By Shelby Britton

The Content Marketer's GUIDE to WEBINARS

Adobe Connect
Webinars for Content Marketing

INTRODUCTION

Your choice to read this e-book indicates that you most likely have decided to start, or expand, a webinar program or improve your existing program. While starting or improving a program is exciting, it can also be a lot of work. I am passionate about this subject and I am glad you decided to take this journey with me.

In this book, I cover how to get started from a technical perspective, best practices and tips for engaging your audience, how to strategically structure your program to generate leads, the best way to squeeze the most leads out of webinars and more. If you are not starting from scratch but are looking for best practices, this book will help you, too. Feel free to skip the sections that do not apply to you or skip straight to a section you need right away. If you find a section boring (however unlikely that may be), move on. If you think a section would be better read later, come back to it. You know what you need, and I hope you find it here.

The fact that you are researching and doing your due diligence before you start your program tells me that you want to be successful and create your program carefully and thoughtfully. You will learn about pitfalls to avoid, ideas to get your creative juices flowing and best practices for every stage of webinar production. The fact that you are learning ahead of time will ensure that you set up everything correctly from the start and will save you time and headaches in the long run.

I hope you find that this guide eases the burden of starting from square one and gives you actionable takeaways no matter what your experience level. I can be found discussing webinar best practices on Twitter via my handle ***@shelbyadobe*** or on my blog at ***www.adobe.com/go/webinarblog***.

Please continue the conversation by connecting with me!

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WHY *Webinars?*

Webinars: One of Today's Three Most Effective Content Marketing Tactics

Some of the reasons webinars continue to grow in popularity as a marketing tool.

In the research report ***2013 B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends*** by the ***Content Marketing Institute (CMI)*** and ***MarketingProfs***, it was reported that 62% of marketers used webinars as a tactic to deliver B2B content marketing (up 59% from the previous year). Additionally, marketers rated webinars as the third most effective content marketing tactic of all (tied with videos).

LET US EXAMINE SOME REASONS WEBINARS ARE SO EFFECTIVE.

- **Immersion:** Webinars are the most immersive content experience available. No other tactic offers attendees the experience of interacting with the content so thoroughly for 30–60 minutes. In addition to a variety of interactivity options, attendees can ask the presenter questions live and participate in the conversation with peers—even more easily than in an in-person environment. The interactive nature of this content consumption makes it highly memorable and impactful.

- **Real-time content delivery:** Additional related resources such as files or web links are easily provided to webinar attendees on the fly during the webinar or baked into the delivery in advance. This gives marketers the added benefit of delivering the planned content as well as offering additional content to attendees in real-time to move them through the marketing funnel quicker. This content remains live during the recording as well (depending on your platform), which gives future viewers the same access to the content that was delivered in real-time.

- **Behavior scoring:** Like no other content marketing tactic available, webinars allow for in-depth and real-time behavior lead scoring. The rich and interactive experience of a webinar gives marketers a wealth of information about attendees that can be wrapped into a behavior or engagement score. See ***Eight Ways to Qualify Webinar Leads*** for more information on this.

- **Cost-effectiveness:** Webinars are cost-effective for both marketers and content consumers. They are less expensive than producing or attending a live event and offer a much wider reach due to their virtual nature. Additionally, the more webinars a marketer incorporates into their overall marketing strategy at various stages, the lower the cost per webinar. The recorded webinar content continues to exist for consumption after the webinar, further increasing its cost-effectiveness. For more on this subject, see ***The Snowball Effect: Repurposing Your Webinar Content***.

- **Convenience:** Webinars offer a convenient way to consume content presented by a live speaker. There is no travel and the content can be enjoyed via mobile devices from an office or any other location. Webinar recordings also allow the audience to re-watch a segment or catch up on something they missed.

Adding Webinars to Your B2B Content Marketing Mix

Deciding if—and how—to use webinars as part of your marketing strategy.

As discussed in the previous section, webinars are reported to be an effective content marketing tactic, but where do they fit in the overall B2B marketing mix? Well, it depends. Once you have decided that webinars belong in your mix for the rich and engaging experience they provide, you need to examine the content you will be delivering to determine each webinar's location in your customer engagement funnel.

THE FIRST QUESTION TO ANSWER IS, "WHY A WEBINAR?" A WEBINAR FITS INTO YOUR B2B MARKETING MIX IF:

- Interaction with your prospects is desirable and beneficial
- Building relationships is an important goal
- You want to make your content more memorable
- Providing content or adjusting content on the fly based on interest is advantageous
- Your product or service is complex and is best demonstrated or explained live
- Decision makers will benefit from receiving live answers and resources to resolve their questions
- You need to move a marketing event online and maintain a rich and engaging experience

If any of the above criteria are met, then we move on to where exactly webinars fit in the marketing funnel. To answer this, you need to turn to content. Webinars are a tactic, and in and of themselves do not determine where they belong in a marketing funnel. Once you decide that webinars as a tactic are a good fit for your mix, then you move on to content, purpose and goals.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING WEBINAR "FLAVORS" BASED ON CONTENT THEME:

- **Thought Leadership:** Establish thought leadership in your industry by inviting luminary experts to share their expertise with your target audience, or have your internal experts review case studies and share best practices. This is a great way to provide value to your target audience and begin building a relationship with potential buyers. In a recent study and the resulting report ***Webinars: They're Not Just for Leads Anymore*** by the Content Marketing Institute (CMI) and Adobe, thought leadership webinars at the top of the engagement funnel were found to be highly effective. Be sure to consider establishing a place for a thought leadership webinar series for contact acquisition, brand awareness and customer relationship building.
- **Educational:** If you have a new product or service (especially in a new product category), you may need to educate your target audience on how the new product solves a problem they may not even be aware exists.
- **Solution:** Generate awareness around one or more solutions that your product offers that your target audience is not yet aware of. Providing a solution overview of benefits specific to the pain points of a target group currently not using your product for that solution can expand current customer use of the product or open up new areas of growth.
- **Demonstrations:** Later in the buying cycle, a product or service demo may be beneficial, either to show the product or explain the benefits.
- **Training:** If new customers need training to be successful with your product or service, webinars are a nice way to deliver training in an interactive, cost-effective and convenient way to improve customer satisfaction and retention. If you have a trial program, you might consider supporting it with free training, because an unused trial is a wasted opportunity to convert a "tryer" into a buyer.

Webinar tip — HELPFUL HINTS by Shelby Britton

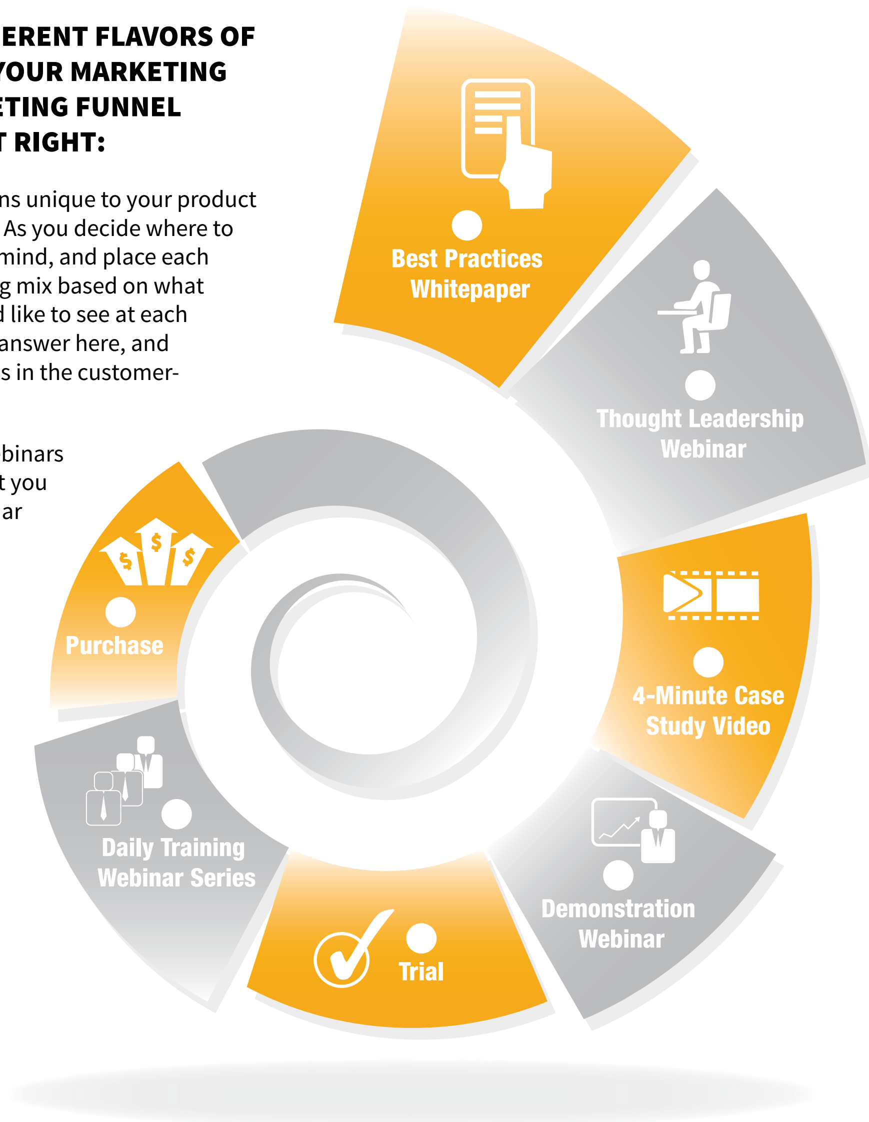
If you offer a trial program for your product or service, you might consider supporting it with free training, because an unused trial is a wasted opportunity to convert a "tryer" into a buyer.

Adding Webinars to Your B2B Content Marketing Mix (cont.)

YOU MAY EVEN HAVE SEVERAL DIFFERENT FLAVORS OF WEBINARS WOVEN THROUGHOUT YOUR MARKETING FUNNEL. IN THE END, YOUR MARKETING FUNNEL COULD LOOK LIKE THE EXAMPLE AT RIGHT:

You can probably think of other content options unique to your product or service that fit well with the webinar tactic. As you decide where to fit webinars into your funnel, keep content in mind, and place each type of webinar appropriately in the marketing mix based on what a typical buyer for your product/service would like to see at each stage of their buying cycle. There is no wrong answer here, and webinars can be an effective tactic at all stages in the customer-engagement cycle.

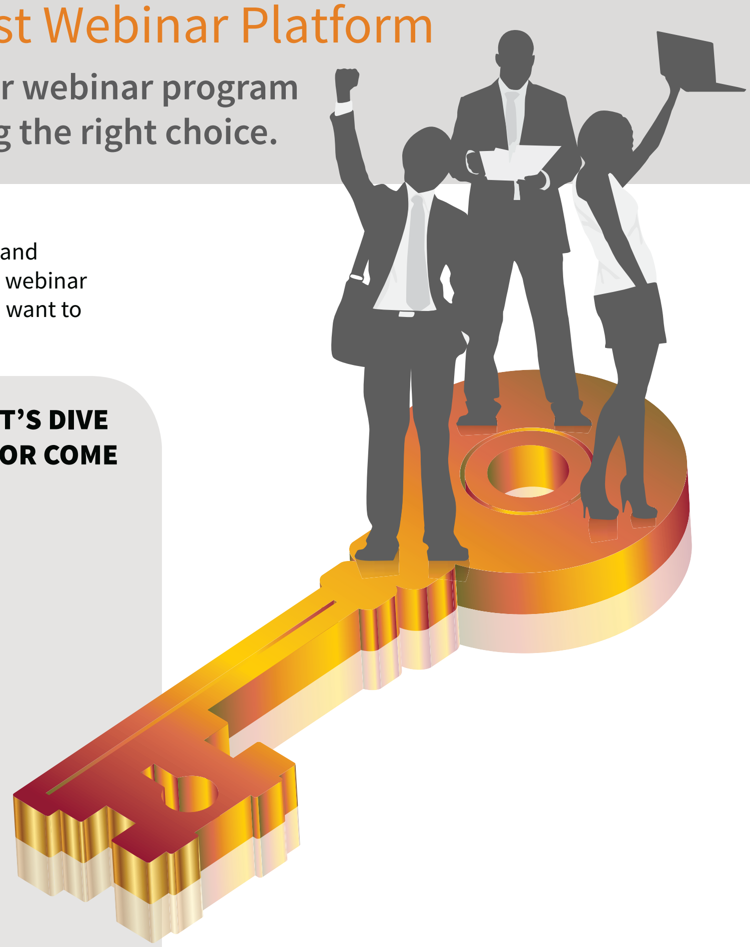
Warning: After you have established where webinars strategically fit in your overall mix, ensure that you work closely with sales to decide which webinar registrants are contact acquisitions and which ones are sales-ready leads. Building a partnership and trust with sales is key to developing quality leads and securing prompt sales follow-up. See more on this in *Don't Waste Time on One-Off Webinars—A Case Study*.



