true. Trust isn't "grabbed," or "engaged." Trust is an emotion, earned cumulatively over time.

Nowhere is this more evident than in today's B2B marketing environment. Today's B2B buyer is self-educated. According to research, only 12% of B2B buyers want to meet in person with a sales representative, and a full 71% prefer to conduct research on their own.ⁱ Additionally, B2B buyers are actively looking for content from their peers. The three most important content types that B2B buyers seek are "transparent pricing," "technical content," and "thought leadership."


As a recent Forrester Research study found:

"The empowered B2B buyer is neither concerned with how your organization is structured and who's responsible for the content on your website, nor are they interested in talking with a sales rep simply because they downloaded a white paper. Your buyers want contextual interactions with both human and digital assets across a holistic, but non-linear journey."

The most important key of those "contextual interactions" is the removal of friction—and that means continuously building and deepening trust.

Stephen Covey calls this "The Speed of Trust" in his book of the same name. He says:

*"Nothing is as fast as the speed of trust. In a high-trust relationship, you can say the wrong thing and people will still get your meaning. In a low-trust relationship, you can be very measured, even precise, and they will still misinterpret you."*ⁱⁱ



In today's fast-paced and noisy marketplace, establishing trust quickly is the key to success in B2B marketing. In fact, one might argue that whichever solution develops trust first, is likely to be the winner of any competitive marketing effort. Developing trust is thus the central core of any content marketing approach, thought leadership program, or the focus of our customer experiences.

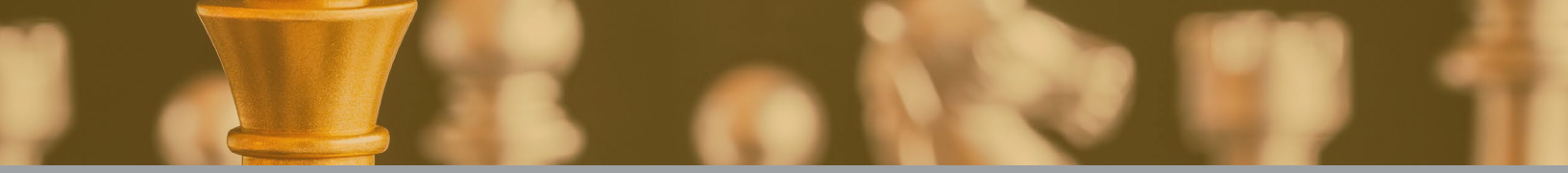
Truly successful marketing and sales organizations are winning the moments of trust earlier than their competitors, and then sustaining it through the entirety of the customer's journey. As famed author and marketing expert Don Peppers put it recently, *"When customers talk to each other about products, they don't talk about the spin, or the tagline, or the brand promise. They talk about their own customer experience."*ⁱⁱⁱ

That last part is a key point. It suggests that the earlier we create a differentiated customer experience that customers can talk about—the more likely we are to be discussed, and thus trusted, among buyers.

Research supports this idea as well. A full 68% of adults surveyed in the U.S. say that trust in a brand has a great deal (31%) or a lot (37%) of influence when they make a big purchase.^{iv} Additionally, interactive content—content that encourages a conversation within the experience—helps to create retention of complex ideas. According to our research at Content Marketing Institute (CMI), 73% of marketers agree that combining traditional and interactive content enhances retention of their organization's message.^v

Understanding Our Audience Is The Challenge Of Winning

It's no secret that one of the greatest challenges for today's fast-paced B2B digital marketer is where and how to use different kinds of content-driven experiences. For many businesses the website has been the digital marketing brochure. Social media is for high-level branding



and, now, targeted paid advertising. Email is used for blasts of information to groups of people in the hopes the marketer can nurture or slowly “drip” them into submission.

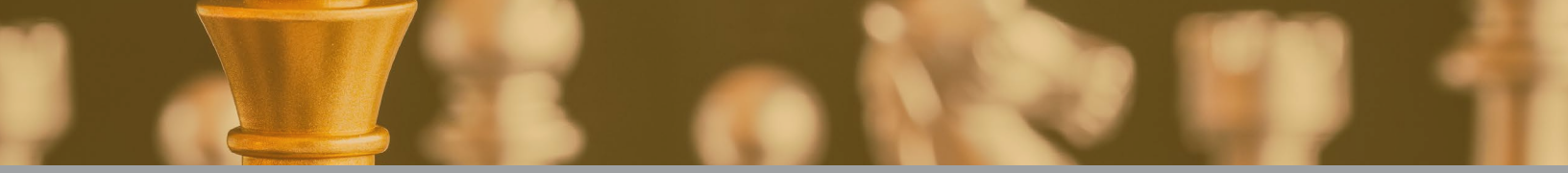
In short, we simply don’t understand the true needs of our audience at the various stages of their journey. And so, despite the development of so many data acquisition capabilities, most high-funnel B2B marketing efforts are still focused on broadcasting messages out to a large, heterogeneous audience. The marketer’s hope is that some of the recipients will respond and interact with their content and provide some level of personal contact data in exchange for it. This is the B2B marketer’s foundation as the beginning of the sales process.