PRODUCING *a Successful Webinar* PROGRAM

How to Choose the Best Webinar Platform

Careful analysis of your webinar program goals is key to making the right choice.



Although it may seem tedious and boring to evaluate technology solutions and compare the options, choosing an appropriate platform for your marketing webinar program is critical to your program's success. To begin your search, you will want to make sure you have a clear idea of your program goals.

SO GRAB A CUP OF COFFEE AND, WHEN YOU'RE READY, LET'S DIVE INTO THE CONSIDERATIONS YOU SHOULD KEEP IN MIND (OR COME BACK TO THIS SECTION LATER):

- How many events do you plan to produce?
- What level of attendance do you expect?
- What is the goal for each event?
- Are you planning a series of repeat events?
- Is interaction—and, therefore, memorability—a significant factor?
- Do you want to accelerate the sales cycle?
- Is mobile reach important?
- Are recording and on-demand capabilities key to your program goals?
- How critical is branding and customizability?

Choosing a webinar technology vendor you can rely on is extremely important for meeting your long-term program goals. The smaller, less expensive players in the web-conferencing market are continually in flux—new ones emerge only to disappear within a year. This will force you to start over with a new vendor. For a list of top web-conferencing vendors, the ***Gartner Magic Quadrant*** report or ***The Forrester Wave*** report are good resources, because these research organizations have been tracking the webinar and web-conferencing space for years.

How to Choose the Best Webinar Platform (cont.)

ONCE YOU HAVE A CLEAR IDEA OF YOUR PROGRAM GOALS, HERE ARE SOME FACTORS TO CONSIDER AS YOU SEARCH FOR AN APPROPRIATE VENDOR.

1 *BASIC FUNCTIONALITY*

Number of hosts/speakers required: You will want to think about how many webinar production hosts you will need on your account and how many presenters/hosts/moderators you may need during each webinar. Having the ability to give host and speaking rights to multiple people at once during an event will make your event run more smoothly. Some platforms allow for multiple people to have host/speaker rights simultaneously and some only allow for one at a time, which requires time and coordination during a live event to pass around rights. In addition, many platforms charge for webinars based on number of hosts. If you expect to require a large number of hosts throughout your organization, it may make sense to choose a platform that allows an unlimited number of hosts.

Capacity: How many attendees do you plan to have? Webinar platforms are typically sold by webinar room capacity—the larger the capacity, the more expensive the room. Keep in mind that on average only 30–40% of registrants for non-paid webinars will attend.

Interactive functionality: Webinar platforms vary widely in the number of features they offer. If interactivity and, therefore, memorability is important to you, ensure that you are choosing the platform that provides the most options for flexibility and creativity.

Mobile access: Mobile access is becoming more and more important. Choose a webinar platform that will give you the broadest reach across all devices (both Apple iOS and Android) and understand what the attendee experience will be on each of those devices.

Audio options: Understand whether the webinar platform will support your audio requirements. Some platforms include unlimited free VoIP and/or teleconferencing, while others charge a fee for one or both.

Free and advanced training availability: Look into whether the vendor provides free training or resources to help you get up and running. If you desire more advanced training, you will want to check into the options and costs for this service as well.

Price: Pricing can be complicated, and comparing potential vendors' prices can be even more complicated if they use different pricing models. The two most common models are a **Named Host** model and a **Seminar Room** model.

If you plan to have a large number of hosts, you may find the Seminar Room model a better way to go, because it allows for an unlimited number of hosts across the organization to use the license (you are simply restricted to holding one webinar at a time on each Seminar Room license). On the other hand, if you plan to have only one host or a few, the Named Host model may be the way to go. Some vendors also offer a pay-per-event model or a monthly webinar room option that may be attractive if you plan to hold only a couple of webinars a year. Regardless, functionality should be your main focus—most vendors will work with you on pricing, especially for volume purchases, regardless of their pricing model.

You will also want to take into account whether a vendor is going to charge you for VoIP or other audio services, which can significantly increase your overall cost. And remember: The larger the room, the bigger the price tag, so you will want to have an accurate estimate of attendees. You can always increase your room size if you find your webinar program is more popular than you anticipated.

Webinar tip — HELPFUL HINTS by Shelby Britton

When estimating your webinar room capacity needs, keep in mind that, on average, only 30–40% of registrants for non-paid webinars will actually attend.

See the Appendix at the end of this book for a handy checklist to use in evaluating webinar platforms.

How to Choose the Best Webinar Platform (cont.)

ONCE YOU HAVE A CLEAR IDEA OF YOUR PROGRAM GOALS, HERE ARE SOME FACTORS TO CONSIDER AS YOU SEARCH FOR AN APPROPRIATE VENDOR. (cont.)

2 *SPECIFIC NEEDS AND CUSTOMIZATION*

Persistence: Consider the convenience and time savings of content persistence. How much easier will your life be if the content you upload to a webinar room, or your overall room design and layout, remain as you left them indefinitely? This is a critical time saver for rehearsals and for repeating events.

Content library and uploaded content: A content library, either shared or for each individual, from which you can easily access content to bring into your webinar room(s), either in preparation for an event or on the fly during an event, can provide consistency to the overall program and save time, especially when you have a team of people working on the webinar program.

Recording, including editing and view tracking: Recording your webinar is extremely important for both attendees and non-attendees. There are three things to consider regarding this feature. First, look for strong editing capabilities, which will enhance the polish of the final recorded product. Second, ensure that you are able to track viewership of recordings. And finally, look for output formats that include MP4 to ensure that the recording is accessible via mobile devices. As an added bonus, look for platforms that provide recordings that keep some of the interactive functionality, such as polls, web links and file downloads, live within the recording.

Video streaming: If you plan to stream video or webcams during your webinar, look for platforms that stream well and do not limit the view of live streaming to a small number of attendees. You will also want to fully understand the webcam rights and advanced functionality.

Registration functionality: If you plan to use the webinar platform for your registration microsites, carefully research whether the platform will support all your registration requirements, such as custom fields, brand-ability, capacity caps, automated and custom e-mail confirmations and reminders, approvals and any other requirements you have.

Branding and customizability: Providing a custom look and feel via your webinar program so that it seamlessly reflects your brand is important, so choose a platform that allows the most customizability for both the registration landing pages as well as the in-webinar experience.

Presenter-only area functionality: Does the webinar platform provide an area for presenters, speakers and hosts to communicate and prepare out of view of attendees? Explore the functionality available in this area.

3 *TRACKING/SCORING/REPORTING*

Campaign tracking: Do you want to track the source of your registrants? If so, ensure that the vendor easily enables you to promote and track campaign sources.

Engagement tracking: The ability to measure overall engagement is critical to improving the quality of presentations, and measuring individual engagement enables you to prioritize leads for sales. Look into the engagement measurement and tracking of each platform, and make sure you understand how each platform measures engagement.

Lead scoring: Most platforms provide some sort of lead-scoring options based on demographics collected during registration and attendance. Look into the robustness of this functionality if it is important to you.

Attendee behavior tracking: Tracking and/or scoring leads based on behavior during a webinar, beyond who attended or did not, is a huge value to provide your sales team for increased lead conversion. Look for platforms that help you track and score on behavior beyond simple demographics. This can include information such as files downloaded, poll answers, questions asked and more.

Marketing automation and CRM systems integration: As a marketer, you will want to make your life easier by looking for a webinar platform that allows integration with your marketing automation or customer relationship management (CRM) systems for passing leads to sales and/or scoring leads.

See the Appendix at the end of this book for a handy checklist to use in evaluating webinar platforms.

First-Time Webinar Set Up

A step-by-step guide for the beginner.

Launching a webinar program from scratch is a large project—one that typically starts with choosing a webinar platform. Once you have selected the webinar technology platform that is best suited to meet your needs and have logged in for the first time, what next?

Setting up your webinar account and delivery room is a key component of the program that requires careful planning and execution for ultimate success.

HERE ARE A FEW SET-UP CONSIDERATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING YOUR PROGRAM OFF TO A GREAT START:

- **Registration:** Your registration microsite is the first point of interaction with your target audience in the webinar workflow, so setting it up is one of the tasks you will want to complete first. Consider the number and type of questions you will require—if the webinar is at the top of your marketing funnel, perhaps you will want to ask fewer questions than you might if the webinar is farther down the marketing funnel. You will want to spend some time designing and branding the entire experience from the landing page to the confirmation and reminder e-mails, ensuring that the look and feel of the registration experience is aligned with your corporate image and the specific webinar imagery.

{ Your registration microsite is the first point of interaction with your target audience. }

- When crafting your confirmation and reminder e-mails, be as concise and clear as possible about how to attend your event on the day of, and if you can, include a Microsoft Outlook calendar meeting. For your reminder e-mails, a best practice is to schedule two: one to be sent the day before and one the hour before your event.

- Before you create and publish your registration microsite, consider whether you will want to use a password/profile model that allows registrants to register for future events simply by using their login rather than filling out all the registration fields again. If your webinar program is geared to repeat users, using a password to store their profile is a great option. On the other hand, if your webinar program consistently attracts new users, they may find the password requirement annoying, which could lead to registration attrition.

- **Audio options:** There are three ways to provide audio during a webinar: 1) VoIP (Voice over IP) only (through the computer speakers); 2) teleconferencing (phone) only; or 3) simulcast (deliver audio via both VoIP and teleconferencing). Your choice will depend on your audience's preference, your webinar platform and your budget. Some webinar platforms include free VoIP or teleconferencing, others charge a fee for one or both, and some integrate with audio providers. Ensure and test that you have set up your audio broadcast choice correctly and fully understand how to implement and deploy it during the live event. See *Can You Hear Me Now? Understanding Audio Options* for a more in-depth discussion on this topic.

- **Room access settings:** Depending on the type of webinar, you will want to set the room access a particular way. For public marketing webinars, the typical set up allows the broadest access—so allowing anyone with the URL to enter the room is the norm. You can also choose options that include requiring a password or limiting attendees to registrants only.

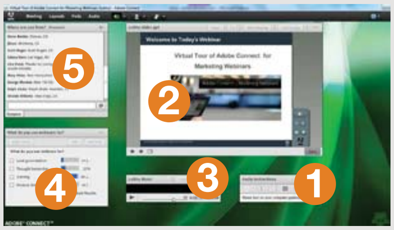
Webinar tip — HELPFUL HINTS by Shelby Britton

For your event reminder e-mails, a best practice is to schedule two: one to be sent the day before and one the hour before your event begins.

First-Time Webinar Set Up (cont.)

HERE ARE A FEW SET-UP CONSIDERATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING YOUR PROGRAM OFF TO A GREAT START:

- **Key stakeholder access:** As you work to set up your webinar account, you will want to ensure that you add your moderators, hosts and presenters to your account as users. After they have been made users on your account with the appropriate rights as you deem fit, you will want to ensure that they receive the webinar room information and are able to access the room prior to the event without issue.



- **Webinar room design:** There are many best practices for good webinar room design and many ways to design your room if your webinar platform allows for custom design. Let us assume that your webinar platform includes custom design options. Starting with the presenter-only, or backstage area, some common elements to include here are a presenter chat for private communication, notes for FAQs and resources, the attendee list to keep attendance private (if desired) and the Q&A moderation panel in order to organize and answer questions.

- In the attendee area, you will typically want a note with instructions on how to join the audio 1, the main slide presentation 2, Q&A for submitting questions and perhaps a headshot of your speaker. From this basic design, you can get creative by adding music 3, video, polls 4, open chat 5 or other elements as you see fit (your options may be numerous or limited depending on the platform you have selected). You may also want to create a lobby for early arrivers as they wait for the event to begin. For ideas on how to create a lobby, see ***Hello… Is Anyone There? Tips for Entertaining the Early Bird***.

- **Presentation flow:** Determining the flow of the event, as well as who does what and when, will be key to a smooth event and can impact room design. If multiple layout functionality is included with your platform, you can use this feature to organize your agenda so you can easily flow through activities on the day of the webinar.

- For instance, let us assume you plan to have an introduction, then the first 15 minutes of your main presentation, a poll, the rest of the main presentation and then a Q&A session. In this case, you can create a layout for each of these segments of your webinar, so that you can quickly and easily click through each layout as you move through your agenda.

- Keep this in mind when you design your room, and develop as many layouts as you have transitions. Creating a layout for each segment saves time and smooths the transition from one activity to the next. In the example where you are conducting a poll in the middle of your main presentation, you would simply click on the layout you developed for the poll, and it would be ready for use. If layouts are not accessible to you within your webinar platform, make sure that you practice moving from one activity to the next according to your agenda so that these transitions happen smoothly and quickly during the live event.

{ Creating a layout for each segment saves time and smooths the transition }

Eight Registration Dos and Don'ts

IF YOU WANT TO ELEVATE YOUR WEBINAR REGISTRATION AND ATTENDANCE CONVERSION RATES, HELPING TO PRESERVE YOUR PROMOTION AND CAMPAIGN INVESTMENTS—AND OF COURSE, YOU DO—FOLLOW THESE BEST PRACTICES FOR WEBINAR REGISTRATION.

1 *REGISTRATION LANDING PAGE*

Do use the event details page as your landing pad, especially if people are touching down on your registration site from a brief e-mail or a banner ad. This event detail page is your chance to expand on the topic and specific value prospective registrants can plan to take away. If potential registrants are coming to your registration microsite well informed from a very detailed webpage, pushing them right to the registration form makes sense.

2 *IMAGERY*

Do design your registration microsite to match your promotional campaign. As prospective registrants exit your excellent promotions (e-mail, banner ad or otherwise) and land on your matching registration site, the imagery will reassure that they are in the right place and have not inadvertently landed on an unfamiliar site.

3 *REGISTRATION FORM FIELDS*

Do not create a massive registration form—too many fields to fill out can be a turn off for potential registrants. **Do** try to limit the fields to only the information you truly need. Consider collecting more information at later stages in the experience, such as during the webinar itself by using a poll or in a post-webinar survey. If you use progressive profiling, use the webinar registration as just one opportunity in this process. **Do** limit the length of any dropdown menus—if they are too long and burdensome, the likelihood of accurate information will decrease. **Do** use testing to determine the exact number of fields appropriate for your program. In our own program, we gained a 3% lift in registration conversion (from landing on the microsite to completing registration) when we decreased our registration form by seven fields (our dropdowns were already limited).

4 *PASSWORDS*

Do not use passwords for large public marketing webinars—if it's public, it's not top secret. Unnecessary barriers are your enemy, making registration and attendance burdensome and lowering conversion rates for both. **Do** consider one exception: If your program has a large proportion of repeat registrants, a persistent profile accessed with a password may benefit your potential registrants by saving them time.

5 *CONFIRMATION LANDING PAGE*

Do boost your attendance rate by spending the time and brainpower to create a well thought-out confirmation landing page for registrants who submit registration. **Do** include all event time/day details (including the time zone) as well as how to join on the day of the event. Ideally, include a link to an Outlook calendar invitation on this page. If appropriate, it may be helpful to include a way for registrants to test their computer for compatibility with the webinar platform, including a way to download any necessary add-ins. Putting all the information on this landing page mitigates damage caused when confirmation e-mails get snagged by dreaded spam filters.

6 *CONFIRMATION E-MAILS*

Do apply the above recommendations to confirmation e-mails, including, and most importantly, an Outlook calendar invitation. **Do** use a subject line that clearly identifies the e-mail – go with obvious over creative, such as *Webinar Registration Confirmation: Webinar Title*. Ensure that your "From" name is also easily identifiable by using your company name. **Do not** use such "From" names as *Admin, Webinar Registration* or something equally generic and unidentifiable. In our own program, we use *Adobe Webinars* as the "From" name. **Do not** use the name of the webinar organizer unless that person is very well known to your audience. Half the battle is getting registrants to open the confirmation e-mail. Trust me—you want that Outlook calendar invitation on their calendar to block their time and remind them to attend. **Do** use a do-not-reply e-mail address for the "Reply-To" e-mail address for both the confirmation e-mail as well as the Outlook invitation to avoid littering the webinar organizer's inbox (unless providing a personalized experience is a goal—usually for smaller events).

Eight Registration Dos and Don'ts (cont.)

IF YOU WANT TO ELEVATE YOUR WEBINAR REGISTRATION AND ATTENDANCE CONVERSION RATES, HELPING TO PRESERVE YOUR PROMOTION AND CAMPAIGN INVESTMENTS—AND OF COURSE, YOU DO—FOLLOW THESE BEST PRACTICES FOR WEBINAR REGISTRATION (cont.).

7 *REMINDER E-MAILS*

Do include the same information and follow the guidelines recommended above in your reminder e-mails, although an Outlook invitation is not necessary at this point. **Do** send at least two reminder e-mails—the first 24 hours before the live event and the second one hour before the event. Some program managers even send a reminder five minutes before the event. Reminder e-mails will back up your other efforts to help increase attendance. Using this method and the above techniques, we typically get 36% attendance rate, which is fairly close to the industry average high of 40% (range is 30–40%). **Do** test and compare your registration conversion and attendance rates to determine what works for your program.

8 *WAIT LISTS*

Do ensure you have set up registration properly if you have limited capacity, so the resulting communications (e-mail or landing pages) clearly spell out what to expect for registrants who receive a rejection from a full event. **Do** plan out how you will handle the overflow. Will hopeful registrants automatically be added to a wait list, and how will they be notified once they have been promoted off the wait list? Or, are they just out of luck? Will you offer more sessions and, if so, when? Will you send the wait-listers a recording of the webinar? While not making the cut may be frustrating for would-be attendees, your clear communication will help ease the rejection. An overly full event is certainly not the worst problem, but your communication, or lack thereof, will leave a lasting impression, so make it a good one.

May all your registration and attendance conversion rates go up and to the right!

Can You Hear Me Now? Understanding Audio Options

Audio communication is a critical piece of the webinar puzzle. When deciding how to best communicate with your webinar audience, there are several factors to consider, which we'll review in detail in this section. If you already have your audio figured out because you're an overachiever, feel free to move on to another section!

As discussed previously, you have three options for providing audio during a webinar: 1) VoIP (Voice over IP) only (through the computer speakers); 2) teleconferencing (phone) only; or 3) simulcast (deliver audio via both VoIP and teleconferencing). Your choice will depend on your audience's preference, your webinar platform and your budget. Some webinar platforms include VoIP or teleconferencing for free while others charge a fee for one or both, and some integrate with audio providers.

Webinar tip

HELPFUL HINTS

by Shelby Britton

Test your audio broadcast deployment several times until you're comfortable.

LET'S LOOK AT ALL THREE OPTIONS IN MORE DETAIL.

1 VOIP ONLY

Pros: If your webinar platform includes this for free—woo hoo! This is your most budget-friendly option. VoIP is fairly simple to use and facilitates the one-to-many communication format that is most common in webinars. The advantage of having the audio automatically captured with the recording adds to the ease of use.

Drawbacks: Attendees may not have computer speakers (a less common problem today than a couple years ago), attendees may not have a headset for their computer (especially a problem for attendees in a cube farm) and bandwidth on the attendee side may be low (which you cannot control). Other drawbacks that may apply to your webinar include the lack of ability for speakers and moderators to chat amongst themselves prior to the event start time and the difficulty in allowing attendee participation via audio if they do not have the right set up on their end (this would mainly apply to smaller events).

2 TELECONFERENCING ONLY

Pros: The benefit of this option is that it's a tried-and-true technology that provides good and consistent quality of audio (it's tough to knock a technology that has been around since 1876!). Using the audio provider's prompts, speakers and moderators can also easily hold a pre-conference so early attendees cannot hear final preparations taking place. If you want attendee participation via audio, this is accomplished quite easily (I recommend allowing attendee participation on the phone only for small events).

Drawbacks: Some webinar platforms provide teleconferencing, but otherwise, this would be a separate service and could significantly increase your overall webinar production budget, especially with an international audience. In addition, many webinar attendees today expect to have a VoIP option. Knowing how to set up the conference call, including muting participants, will be important—typically an operator is desired to help with managing details like this on large calls. If you are recording the webinar, the audio will need to be captured separately and added to the webinar recording in post-production.

3 SIMULCAST

Pros: Simulcasting both VoIP and a teleconference offers the most flexibility to webinar attendees. It allows attendees to choose the option that is best for them and also allows presenters and moderators to have a private pre-conference via phone. To accomplish a simulcast, you can use Universal Voice, which allows the integration of virtually any audio provider with the webinar platform. Some webinar platforms that offer a teleconferencing option will naturally accomplish a simulcast. Another, albeit clunky, way to accomplish this is to have each presenter use both a phone headset and a computer headset and speak into both (the downside is that you will need to manage each broadcast separately). Finally, you can use hardware to accomplish the integration (an example of this device would be the THAT-2 from JK Audio). Simulcasting easily and automatically records the audio with the webinar so that the recording is available immediately without any post-production work.

Drawbacks: If you are concerned about simulcasting due to the cost of the teleconference, a nice option is to simulcast but only provide the call-in number to those attendees that are having trouble with the VoIP or request a call-in number. You could also require that international attendees listen via VoIP to save on the teleconference portion.

Once you have made a choice, ensure and test, and test again, that you have set up your audio broadcast choice correctly and fully understand how to implement and deploy it during the live event.

Virtual Event Vitals: Rehearsals and Site Inspections

For best results, treat your online event with as much care as you would a physical, in-person event.

There is no such thing as an instant webinar.

In this age of instant gratification and technology, many webinar producers make the mistake of assuming their webinar technology platform will read their mind, set itself up according to their requirements and instantly produce a flawless event to a virtual audience of hundreds or thousands.

This is an ill-fated assumption.

A mission-critical event with a large audience should never be left to chance—or to the last minute. The producer of a live, in-person event will visit the physical event venue for a site inspection in advance of the event and then show up early to the event to make sure everything is correctly set up according to specifications before the event begins.

The same should be true for a virtual event.

At a minimum, a virtual event producer should spend time in the virtual room setting it up ahead of time, hold a rehearsal with all speakers, moderators and hosts, and, finally, build in a 30-minute pre-conference for speakers and hosts immediately prior to the event.

Take some time to avoid virtual event disasters.

EIGHT REASONS TO PREPARE, SITE INSPECT AND REHEARSE YOUR VIRTUAL EVENT

1 TEST AUDIO BROADCAST

As we have discussed, many audio options exist for webinars. You will want to test your audio broadcast several days or more prior to the event, and then again on the day of the event. Ensure that you fully understand how to broadcast your audio option of choice and how to manage all the features and functionality of that audio broadcast. For instance, make sure you understand how to mute participants on the phone or put your presenters into and out of a sub-conference prior to the event start time.

2 CHECK THE PRESENTER(S)' AUDIO QUALITY

There are many things that can reduce audio quality. Be sure that presenters use the exact same equipment during rehearsal that they will use during the live event—this includes the computer and the actual phone or headset. Wireless is not recommended for either computer or phone, and, of course, using a speakerphone should definitely be avoided. No matter how experienced your presenter is, stick to your guns and insist on a test.