But understanding our customer’s needs, and acquiring data, is only getting more complicated. In a world of GDPR and increasing privacy concerns, how do marketers continue to ask for that personal data, and deepen their understanding of audiences, while simultaneously developing more trustworthy digital experiences?

Webinars and online conferences continue to be one of the most foundational marketing approaches used by B2B marketers. According to CMI research, B2B marketers rate webinars among the top three most effective content types they use in the middle stage (consideration/intent) of the customer journey.^{vi} In addition, 42% of respondents to an Ascend2 survey indicated that, when presented with a list of seven types of online forms, *webinar registrations generate leads with the highest customer conversion rates (second only to content download forms at 57%)*.^{vii}

The challenge is that, like most other platforms, many B2B marketers continue to view webinars in a limited, broadcast only approach. For these businesses, webinars are simply “live versions” of a white paper, product demonstrations, or virtual panel discussions. Webinars are simply treated as a different form of gated asset.

But when we dig further into the success of webinars, we find that the marketers who are truly experiencing the most success, are expanding and innovating their use of webinars and online conferences into trusted, interactive content experiences. They are integrating multiple content formats, conversations, and interactivity in order to create data-rich customer experiences.



These marketers are using the opportunity to create online events that simultaneously deepen their understanding of audiences, and create trustworthy experiences from the very beginning.

Deepening our understanding of audiences is the starting point for making ALL of our marketing content more trustworthy.


So how can today's B2B marketers revisit the classic broadcast webinar format, and best align aspects of creating trust, with the best practices in creating interactive experiences with webinars?

Developing Cumulative Trust with Interactive Events

One of the common misconceptions about webinars are that they are seen as only a lead generation tactic. This means that whether it's a product demo, or a client story, or a cool thought leadership discussion, the webinar is only seen through the lens of "can it generate leads?" In fact, a 2014 CMI study found that marketers that had used and "given up" on webinars (which was, by the way, a small slice of the total sample) had only used them for the *"traditional applications (e.g., product demonstrations) and then stopped because of a reprioritization or budget challenge."*^{viii} In short, these marketers fit the format to the customer's journey instead of the other way around. As one frustrated marketer told us, "We only do webinars for lead generation."

On the contrary, those B2B marketers that were successful with webinars were *"setting webinar goals that stretched over every aspect of the customer's journey."*

On the contrary, those B2B marketers that were successful with webinars were *"setting webinar goals that stretched over every aspect of the customer's journey."* They were getting beyond content type and format at specific parts of the customer's journey—and stretching the idea of how "webinars" actually work.



This is a critical aspect of trust. Trust itself is a cumulative emotion. It is built and deepened over multiple experiences. It makes sense then that if marketers want to use webinars as interactive experiences that build trust, they should look to explore new ideas for webinars across all aspects of the customer's journey—and against the attributes of the elements of developing trust.

When it comes to modeling the attributes of human trust, there are quite a number of models available. But one that we have found particularly helpful for working with marketing content and communication are these four values:

1. **Recurring.** In a word this means consistency. In order to create cumulative trust, you need *new information*, combined with a sense of familiarity, *delivered consistently*. In short, after the delivery of the first experience, you must offer up and then deliver upon another experience to deepen trust.
2. **Personal.** This value implies that every interaction feels personal (not necessarily personalized), and uniquely tailored for their needs. This is critical in any kind of content marketing. We must bring a clear point of view to all of our content that feels not just relevant, but personal to the audience we are trying to engage.
3. **Positive.** Meaning that we deliver positive value every single time. Trust is one of the hardest things to create, and one of the easiest to break. If we look across the customer's journey, we must ensure that we are creating value with each experience.
4. **Risk-Appropriate.** As a general rule, the newer and stranger the experience, the lower the perceived risk must be. This is where we have the opportunity to measure how the speed of trust accelerates through great customer experiences. As we become more familiar—and trusted—by our audience, cumulative trust is deepened, and the perceived risk is decreased.