3 ENSURE THAT THE PRESENTER UNDERSTANDS HOW TO USE THE PLATFORM

If your presenter is new to the particular webinar platform technology you are using, take the time to give him a tutorial, even if he is experienced at webinars in general. Just as it is always awkward to drive a new car for the first time, it can be equally difficult to find all the right buttons to push in an unfamiliar webinar room.

4 UPLOAD AND FLIP THROUGH ALL SLIDES

Uploading slides 15 minutes prior to your event is very risky—particularly if your slide deck is a big file that may take longer to upload. Take the time to upload the slide deck during rehearsal, and flip through the entire deck to check for any misaligned text or images. Make any necessary changes to the deck, re-upload it before the pre-conference and re-check it.

Webinar tip — HELPFUL HINTS by Shelby Britton

To help ensure a smooth webinar, hold a 30-minute pre-conference for speakers and hosts immediately prior to the event.

Virtual Event Vitals: Rehearsals and Site Inspections (cont.)

EIGHT REASONS TO PREPARE, SITE INSPECT AND REHEARSE YOUR VIRTUAL EVENT (cont.)

5 *CONFIRM THAT ALL PARTIES KNOW HOW TO GET TO YOUR EVENT*

The rehearsal will give all your presenters, hosts and moderators a chance to find the webinar location—in other words, locate their login information, practice logging in, download the presenter add-in and overcome any other technical issues related to browsers or operating systems. The last thing you need on the day of the event is a missing presenter!

6 *REVIEW THE FLOW OF THE EVENT AND ROOM SET UP*

Ahead of time, be sure to prepare any polls, chats, quizzes or multiple slide decks you will be using. If your webinar platform offers multiple-layout functionality, arrange the layouts in the order of your agenda. This will ensure a smooth flow and eliminate the need to fish for polls during the live event.

7 *PREP YOUR BACKSTAGE AREA AND FAMILIARIZE ALL HOSTS, PRESENTERS AND MODERATORS WITH IT*

Your presenter-only area (if your platform has one) is your private backstage area for hosts and presenters. This is a great place for the attendee list, a presenter chat (so you can coordinate amongst yourselves without interrupting the event flow), Q&A moderation and any notes or reminders you might have for your presenters or moderators. Remind your presenters to keep an eye on the backstage in case you need to communicate with them while they are presenting.

8 *HAVE AN EMERGENCY PLAN AND COMMUNICATE IT TO ALL HOSTS, PRESENTERS AND MODERATORS*

Even the best-planned virtual events are subject to things going wrong, just like physical events. Think through what you will do if:

- Your audio-conferencing provider experiences an outage
- Your presenter's computer crashes
- Your presenter accidentally hangs up on herself
- You lose your Internet connection

These things can and do happen on occasion, and you should be prepared to deal with them, should they happen to you. For more detailed advice on preparing for unexpected emergencies, see ***SOS… My Webinar is Imploding! Creating an Emergency Plan***. You cannot always prevent an emergency from arising, but with planning, you can prevent it from becoming a webinar disaster.

How Webinar Features Differ from Small Online Meetings

Prevent bandwidth overload and content-delivery issues by resisting the temptation to use every bell and whistle available.

A warning bell should be going off in your head right now at the thought of using every bell and whistle your webinar platform offers during a webinar. Unfortunately, many webinar presenters and producers treat a large webinar with hundreds of attendees like a small, internal company meeting. In some ways, you cannot blame them, really. A technology platform that offers all kinds of cool features naturally tempts you to want to use them all, and sometimes all at once—in the same way that sundae bars tempt you to pile every delicious topping available at the condiment counter on top of your ice cream. Yielding to such temptations can have dire consequences for your webinar or your digestive system.

While you can get away with cool and very appropriate features like multiple live streaming webcams and screen sharing for your team meeting of 10 staffers, the 500 attendees at your webinar are not likely to have the same pleasant experience.

Webinar tip

HELPFUL HINTS

by Shelby Britton

Streaming webcams are bandwidth hogs. Save yourself bandwidth and headaches by simply displaying a jpg picture of your presenter instead.

SIX TIPS FOR HOLDING AN ENGAGING AND INTERACTIVE WEBINAR WITHOUT OVER-EXTENDING BANDWIDTH AND FRUSTRATING YOUR ATTENDEES

1 *TRADE IN THE LIVE WEBCAM FOR A NICE HEADSHOT OF YOUR SPEAKER*

Streaming webcams are bandwidth hogs. In addition, many presenters are camera shy or do not know how to "perform" for the camera—they may tend to look down at their notes the majority of the time instead of into the camera or they may like to move around the room constantly, neither of which translates well on camera. Save yourself bandwidth and headaches by simply displaying a jpg picture of your speaker instead.

2 *UPLOAD YOUR POWERPOINT OR PDF SLIDE DECK INTO THE ROOM INSTEAD OF SCREEN SHARING*

Uploading your PPT or PDF slide deck into the room (if your platform allows) will reduce bandwidth stress and ensure that everyone is on the same page, avoiding the delays that often occur for some attendees when the presenter uses screen sharing.

3 *CONSIDER USING Q&A INSTEAD OF OPEN CHAT*

Using moderated Q&A reduces the volume of chat and, therefore, bandwidth strain. In addition, open chat in large webinars can distract from your content both visually (with hundreds of chats flying by on the screen) and mentally (occupying audience mindshare). Even worse, in an open-chat environment, the audience will occasionally hijack your event and start having their own conversations with one another. Open chat is, however, a great interactive tool for gathering feedback, brainstorming or asking an open-ended question. For these purposes, it is recommended that you bring the open chat into the participant area at the appropriate time, use it to cover the Q&A until the exercise is over and then take open chat away.

4 *DISABLE RAISE-HANDS OPTION*

If this feature is available with your platform, unless you have a very specific reason for using it during your webinar, you should disable it for the duration of your event. It tends to be distracting and can unnecessarily use up precious bandwidth.

5 *CLOSE POLLS WHEN YOU ARE DONE*

Polling is a great interactive feature that is perfect for a webinar setting. To ensure your polls do not continue eating up bandwidth unnecessarily, be sure to close the poll when you are done collecting answers.

6 *HIDE OR MOVE THE ATTENDEE LIST INTO THE PRESENTER-ONLY AREA*

Using the backstage, presenter-only area for the attendee list not only keeps the attendee list private while allowing hosts and presenters to view and manage it, but also conserves bandwidth and CPU load.

As you prepare for your webinar, keep your audience size in mind and come up with creative ways to engage your audience in a bandwidth-neutral way.

Backstage at the Webinar

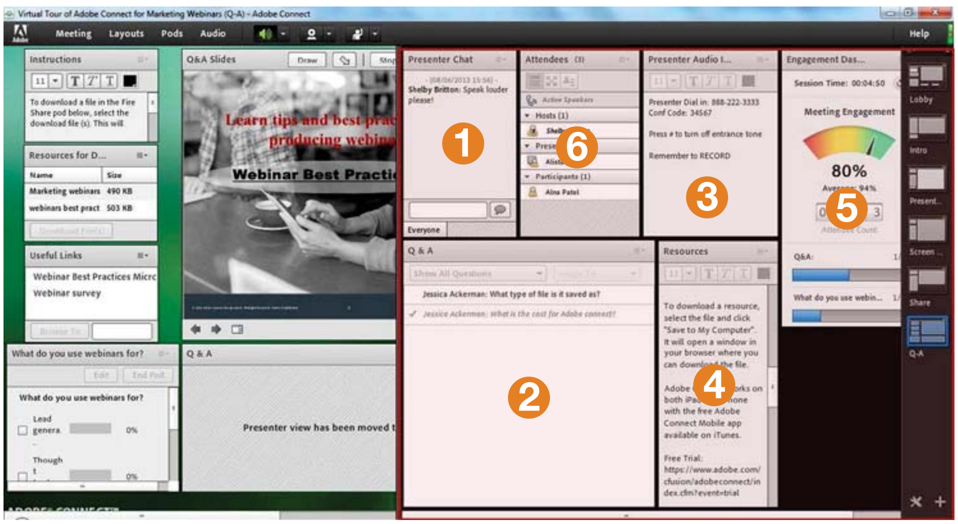
Make good use of the presenter-only area to deliver a seamless and professional webinar.

Performances are given on stages, and every stage has a backstage. That backstage is critical to the success of the live, on-stage production. Your webinar productions are no different.

From the backstage, technical issues are handled, content is readied, stagehands seamlessly work through scenes changes, cast members prepare to enter the stage and audience interactions are moderated.

Without this behind-the-scenes area, the production can seem disjointed, and the audience will be distracted from the main action.

Consider these uses of your backstage, or presenter-only area, to keep attention focused on the star performer—your presenter!



Webinar tip

HELPFUL HINTS

by Shelby Britton

Assign a member of your team to serve as a "stagehand," ensuring that polls, video or other content is ready to bring on "stage" when needed.

- **"Stagehands":** Assign a member of your team to ensure polls, video or other content is ready to bring on "stage" as needed. This person can also be in charge of moving through layouts or assisting the presenter with any needs as they arise. You might also designate another team member to answer technical questions from the audience or lead the resolution of any technical issues.
- **Backstage communication:** Use the private presenter chat placed in the presenter-only area to communicate behind the scenes with the presenter or other team members silently, so as not to distract the audience. 1
- **Audience interaction:** Use the backstage to conveniently organize and moderate questions coming in through the Q&A. 2
- **Call boards:** Post notes to share instructions or reminders for speakers and "stagehands"—like instructions for dialing into the audio. You can also use notes to store commonly used answers, resources or hyperlinks to use when answering FAQs. This is especially useful for recurring sessions in which speakers or moderators may rotate. 3
- **Scene changes:** The presenter-only area should be used to prepare for interactive activities, like polls. Use this private area to prepare for the next move through your event agenda for seamless scene changes. 4
- **Engagement:** Use an engagement dashboard in your presenter-only area to monitor audience engagement in real-time to gauge their attention level. 5
- **Attendance:** Track audience attendance in private by placing the attendee list in the presenter-only area, where you can easily track and manage audience attendance, status and rights. 6

Defining the Difference: Your Audience's Virtual Experience vs. Your Own

Familiarize yourself with your webinar audience's viewpoint to avoid problems.

As the webinar host or presenter, you have a different view than your audience—more rights, more features, more control. It is a good practice to familiarize yourself with the webinar room from the perspective of your audience. This will help you help them when they need to answer a poll or use full screen on the slides. If you are not familiar with their viewpoint and give the wrong instructions, you run the risk of confusing and frustrating your audience.

It is also a good idea to "walk through" the room from the participants' point of view after you have set it up to see how it comes across visually for them. You can do this by logging into the webinar room as a participant from another computer or a different browser window and observing how the room looks as the host-version of yourself practices running through the agenda.

FIVE ISSUES TO LOOK OUT FOR

1 *OVERALL LAYOUT PROPORTIONS*

If you use the presenter-only area of the webinar room, your participant area will look much smaller to you than to your attendees, so make sure you check the room out from the attendee view before the live event. Ensure that each element of your layout is given the appropriate size for its content relative to other elements within that layout.

2 *SIZE OF Q&A*

Depending on your webinar platform, you may or may not have control over the location and size of the Q&A. If you do, consider making this element short but wide to make it easier for your audience to submit questions. If this area is too narrow, submitting questions will be more difficult because the audience will only be able to see one or two words at a time.

3 *AUDIENCE'S RIGHTS OR CONTROLS*

Make sure you know what your audience can and cannot control within the room, including audio, full-screen mode, webcam rights, bandwidth adjustments and other such controls, so you can help instruct them. That way, you can avoid frustrating your webinar participants by asking them to do something like white board when you have not granted them those permissions.

4 *TEXT SIZE*

Be sure to keep the various screen sizes your audience may be using in mind when reviewing text components. For instance, increase the text in your PowerPoint file or notes so that attendees with small screens can read it easily. If you have access to a small-screen device, check out your room from that vantage point and make adjustments as needed.

5 *WHITESPACE*

Look at your webinar room layout(s) from a designer's perspective. Check out any whitespace (or gray space, depending on your platform) between or within areas and adjust element sizes to take advantage of whitespace or eliminate it. When you look at the room from a participant's perspective, you may be surprised to find that your PowerPoint is too small for the area, your speaker's photo is swimming in unnecessary whitespace, or your tiny poll element forces participants to scroll to see all the available answers.

Webinar tip — HELPFUL HINTS by Shelby Britton

If you have access to a small-screen device, check out your webinar room on it from the audience's vantage point and make adjustments as needed

May your next webinar be easy on the eyes of your audience!

Six Easy Tips for the Novice Webinar Presenter

Even if you are experienced with live, in-person speaking engagements, delivering a successful webinar presentation is a whole new ballgame.

Whether you are an experienced speaker transitioning from live presentations to virtual environments or a new speaker starting out for the first time via webinar delivery, careful thought and preparation are in order.

TO HELP EASE THE LEAP INTO VIRTUAL DELIVERY, HERE ARE SIX TIPS TO SMOOTH THE TRANSITION AND PREPARE YOU TO DELIVER A STELLAR PRESENTATION FROM YOUR VERY FIRST EVENT.

1 *LEARN THE TECHNOLOGY*

This is an extremely important step. Webinar presenter neophytes often make the big mistake of logging into the webinar platform the week of the event (or even the day of the event) and expecting the technology to magically read minds. Just as you would for a live, in-person event, spend some time learning the layout of the virtual venue—setting up the room the way you like and planning your event flow carefully. This time investment is well worth the result of a **professionally and seamlessly produced event**.

First-time webinar presenters will also benefit from the **increased confidence** that results from dedicating time to learning the technology. The last thing a new virtual presenter needs on the day of their first webinar is to be uncomfortable with the technology, which translates to distracting the audience while fumbling around to accomplish simple tasks like moving slides forward, screen sharing or administering a poll.

Thoroughly understanding the webinar platform technology will also enable the presenter to **take advantage of all the technology has to offer** in the way of interactive options. Take the time to log in well in advance of the event to familiarize yourself with the environment. Some platform providers have free training courses or tutorials you can use to get started.

2 *USE A PRODUCER*

Just as a presenter at a live, in-person event would have a support team, including the event coordinator and an AV tech, a webinar producer is a must as well. At least one other person should be on the webinar to moderate, host and/or produce in order to assist the speaker. This allows the speaker to focus on delivering the content by eliminating distractions from attendees needing technical assistance or from tasks related to webinar platform management. Plan to meet with your producer in advance of the event to review your presentation and plans for interactivity so that the producer knows what to expect and understands how to provide meaningful help throughout the event. As a new virtual presenter, you may rely more heavily upon this person during the first few virtual deliveries until you become better at handling the webinar technology while you are presenting content at the same time.

For more tips, see:

- *Running a Webinar Program Takes a Team*
- *Backstage at the Webinar*
- *The Webinar Producer: Seven Reasons You Need One*

Webinar tip — HELPFUL HINTS by Shelby Britton

Thoroughly understanding your webinar platform technology will also enable you to take advantage of all the technology has to offer in the way of interactive options. Some platform providers have free training courses or tutorials you can use to get started.

Six Easy Tips for the Novice Webinar Presenter (cont.)

TO HELP EASE THE LEAP INTO VIRTUAL DELIVERY, HERE ARE SIX TIPS TO SMOOTH THE TRANSITION AND PREPARE YOU TO DELIVER A STELLAR PRESENTATION FROM YOUR VERY FIRST EVENT (CONT.).

3 *PLAN AHEAD*

Once you have become familiar with all the tools and features available within your webinar platform, you can now carefully plan out how you would like your event to go. Do you want to use polls, chat, video, screen share, uploaded content and music? Plan out all of these interactions at specified intervals ahead of time.

Here are three tips to help organize the flow of the event:

a. Use layouts to seamlessly move from one activity to another (if your platform has this functionality)

b. Use the webinar producer to help administer interactive activities

c. Put placeholders in your slides to indicate, and remind you of, a transition or activity you have planned for that point in the presentation.

For more tips, see:

- *Becoming a Virtual Interaction Master.*

4 *PRACTICE*

This element is crucial for new virtual presenters—even if you have presented the same content in other settings. You will want to practice with the same computer, audio equipment and Internet access that you will use on the day of the event to make sure everything looks and sounds good. Practicing your delivery style via the new virtual environment will help increase your comfort with not having a live audience physically present. You will also want to flip through all of your slides to make sure they look nice in the webinar room and go through the motions of each interactive activity you have planned so they go smoothly and seamlessly on the day of the event.

For more tips, see:

- *Webinar Don'ts: Six Things You Should Never Do*
- *Virtual Event Vitals: Rehearsals and Site Inspections*

5 *ADD INTERACTIVE FEATURES GRADUALLY*

There are many interactive features and exercises you can add to a webinar presentation. The more interaction from the audience you can garner, the more they will remember the content and be likely to engage with you in the future. However, as a first-time webinar presenter, you may benefit from choosing just two or three points of interaction throughout your first webinar delivery, with the help of your producer. Then add other interactive elements as you become more comfortable with webinar presentations. Here are some good choices for your first interactive points during the initial delivery:

- Add an open chat pod in your lobby, or upon first opening the webinar room, asking attendees to enter their current location
- Ask attendees to type their first name into the moderated Q&A and acknowledged some of their names out loud
- Use a poll
- At the halfway point in your presentation, answer one or two questions that have come in
- Hold a post-presentation Q&A during the last 5 to 10 minutes of the webinar

You can add more advanced interactive options like multiple chat pod exercises or Twitter participation in future sessions.

For more tips, see:

- *It's Not Just Chat! The Interactive Tool that Offers Endless Possibilities*
- *Five Ways to Lose Your Audience's Attention*
- *Hello… Is Anyone There? Tips for Entertaining the Early Bird*

6 *REVIEW AND REVAMP*

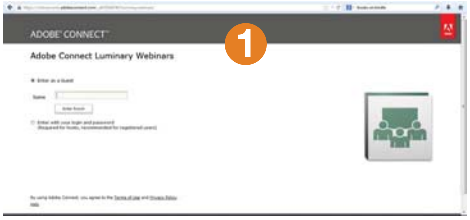
Always record your sessions, both for your audience and for yourself. Review the recording and look for ways to improve your virtual delivery style, the smoothness of the event delivery, the cadence of activities, slide changes and transitions and how you can increase interactivity the next time. If this is a session you are going to repeat in the future, some webinar technology platforms offer the advantage that your content and layout will remain the same, so you can just tweak the room with the improvements you have in mind without having to start over from scratch.

Once you become comfortable and start rolling with webinar presentations, you will quickly discover the advantages of the reach you now have to deliver your content broadly and with great audience involvement.

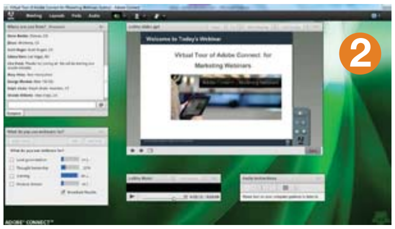
Make Your Webinar Room Brand Happy!

Decorate your virtual space to reinforce your brand.

You have worked hard to build your brand, so you do not want to miss an opportunity to display it wherever possible and appropriate to your next webinar audience. Just as you would hang banners and post signs at a physical event, hang your logo to build your brand during your virtual event as well. It does not have to be "in your face," but it is your webinar room, after all, so go ahead and make it look that way. Here are some ways to go brand happy with your virtual event room. Please note that most of these examples reference Adobe Connect, but other webinar technology platforms may offer similar branding opportunities.

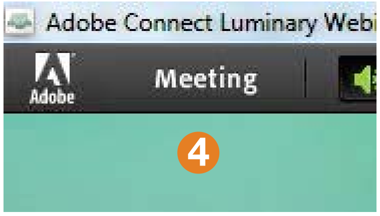


- **Account URL Customization:** Some webinar technology platforms automatically give each account its own unique URL (i.e. aquo.adobeconnect.com). Step one, done.
- **Webinar Room URL and Name:** Take advantage of the ability to brand each webinar room with its own unique name and URL—just as you would name a physical conference room or banquet hall (i.e. Aquo Users Forum Series at aquo.adobeconnect.com/forumseries). This is done at the time you create the seminar or meeting room, and the name can be updated at any point as needed.
- **Custom Event URL:** Each event can also have its own unique URL (i.e. aquo.adobeconnect.com/juneforum).
- **Put Your Brand on the Front Door:** If possible, replace the standard product logo with your own logo on the front door page, where attendees will land when they want to enter the room. 1
- **Room Background:** Change the background of your webinar room with a custom background. 2
- **Logo in the Layout:** Upload your logo and add it to appropriate layouts. 3
- **Logo in Room Interface:** Replace the standard product logo within the webinar platform user interface with your own logo. 4
- **Logo Bug on Slides:** Lastly, and most obviously, you can add your logo bug to the bottom corner of your slide deck(s). 5



Please note that this level of customization varies among webinar platforms, and if branding to this extent is important to you, make sure to add this requirement to your checklist while shopping for your webinar platform.

Have fun decorating your webinar room for your next event!



SOS… My Webinar is Imploding! Creating an Emergency Plan

Hoping for the best but planning for the worst can help save your webinar from disaster.

Even the most detail-oriented and prepared webinar producer runs into unanticipated challenges from time to time. The difference between saving your webinar during an emergency and watching the entire event implode completely is having a well-thought-out Emergency Plan.

Several of the most common emergencies can be either a small blip on the webinar radar (sometimes even going completely unnoticed by your audience) or can quickly spread from a small flame to a blazing inferno, devouring the time and investment you spent on preparation and promotion. Having an Emergency Plan in place before the emergency arises will make all the difference between a blip and total disaster.

BECAUSE THE SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF EACH WEBINAR IS DIFFERENT, THERE ARE NO HARD AND FAST RULES FOR CREATING AN EMERGENCY PLAN. HOWEVER, REGARDLESS OF THE SPECIFIC EVENT ITSELF, CERTAIN ISSUES SHOULD ALWAYS BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION:

- **Secure a backup audio conference phone line**
  If using an audio conferencing line, either as the only audio option or for simulcasting, always secure a backup audio conferencing phone number from a different teleconferencing provider in case the main line provider has an outage during the webinar. The backup line should have the same capacity as the main line, and the user(s) should be familiar with at least its most basic features, such as how to mute participants. If main audio goes out, the new audio conferencing information should be shared in a Note pod so that all participants and speakers can call back in to the backup line.

- **Confirm that all event speakers have a phone headset, as well as a computer headset/microphone**
  In the case that universal voice or integrated audio is not working for simulcasting audio via both phone and computer, instruct all speakers to call into the phone line and turn on the computer mics simultaneously. Speaking into both devices at once, albeit clunky, accomplishes the desired simulcast in a pinch. Testing this backup option during a rehearsal is advised.

- **Confirm that all event speakers have a cell phone available**
  Although cell phones are not the preferred means of webinar communication, they can still be an invaluable backup in case of disruption in phone service at the speaker's physical location. The cell phone should be silenced while it is on standby, or the speaker can proactively call in on the cell phone before the webinar begins and mute it, if that is their preference.

- **Ask that all event speakers have a second computer available**
  Each main speaker should have two computers powered up and logged into the webinar room. If the main computer crashes or freezes, the speaker can seamlessly move over to the second computer without any disruption of the event.

- **All event speakers should have a hard copy of their slides available**
  In the event that a speaker does not have two computers available, or the Internet goes down at the speaker's location and renders both computers unusable, a hard copy of the speaker's slides will allow them to continue the presentation without interruption. The host or moderator should advance the slide when instructed to do so by the speaker.

- **All team members and speakers should be aware of and be comfortable with the Emergency Plan**
  It is critical that the producer, her team and all speakers understand what the Emergency Plan is and what steps should be taken in each scenario should an issue arise. Often, when sharing the Emergency Plan, the webinar producer asks that if an issue isn't directly affecting the audience, that the speakers do not acknowledge that issue verbally.