So, how then might marketers map these values of trust against a simple customer's journey and the best practices of more innovative and interactive webinar programs?

The answer is that we can look at each stage in the customer's journey, pressure test that against the four values of trust, and make choices about how to include various levels of interactivity into the actual experience.

Winning The Game Of Trust With Interactive Webinars

The Awareness Stage

THE CUSTOMER'S EXPERIENCE

Here, the content should focus on storytelling that creates a common bond with the audience that they can all relate to. It may be high-level education, but the experience here should appeal to the emotional aspects of the audience.

Four Trust Values to Pressure Test

- **Recurring** – Is this webinar just a one-off? Can we do this as a series or a curriculum?
- **Personal** – Can we capture personal pains, questions, or signals through the webinar registration process in order to tailor our discussion to exactly what the audience wants to hear?
- **Positive** – What point of view are we creating?
- **Risk Appropriate** – Are we asking for too much “buying” signal data? What data do we really need to simply be able to communicate with them? Consider adding in deeper questions about data collection as the “follow-on” or with a poll or survey.

IDEA

Testing your audience. Perhaps open up your webinars with a quiz or test to actually give a sense of equal (or unequal as the case may be) footing among your audience. Give them a sense that they are all in this together.

EXAMPLE

A startup technology company we worked with created a series of interactive webinars designed to create brand awareness. They brought in journalists and analysts to have a spirited discussion/debate about new trends in their particular industry. The technology company didn't even participate. They just hosted and facilitated the discussion. At the beginning, middle, and end, the company offered up interactive surveys to get the audience's thoughts on the trends they heard, and their willingness to participate in further research. The results were that they received hundreds of new registrants to their audience database and participants in their research.



The Consideration Stage

THE CUSTOMER'S EXPERIENCE

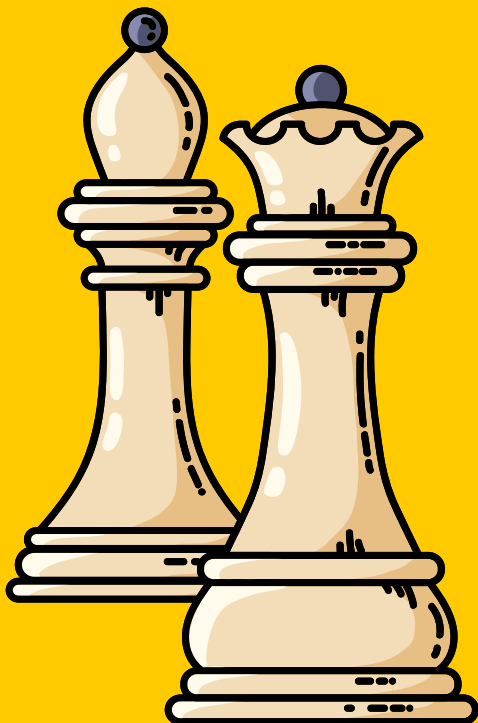
In B2B marketing, this experience is where the deeper dive into the implications of the changes our solution will solve. It should include valuable information about how a particular challenge is solved or approached.

Four Trust Values to Pressure Test

- **Recurring** – Do we have a mechanism built into this webinar to lead the audience to a deeper conversation? How will we make sure that every question that we capture is answered?
- **Personal** – Can we mix formats here? Can we deploy something the audience can look at as a download as they watch the webinar? Or, perhaps we should display a video the audience should watch as part of the registration process? Can we deploy surveys or polls to capture the audience's needs in real-time?
- **Positive** – Are we truly educating on an approach or change? Or, are we masking a pitch or sales material?
- **Risk Appropriate** – Can we include the use of real-time chat or interactive questions?

IDEA

The flipped webinar. Consider a live video format where the Q&A with subject matter experts is a live “webinar” but is based on a deeper dive on-demand webinar that the audience can watch prior to attending the live Q&A.



EXAMPLE

An accounting firm partnered with a well-known subject matter expert to do a series of video webinars going through step-by-step a very specific approach to new corporate tax approaches. Each step had a short on-demand component. Then, the company created a “live” ask-the-expert webinar. They optimized the discussion by the more popular segments that had been viewed. The result was a 40% return rate of registrants who attended both the segments as well as the live event, providing a much higher quality of lead to sales enablement.

The Decision Stage

THE CUSTOMER'S EXPERIENCE

It's at this stage of the customer's journey that we want to deliver a differentiation in the brand's approach to solving a particular challenge.