- **Have a plan for communicating an emergency issue with your audience when necessary**
  If an emergency occurs that will cause an obvious delay in visual or audio communication, have a plan as to how this should be shared with the audience. One such example would be if a main audio line goes down and the audience has to call back in. In such an instance, a typical Emergency Plan might include having a pre-written note ready to post, or a chat handy to visually communicate next steps to the audience. If visual communication is compromised, anyone on the team can share an audio announcement of the issue. The goal, regardless of the issue at hand, is to ensure that the audience does not feel disconnected or disinterested as the issue is fixed.

- **Do not over-apologize**
  Presenters should not apologize for technical difficulties more than once. The speaker should simply acknowledge the issue, communicate what the audience's next steps should be, apologize for the inconvenience and proceed with the Emergency Plan. Once the problem has been resolved, the audience will quickly forget about it, and discussing it at length could alienate the audience (at best), or leave them with a negative overall response to the entire event (at worst). Technological issues are not foreign to the webinar audience, so the overall statement should be brief and direct.

Webinar Promotion: Stick to the Basics

How to drive webinar registrations.

MARKETING TACTICS USED SUCCESSFULLY FOR OTHER PROGRAMS DO NOT ALWAYS WORK AS WELL WHEN IT COMES TO PROMOTING A WEBINAR.

Webinar tip

HELPFUL HINTS

by Shelby Britton

When it comes to successful marketing vehicles for webinar promotion, the good, old traditional e-mail invitation wins hands down.

At a recent conference at which I was speaking, I had an opportunity to chat with a fellow marketer in attendance about her disappointment in the results of what she described as a "failed webinar program" her team had recently launched. After some investigation into the cause of her frustration, I was not surprised to uncover that the failing key performance indicator (KPI) was quantity of registrants.

The diagnosis? Not failing webinar, but failing promotion plan.

The mistake here was assuming the problem lay with using webinars as a tactic in general. Once we broke down the webinar program into its various pieces (promotion, registrations, attendance, in-webinar experience, post-webinar follow up), we were able to pinpoint the specific problem area.

Unfortunately, the fate of a new webinar program is often doomed from the start because the natural plan of attack for many marketers is to apply expertise and success in other areas to the promotion of webinars. This does not always translate. While search engine marketing (SEM), social marketing, digital advertising and other methods work great for driving website traffic or whitepaper views, they may not be the best drivers of registrations for a one-time event.

After $2M of promotional spend and five years of analysis and testing of promotional options for webinars, I have discovered that good, old traditional e-mail wins.

When it comes to driving webinar registrations, the targeted and focused communication of an e-mail invitation to a webinar has worked the best. And I do not mean newsletters. I mean a dedicated invitation to one webinar that is relevant to the recipient with a short and concise description of the value and a clear call to action (CTA).

KEYS TO E-MAIL INVITATION SUCCESS FOR WEBINARS

- **Relevance to target audience:** Ensure that the webinar topic is of interest to the group receiving the invitation. This might mean a smaller, more targeted list of recipients.
- **List rentals vs. partnerships/sponsorships:** I found that renting a list and sending an invitation to a list of people with whom I do not have a relationship did not work as well as if I partnered on the webinar with a group that already owned a relationship with my target audience, or if they sent the e-mail invitation on my behalf (think of it as an introduction). I found the cost per registrant using partnerships to be 36% less than cold list rentals due to the better response rate.
- **Value focused:** Focus your webinar invitation on the take-away value you will provide to the attendee rather than on product/company information and features or the presenter's bio (unless the presenter is the big draw).
- **Building a database:** As you build your database of contacts from various activities, such as whitepaper downloads, try to collect information about areas of interest—via either the content they have consumed or registration questions. You can use this area of interest information to send relevant webinar invitations in the future for higher response rates. Your house list will be the highest generator of registrations (as long as you do not overuse it).
- **Minimize focus on date/time:** Leading with the date and time in the subject line or first sentence of your event description can cause a loss of interest prematurely due to availability. Keep in mind that providing a recording to non-attendees is always an option. Capture their interest in the content of your event, and they may register regardless of availability in order to get the recording.

While I continue to include efforts such as social, banner ads, newsletters and SEM into my webinar promotion mix, they do not drive nearly the same response rate as dedicated e-mail.

You might wonder how many registrations are enough? The webinar content and the intended place in the customer engagement funnel will help you determine this. For instance, smaller registration numbers for a webinar at the bottom of the marketing funnel would be expected and healthy—and also allows for more interactivity and personalized in-webinar attention for those prospects.

For more information, see:

- *Adding Webinars to Your B2B Content Marketing Mix (cont.)*
- *Eight Ways to Qualify Webinar Leads*

Webinar ROLES *and* RESPONSIBILITIES

Running a Webinar Program Takes a Team

No webinar manager is an island.

It takes a significant number of people to run a successful webinar program. The team of people that will help you manage your program will consist of both internal and external resources. Internal resources may include your immediate team members, colleagues within your department or key resources within your company but outside of your department ("internal vendors," if you will). External parties outside of your company should also be considered team members, because they are integral to your program's success.

Consider the following internal and external resources as you compile a list of key stakeholders and resources you need onboard for the success of your webinar program strategy.

INTERNAL RESOURCES

- The Webinar Program Manager is, of course, at the top of the list. This person organizes all of the details, including the content calendar, presenters, scheduling, registration, promotion, rehearsals, day-of production, post-event follow up, lead distribution and more.
- Product Marketers drive the structure and foundation of the webinar program with strategy, focus, target audience definitions and competitive differentiators. They can also help create content.
- Subject Matter Experts help direct the content, messaging and collateral used for each track focus.
- Product or Corporate Evangelists are typically always willing to fill speaking slots and build or review content.
- Your resident Social Media Guru, or team of gurus, will ensure that your followers know all about upcoming events.
- Your Website Producer can help create webinar program awareness on the website, which is, of course, extremely important.
- You need to be friends with IT and/or Conferencing Support, as they typically provide the audio and web-conferencing access and hardware you need, in addition to technical support during the event.
- Your Contact Management group, or those in your organization who hold the keys to your company database, can assist in segmenting and pulling the house list to use for promotions.
- If your leads do not route, your efforts are wasted, so your Lead Management team will keep everything flowing correctly through the customer relationship management (CRM) system.
- Finance and Purchasing typically divvy out the funds and/or help you to spend them in a timely fashion to drive webinar registrations.
- Sales teams are integral to the overall program success, because they follow up on leads generated from the program and provide continual feedback, turning your investment into revenue.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- Your Agency, if you use one, will be integral for designing e-mail promotions or other collateral related to promoting your webinar.
- Thought leadership or third-party analyst Presenters belong on this list of valuable resources, because they provide the critical component of content and are tasked with keeping an audience engaged for 60 minutes.
- The Media Partners you use to generate registrations make all the difference because without registrants and attendees, your planning and production efforts are futile.
- Channel Partners, if applicable, can help drive registrants and interest, as well as nurture leads post-webinar.

These key resources may change from time to time from internal to external and back, but one thing will remain constant: You need a team, and your entire team is important to achieving success. One person certainly cannot accomplish all of this work alone.

Perhaps there are resources listed here that you have yet to tap into to help make your job less overwhelming?

A Successful Webinar Program Manager Wears Many Hats

Why webinar program management is a full-time job.

Now that you know what a large team it takes to pull off a successful webinar program, let's expand specifically on the critical role of the Webinar Program Manager. For any significant webinar program, a dedicated Webinar Program Manager is an absolute must for success due to the multi-hat wearing nature of the role. The webinar program should be the sole focus of one individual, rather than an additional responsibility for someone with other areas of focus. Not only must this person wear multiple marketing hats, but he or she must be very good at it. This makes filling the role of Webinar Program Manager a difficult task.

HERE ARE SEVEN HATS THE WEBINAR PROGRAM MANAGER MUST WEAR WELL:

1 *CONTENT MARKETING*

Content is the backbone of any webinar program, and the manager needs to have a good sense of which valuable content will draw in a healthy volume of the right audience. This includes searching out and vetting dynamic virtual presenters who have the right content for the target audience and program goals.

2 *E-MAIL MARKETING*

This is a big area in and of itself that includes knowledge of e-mail content and design along with subject-line creation and A/B testing to drive the best results. This can also include e-mail automation know-how and SPAM laws. A solid use and understanding of e-mail analytics will help the Webinar Program Manager improve design and content to drive interest and action.

3 *EVENT MARKETING*

Anyone who has planned an event, physical or virtual, knows what a detail-oriented task it is. Paying attention to the event logistic details is extremely important, along with ensuring that the event is planned in such a way as to engage and enthrall the audience during its live production.

4 *DEMAND GENERATION*

Of course, without registrations there would not be much of a webinar program. The Webinar Program Manager needs to be really good at knowing how to target the right audience and use the right media venues and tactics to drive interest. Using lots of data and analytics will make the program manager successful here.

5 *NURTURE*

The webinar program itself can actually be a nurture program if it is designed with several levels. Additionally, if a registrant stalls in the buying cycle, the Webinar Program Manager needs to know how best to nurture that registrant back to a sales-ready state. This requires a good understanding of the target audience's buying cycle and their needs at each stage of that cycle.

6 *WEB DESIGN*

Not only will a Webinar Program Manager want to use the company website to promote webinars, but he or she will be responsible for designing (or influencing the design of) the registration microsite landing pages and registration forms. Grasping web design concepts is essential, along with understanding what design elements and placements drive action and how visitors will interact with and navigate through the event microsite.

Webinar tip — HELPFUL HINTS

by **Shelby Britton**

For any significant webinar program, a dedicated Webinar Program Manager is an absolute must for success. The webinar program should be the sole focus of one individual, rather than an additional responsibility for someone with other areas of focus.

7 *SOCIAL MARKETING*

Most webinar programs include some element(s) of social marketing. This can include promoting webinars via such social media venues as Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter prior to the event, or using Twitter during the event to spark conversation and interaction.

Each of the above marketing hats that a Webinar Program Manager must wear can be a job in and of itself. In fact, many enterprises have entire departments within their marketing organizations staffed by specialists dedicated to each of these areas. If you have a webinar program without a dedicated manager, consider tapping one person to take on the program as their sole responsibility or hiring a dedicated resource.

If you are a Webinar Program Manager—kudos to you for bearing the weight of multiple hats!

The Webinar Producer: Seven Reasons You Need One

Like a wedding planner, the Webinar Producer is invaluable to ensuring that your big day comes off without a hitch.

Whether you are contemplating holding a webinar event for the first time or you are experienced with webinars, using a dedicated Webinar Producer for your event offers many advantages. A producer unburdens the presenter and marketer from managing the technical aspects of event production during the webinar, which enables the presenter to focus on content and assures the marketer of a smooth, professionally produced event for the attendees attracted by all their promotional efforts.

If your webinar program is not big enough to justify hiring a full-time producer and there is no one else available in your organization with the skills to double as a producer, consider outsourcing this function to an agency or freelancer (unless your webinar program manager is capable of donning yet another hat).

Webinar tip — HELPFUL HINTS by Shelby Britton

If you use a Webinar Producer, he or she should be responsible for leading the 30-minute pre-conference immediately prior to the webinar for the presenter(s), moderator, host and other parties involved in running the webinar.

HERE ARE SEVEN WAYS A WEBINAR PRODUCER CAN PROVIDE VALUE TO YOUR WEBINAR PROGRAM:

1 *SET UP*

A Webinar Producer can be relied upon to help set up the webinar room appropriately for a large event, including layout design and interactive activity preparation. Set up also includes configuring the desired audio broadcast options—VoIP only, VoIP and phone, muting participants, etc.

2 *REHEARSAL AND PRESENTER TRAINING*

A producer can be responsible for setting up the webinar rehearsal with the presenter and other participants to run through event flow as well as to train the presenter how to use the webinar platform if needed. This service would include working with the presenter to ensure he or she has appropriate phone and computer equipment, Internet access and headset by testing the quality of this equipment during rehearsal and making recommendations.

3 *PRE-CONFERENCE PREPARATION*

A 30-minute pre-conference immediately prior to the webinar is recommended for the producer, presenter, moderator, host and other parties involved in running the webinar. The Webinar Producer should be responsible for leading this pre-conference. This time is typically used for ensuring all speakers and hosts are logged in to the audio and webinar platform, the audio sounds good, the room set up is perfect and any required content has been uploaded and is working well.

4 *WEBINAR PLATFORM MANAGEMENT*

During the event, the producer should be responsible for all aspects of webinar platform management. This includes starting the recording, managing audio, assisting with any interactive activities, answering technical questions via the Q&A, and handling any technical issues that might arise for attendees or presenters.

5 *MODERATION*

The producer can double as a moderator if needed. Typically, this means the producer would kick things off by welcoming attendees to the webinar, providing any housekeeping items and introducing the speaker. In addition, the producer can help facilitate the Q&A at the end by asking the presenter any questions that were submitted via the Q&A and then delivering the closing message at the end of the webinar. This would also include prioritizing those questions and pre-screening them for relevancy and appropriateness.

6 *CLOSING OUT THE WEBINAR*

In the same way that the producer got things started, the producer can be expected to wrap things up. This includes stopping the recording and ending the meeting. If planned, the producer can also be relied upon to push out a survey to attendees before ending the meeting or upon the close of the meeting.

7 *RECORDING EDITS*

Editing the recording (if needed) and distributing the recording to the appropriate parties after the event is another task often completed by Webinar Producers. Editing is often desired to cut out any pauses or, in worst-case scenarios, any technical issues, so the recording is as seamless as possible. Other edits such as removing segments like the housekeeping introduction or the Q&A session, anonymizing the Q&A or chat and hiding specific content can be considered. The Webinar Producer can even create shorter versions of the recording to be used as teasers for the full recording or convert the recording into other formats (such as converting from FLV to MP4).

How to ENGAGE Your Webinar AUDIENCE

Hello… Is Anyone There? Tips for Entertaining the Early Bird

A well-designed virtual lobby can help engage attendees before your webinar even begins.

Creating a fun and lively lobby for your webinar attendees to "sit in" while they wait for your webinar to begin can help to reduce the anxiety they may otherwise feel, wondering if their audio is working or if anyone else is in the room. This allows your attendees to relax while they wait, putting them in a better frame of mind for when your presentation begins.

If your webinar technology platform offers this functionality, you can create a unique layout that you will use as your webinar lobby when you first open your room. Labeling it "Lobby" makes it easy to find later.

Once you've created your lobby, you can start adding fun and interesting elements to the layout.

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS.

- **Play music in your lobby**
  Simply upload an MP3 or MP4 into the room, if your platform allows for content upload, and press play. You will want to make sure the music file is long enough—for example, if you typically open your webinar room to attendees 15 minutes prior to event start time, make sure your music is 15 minutes long—or just pay attention and press play again when the music runs out. Do not forget to keep music royalty laws in mind. Check with your legal department if you are uncertain about what songs you can play.
- **Upload a welcome slide(s)**
  Upload one slide with the title and associated image for your webinar, or create a deck of rotating slides. Adobe Presenter is a nice tool to use for creating a welcome slide deck to rotate and loop continuously in your lobby. This deck could include the title side, a sponsor(s) slide, announcements, instructions, etc.—the sky is the limit.
- **Add instructions on how to join the audio portion of the conference**
  Including a note to let attendees know how they can join the audio portion of your webinar should do the trick.
- **Include Q&A**
  Moderated Q&A will allow attendees to submit technical questions as needed while they get ready for the event to begin. Labeling the Q&A "Technical Questions" will help attendees understand how to ask for help, especially if you also have an open chat option available for another reason, such as engaging the audience in an ice breaker while they wait for the event to start.

Hello… Is Anyone There? Tips for Entertaining the Early Bird (cont.)

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS (cont.)

- **Provide open chat**
  Open chat allows for free-flowing conversation among attendees and is a great way to break the ice before the event, warm up the audience for interaction and let everyone know they are not alone in the virtual world. Kicking things off with a simple question such as, "What is the weather like where you are?" or, "Tell us where you are joining us from," is a nice way to get the audience started.

- **Consider incorporating a game**
  Several games and custom applications may be available in your webinar platform to download free and upload into your room to give your attendees something to do while they wait. Adobe Connect, for instance, offers a countdown timer, among other custom applications, that visually indicates how much time is left before the presentation begins. Just keep bandwidth and expected audience size in mind before deciding to include a custom application or game.

- **Display your company logo**
  Upload your company logo into the room, and place it somewhere on your layout. Perhaps you would also like to display a sponsor or partner logo or banner.

- **Make slides or handouts available for download**
  Use file-sharing functionality within the webinar platform to make your slides or a handout available for attendees to download prior to the event. This is useful for attendees who like to follow along with the presenter and take notes.

Webinar tip

HELPFUL HINTS

by Shelby Britton

A fun and lively lobby where attendees can wait for your webinar to start can help reduce their anxiety and engage them before your event even begins.

Be creative and have fun with your lobby. You will appreciate the experience as much as your attendees.

Webinars, Attention and Memory: What Marketers Can Learn from Teachers

Why engagement is key to webinar success.

Marketers can learn a lot from teachers. Our goals are very much the same: We want our audience to remember our message.

What teachers have known for a long time is that active participation in the learning process increases attention, which in turn increases memory. If you can encourage active participation by your target audience in the messages and stories you are telling about your products, you reap the benefits of increased brand awareness, leads and sales. Delivering content via webinars affords you the perfect opportunity to use active participation to increase your audience's memory of the concepts presented.

TO UNDERSTAND MORE ABOUT HOW THIS WORKS, LET'S FIRST LOOK AT WHAT TEACHERS KNOW:

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION LEADS TO ATTENTION.

In Madeline C. Hunter's book, *Enhancing Teaching* (New York: Macmillan College Publishing, 1994), she defines active participation as the consistent engagement of the mind of the learner with the content of the lesson.

There are two types of active participation:

1 **Overt Active Participation**

Physically or audibly performing a task that helps the learner grasp the concept more fully

2 **Covert Active Participation**

Performing a mental activity independently

ATTENTION INCREASES MEMORABILITY

In the study, *Interactions between Attention and Memory*, by Marvin M. Chun and Nicholas B. Turk-Browne of the Department of Psychology, Yale University, the following conclusions were drawn:

"…memory has a limited capacity, and thus attention determines what will be encoded. Division of attention during encoding prevents the formation of conscious memories…"

"…it is uncontroversial that attending to or focusing on a fact or event will enhance the likelihood of later memory…"

"Classic psychologists such as William James stated long ago that 'we cannot deny that an object once attended to will remain in the memory, while one inattentively allowed to pass will leave no traces behind.'"

Therefore, marketers need to do all they can to grab the attention of their audience and ensure that audience is focusing completely on the concept they wish the audience to remember.

Webinar tip

HELPFUL HINTS

by Shelby Britton

Active participation in the learning process increases attention, which in turn increases memory.

Webinars, Attention and Memory: What Marketers Can Learn from Teachers (cont.)

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR WEBINAR PRODUCTION

If active participation leads to attention, which leads to memorability, then the production of a webinar needs to be centered on interactivity for maximum impact. We marketers must focus on keeping the attention of the audience we worked so hard to procure, so that our message breaks through digital distractions and our investment yields a return.

We need to encourage both overt and covert active participation throughout a webinar to engage the audience's mind with the content we are delivering. Fortunately, webinar technology is exactly designed to foster interactivity and engagement. Here are some ideas for integrating active participation throughout your next webinar to capture and maintain attention.

OVERT ACTIVE PARTICIPATION:

- **Share**—Use a Q&A or chat to ask the audience to share their experience with the topic at hand. An open chat method for this exercise will allow the audience to learn from their peers attending the event as well as from you.
- **Brainstorm**—Ask attendees to write in an open chat what they could do with the information you just presented. This engages their minds around applying the concept you just introduced to their own situation. You might consider a pro and con list using two chats if appropriate for the exercise.
- **Write**—Instruct attendees to take out a piece of paper and draw their own version of a diagram, chart or something that you have shared, which will help them actively learn and make the concept their own. In smaller webinars or in breakout rooms, you can use white-boarding functionality to accomplish this within the webinar room.

COVERT ACTIVE PARTICIPATION:

- **Visualize**—Ask the audience to consider and visualize what they would do or say as you describe a concept or situation.
- **Consider**—Prompt the attendees to consider or prepare an answer in their head in preparation for an overt exercise where they will be asked to share their thoughts or insights with the group. Continually encouraging the audience to think this way throughout the presentation regardless of whether a more overt exercise will follow will help remind the audience to engage their minds with the topic at hand.

What additional ways can you think of to foster active participation in your next webinar for maximum content retention?

Becoming a Virtual Interaction Master

Seven tips to prevent your webinar from becoming a snoozer.

Hours of hard work planning a webinar and creating valuable content—combined with a significant investment in promotional spend to drive registrations—will not matter if no one is listening during the webinar delivery.

You might believe that if your registrants took the time to show up, that means they are listening intently. That is not likely unless you have put careful thought into how to keep your audience engaged throughout the event.

If a webinar is planned without interactivity at the core, it is more likely your audience will be checking Facebook, e-mailing, daydreaming, eating a snack or drooling on their keyboard. To avoid this fate, you must master the art of virtual interaction.

Lack of the ability to see your webinar attendees' faces does not mean you cannot see their interaction or engagement level. A virtual interaction master is able to grab the attention of an audience before the webinar even begins and hold everyone spellbound for 60 minutes.

HERE ARE SEVEN TRICKS VIRTUAL INTERACTION MASTERS USE:

1 *ASK FOR EVERYONE'S FIRST NAME AND RECOGNIZE THEM*

This is a crafty way to set an interactive tone right from the start and also let your audience know you are a live person paying attention to them instead of a recorded voice. Ask them to enter their first name in the Q&A, and then welcome a few of the attendees by name. You will be amazed at how much more interaction you will get throughout the webinar if you try this simple technique right at the start. This is especially true if you are using a moderated Q&A where attendees cannot see other submitted questions. This lets them know they are not alone and you recognize their presence.

2 *GET TO THE CONTENT FAST*

Housekeeping items, such as how to use the platform, are a good way to drive people straight to their e-mail and lose their attention before you even begin your main presentation. Keep it short and provide any tips they need for using your platform as you go and when appropriate. You could also add a note to your layout to display answers to frequently asked questions. Getting to the content fast also means spending minimal time on your speaker bio and company profile.

3 *ANSWER QUESTIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGE COMMENTS AS YOU GO*

Not every speaker can do this, and it takes some practice to do well. Once you are comfortable, keep an eye on the Q&A and answer relevant questions or acknowledge a comment as you go. This does not mean you should stop the presentation for a designated Q&A moment, which can ruin the flow, but rather that you should have a conversation with your audience. For instance, if you are talking about widgets and John comments that widgets are great, verbally agree with him and keep going. Or perhaps someone needs clarification on an acronym you just used, so you work the answer seamlessly into your presentation as you continue. Watch your Q&A go nuts if you can master this technique!

4 *ASK THE AUDIENCE ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE, INPUT OR THOUGHTS*

Everyone's favorite topic is themselves. If you can get them thinking about how your topic relates to them personally, they will be more likely to remember the content and engage their minds around the content you are presenting. Ask them what their experience is in the area you are discussing, or ask them to share their insight or learning around the topic at hand. Using a poll or open chat is a good way to collect this feedback and get them interacting with you.

Webinar tip

HELPFUL HINTS

by Shelby Britton

Including some type of interaction—such as a poll, chat or Q&A—every five to seven minutes throughout your virtual presentation will keep your audience engaged, attentive and more likely to retain the content.

Becoming a Virtual Interaction Master (cont.)

Seven tips to prevent your webinar from becoming a snoozer.

- **HERE ARE SEVEN TRICKS VIRTUAL INTERACTION MASTERS USE (cont.):**

5 GET THE AUDIENCE TO INTERACT WITH EACH OTHER

Think about dividing up your audience in some way and asking them to provide the pros and cons about something related to your presentation, or ask each group to brainstorm and provide input on separate topics. Then recognize some of the ideas and feedback you receive. If your platform allows, using multiple open chats is a great way to set this up, and if you have it prepared on a separate layout ahead of time, it is an exercise you can fit seamlessly into your presentation.