Four Trust Values to Pressure Test

- **Recurring** – We should ask which experiences have brought us to this point, and make sure that we are developing the correct next step. Have we demonstrated consistent value through the previous steps, that make this logical? Can we see the data that would tell us that?
- **Personal** – How can the audience see themselves in our solution? Do we have customer stories or testimonials that not only vouch for our product, but that closely align with the self-image of the target audience to this webinar?
- **Positive** – Does this deliver value, specifically in the implication of choosing this approach, rather than just give simple persuasive reasons why our product is so great?
- **Risk Appropriate** – Can we address through interactive conversation the objections this audience may have? Are we willing to see those objections during our presentation?

IDEA

Consider a group chat that happens live during a solution-oriented webinar, where there are subject matter experts embedded in the audience that can answer questions, respond to objections, and generally create a valuable experience.

EXAMPLE

A medical device company created a running, educational video series (or webinars) that interviewed existing doctors who had saved lives. Each video illustrated the “best practices” employed and what the implications were to their normal operation procedures.



The Loyalty/Evangelism Stage

THE CUSTOMER'S EXPERIENCE

It's at this stage where we must deliver audience value that goes beyond the product or service. It's not just about training on the product/service, but how to teach customers to be better customers.

Four Trust Values to Pressure Test

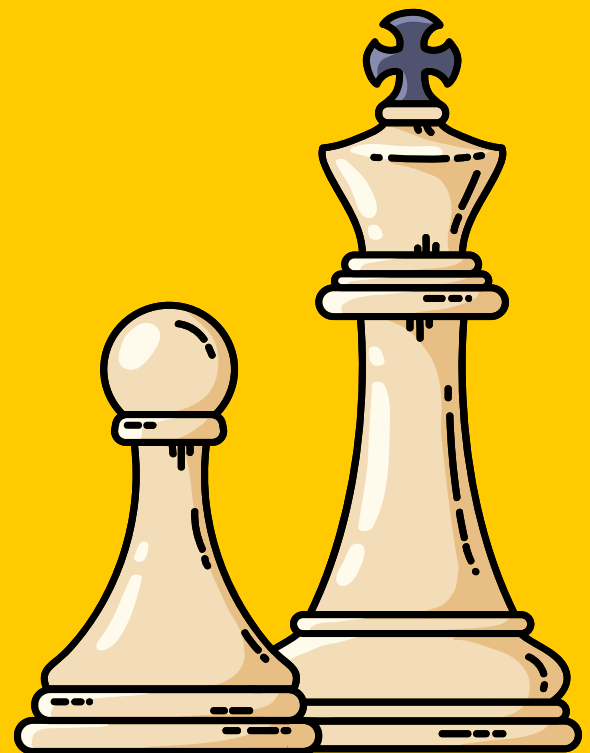
- **Recurring** – Can we create a series or multiple formats from this? How can we create an ongoing series of our customer event—where we teach our audience to be better customers?
- **Personal** – What are the things that this audience needs to know about advancing their use of our solution, but go beyond what our product may do currently?
- **Positive** – Beyond our product, what is the next thing a customer needs or wants to know to advance? What is the next value?
- **Risk Appropriate** – Can we acquire deeper levels of data here—from intent to desire to use of our product to identify our “super fans?”

IDEA

Look at doing a live webinar from a live event. Consider a video + interview format that feels more like a live experience.

EXAMPLE

A financial services company created a monthly webinar to educate clients on separate but related topics such as politics, the future of technology, art, and pop culture. The key to the editorial strategy for these webinars was that they were presented from events that their clients might have wanted to attend but couldn't.





Conclusion: Winning Is The Only Thing

Marketers now live in a world where the bar of trust in external media is low. We can compete with just about any media property in the world to be the trusted source of valuable information. This means that in every digital experience we create, we should not only focus on winning the audience's attention, but in deepening the trust gained (or regained) in every step that precedes or follows it.

Webinars that integrate multiple content types and interactive components and that stretch over the entirety of the customer's journey are an excellent vehicle for this. If we put these audiences at the center of our process, they will engage in a deepening conversation with our brand. It is then that the customers will see us not just as a new approach to solving a problem, but as a *trusted advisor* that can help them succeed.

Vince Lombardi once said "winning isn't everything; it's the only thing." When it comes to winning our customers' trust, winning is truly the only thing.

About GoToWebinar

GoToWebinar makes hosting online events a breeze, giving you the tools, analytics and integrations you need to engage new leads and close more sales. Learn more at GoToWebinar.com

End Notes

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