6 PLAN AN INTERACTION EVERY 5 TO 7 MINUTES

Planning some sort of interaction every five to seven minutes throughout a virtual presentation will keep the audience engaged, attentive and more likely to retain the content. This could include using emoticons, polls, chat, Q&A or anything else that gets them touching the screen to interact with your webinar platform and, therefore, with you.

7 USE THE ENGAGEMENT METER

If visual confirmation that your audience is attentive via their use of polls, chat, emoticons and Q&A is not enough for you, your webinar technology platform may offer an engagement meter. This will give you a good understanding of the audience's overall engagement level. You can even go back through your presentation at the end of the webinar and check to see at which points you lost your audience. This is a good tool to use as you work to improve your skills in this area.

For the most part, anything you can do during an in-person event, you can find a way to replicate virtually. Good luck on your journey to becoming a virtual interaction master!

It's Not Just Chat! The Interactive Tool that Offers Endless Possibilities

Five ways to use the chat function to elevate audience interaction to a new level.

If you are simply opening a chat without a strategy for how to use it, you are missing out. A simple chat gives you a plethora of really creative interactive exercises that can be developed to boost overall engagement by capturing attention, driving interaction and holding that attention.

HERE ARE SOME FUN EXAMPLES I'VE OBSERVED FROM A VARIETY OF WEBINARS OVER THE YEARS TO GET YOUR WHEELS TURNING.

1 *THREE CHATS TO COLLECT FEEDBACK ON THREE RELATED TOPICS*

- What it looks like: A question on a slide and three separate open chats, each with a unique title.
- The activity: Ask an open-ended question that has three categories for answers and then prompt the audience to provide their feedback in the appropriate chat(s).

2 *CHAT WITH A VIDEO FILE*

- What it looks like: A video, one open chat and a slide with a guiding question.
- The activity: Play a video and ask the audience to share their observations in an open chat based on the overall guiding question that has been presented while the video is playing.

3 *CHAT WITH AUDIO FILES (MP3 MUSIC):*

- What it looks like: An open chat with one or more audio files uploaded and ready to play.
- The activity: One idea for using audio files is to upload mystery music and ask the audience to identify the song, jingle or voice in the chat as you play each one. The first person to answer correctly wins. Are there other creative ways you can use audio files to create an interactive exercise with an open chat in your next webinar?

4 *LEARNING OR TAKEAWAY RECAP*

- What it looks like: A slide with instructions and three or more open chats.
- The activity: Ask the audience to recap what they have learned and how they might implement the ideas presented through the webinar. Use one chat for each specific area of learning.

5 *BRAINSTORMING AND/OR DIVIDING A LARGE GROUP INTO SMALLER WORKING GROUPS*

- What it looks like: A slide or note with instructions and four open chats.
- The activity: Ask the audience to work on a question in smaller groups by dividing the group by birthday month and asking them to brainstorm with their group in their designated chat area (January–March, April–June, July–September, October–December). Certainly, there are many other ways to divide a group into four as well.

Give one of these a try or create your own interactive exercise using open chat in your next webinar.

Webinar tip

HELPFUL HINTS

by Shelby Britton

If you are opening a chat without a strategy for how to use it, you are missing an opportunity to boost audience engagement through interactivity.

Webinar Don'ts: Six Things You Should Never Do

The only two things that really matter in a webinar are the audience and the content. Ignore either one at your peril.

WHEN IT COMES TO PRODUCING A WEBINAR, THERE ARE ONLY TWO CRITICAL FOCUS AREAS:

1 **The Audience**

2 **The Content**

Without a laser focus on these two areas, a webinar is a pointless effort. Therefore, the biggest mistakes you can make in a webinar stem from ignoring the content or the audience.

YOUR WEBINAR WILL HAVE THE BEST CHANCE OF SUCCESS IF YOU AVOID DOING ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

1 *DON'T: SPEND MORE THAN 30 SECONDS ON HOUSEKEEPING*

Content is king. Housekeeping items are not content. The audience showed up to consume the content you offered. Hit them with more than 30 seconds of boring housekeeping items, and they will be off rummaging through their e-mail inbox for something more interesting.

Webinars are not new—most people know the drill. Move your housekeeping items or FAQs to a notes area, and let the audience read them if they need to, so you can get to the content fast!

2 *DON'T: TALK ABOUT YOURSELF FIRST*

Everyone's favorite topic is themselves—not you (sad, but true). If the audience is interested in the presenter's bio, they most likely have already read it during the registration process. Similarly, if they were interested in where your company is located and how many employees your company has, they can look that up online. They did not sign up for your webinar to hear bios and company profiles—they want the content you promised. You worked hard to attract a valuable audience to your webinar. The last thing you want to do is squander an opportunity to deliver your message to them.

Consider adding a LinkedIn URL for the presenter(s) and the company URL in lieu of reading off bios and profiles, so attendees can review the information on their own. **Again, content first.**

3 *DON'T: SCREEN SHARE*

This dismayingly common practice violates the rule of focusing on audience and content, because it results in a poor **content-delivery experience** and, therefore, is annoying to the audience. The audience does not want to see your desktop or deal with the latency. For the best quality presentation, upload your content directly into your webinar room to ensure that the audience is on the same page with the presenter and not subjected to a messy desktop, e-mail notification pop-ups or instant messages. With so many other interesting things you can do with webinar technology, there is really no need for screen share to deliver a presentation.

4 *DON'T: RELY SOLELY ON POWERPOINT*

Delivering an **immersive content experience** is the only reason to deliver content via a webinar. The dynamic and interactive environment makes the experience and, therefore, the content more memorable. (This is why webinars are the ***third most effective content-marketing tactic***). If your content truly can be delivered via PowerPoint alone, with perhaps some audio, consider SlideShare or YouTube rather than putting in the time and effort required to produce a webinar.

Get creative with the delivery of your content. Will showing a short video clip add value? A picture? Streaming webcam? How about audience involvement or input on a topic?

Webinar tip: HELPFUL HINTS

by **Shelby Britton**

Rather than reading presenter bios and company profiles during the webinar, consider providing a LinkedIn URL for the presenter(s) and the company URL instead. That way, attendees can review that information on their own, and you do not risk losing their attention by failing to focus on the valuable content they registered to receive.

Webinar Don'ts: Six Things You Should Never Do (cont.)

The only two things that really matter in a webinar are the audience and the content. Ignore either one at your peril.

YOUR WEBINAR WILL HAVE THE BEST CHANCE OF SUCCESS IF YOU AVOID DOING ANY OF THE FOLLOWING (cont.):

5 *DON'T: IGNORE YOUR AUDIENCE*

This is the cardinal sin when it comes to webinar mistakes. The entire point of a live webinar is to interact with the audience and allow participation. Webinars offer all kinds of ways for the audience to **interact with content**. A good goal is to try not to go more than seven minutes without acknowledging your audience and allowing them to participate in some way.

6 *DON'T: ALLOW MORE THAN 3 SECONDS OF SILENCE*

While three seconds may not sound like a long time, when you take away the physical presence of the speaker, the only thing the audience has is that person's voice. No facial expressions. No body language. **Sound connects the audience to the content**. This is especially true if you have not planned enough visual stimulation into your content delivery. Any more than three seconds and your audience will start to think their Internet connection went down or that something is wrong with the webinar audio. Even during a poll or chat exercise, have the speaker continue speaking—reading the poll question or commenting on the answers.

The Bottom Line: *Focus on the* **audience** *and the* **content***, and your webinar will be a smashing hit!*

Five Ways to Lose Your Audience's Attention

How to avoid boring webinars.

If someone signs up for your webinar, they have signed up for interaction and entertainment in addition to education—otherwise they would have chosen to consume similar information via video or whitepaper.

With all of the advanced technology available out there for making webinars engaging, dynamic, interactive and participatory, there truly is no reason why webinars should be anything less.

HERE ARE FIVE DISTURBINGLY COMMON WEBINAR PRACTICES THAT THREATEN TO PUT ATTENDEES TO SLEEP:

1 *SNOOZE BY POWERPOINT*

Slides with pictures are visually interesting, however, if there are not enough slides or the slides have too much text instead of something visually appealing, attendees will start to nod off. Since attendees cannot see the presenter, they need something else visually stimulating to hold their interest. To avoid drowsy attendees, "webinar-ize" your PowerPoint presentation. Two things you can do to improve your PowerPoint presentation for webinars are:

a. Use more pictures than words (the presenter provides the words).

b. Use more slides so that the visual stimuli are constantly changing and giving attendees a reason to pay attention. A new slide every one minute or less is ideal—consider how many frames in a TV show are required to keep watchers' attention.

2 *MODERATED Q&A*

Moderated Q&A is not the most interesting feature that webinar technology has to offer. Not only do attendees not see the presenter, with moderated Q&A they also cannot see other participants' interactions, which can lead to a feeling of isolation. While moderated Q&A is the norm for most large public events, throwing in an open chat opportunity to give attendees a chance to provide input or ask questions will go a long way to help them not feel so alone in cyberspace. If needed, you can "anonymize" attendees' names.

3 *NON-RELEVANT POLL*

A common mistake with polls is to ask attendees something you already know from the registration process or to bring in a meaningless poll just for the sake of interactivity. Your audience wants to provide valuable input relevant to the topic and see what their fellow webinar attendees think, too. Try to get your attendees' brains working and engaged with the content, not just their mouse-clicking fingers. Putting meat on your polls will increase engagement, audience appreciation and content memorability.

4 *SAME OLD LAYOUT FOR 60 MINUTES*

Your audience needs something new to look at every once in a while. Staring at a static screen for 30 to 60 minutes is not going to cut it when your attendees are in Outlook withdrawal. Try moving things around or bringing in some new elements every so often—preferably an interactive exercise or something dynamic that enhances the message.

Webinar tip — HELPFUL HINTS *by* **Shelby Britton**

When building your slide deck, plan for a new slide every one minute or less to maintain audience engagement with changing visual stimuli.

5 *LACK OF CREATIVITY*

Most webinars follow the same agenda of *PowerPoint, poll, PowerPoint, Q&A session*. Your audience will be grateful and more attentive if you can break out of this pattern and introduce something new and interesting. How about a video or MP3 that illustrates your point, a web link area with an interesting website or resource or a file-share area with handouts or case studies? Consider streaming your webcam every so often if the size of the event allows for it. How about a couple of open chats, asking half the audience to comment on pros and the other half to give cons (or comment on different topics)? Or perhaps a contest with the submission of ideas/answers that attendees get to vote on? Of course, it all has to work in a way that is relevant to the content, but with a little thought and effort, you can gain your audience's attention by breaking out of the usual webinar blueprint.

Put the power of webinar technology to use and make dynamic interactivity a priority!

Webinar Engagement by the Numbers

Measuring and analyzing audience engagement.

Engagement is the most important aspect of any webinar and is what makes webinars so effective as a marketing tool. Therefore, you need to find ways to quantify engagement throughout your program in order to gauge effectiveness and quality of content, including delivery.

As part of my ongoing evaluation, I recently studied 20 thought leadership webinars in my own program that were conducted over the past year, involving 16,558 registrants, 5,750 attendees and nine different presenters. This program has been running for five years and has been optimized extensively along the way. I have broken out each specific engagement activity. My numbers are in line with, or a bit higher than, industry-standard benchmarks I've seen.

As you evaluate your own webinar program for engagement health and effectiveness, consider including similar engagement statistics in your analysis. You can also use these statistics from a mature program as a benchmark for your own efforts.

Webinar tip

HELPFUL HINTS

by Shelby Britton

Statistics from the Adobe Connect webinar program show that 51% of people who receive the e-mail invitation and click through to the registration page will actually register for the webinar.

51%

51% AVERAGE REGISTRATION CONVERSION

(PAGE VIEWS/LANDINGS TO COMPLETED REGISTRATION)

The conversion of a site visitor to a registrant depends on two primary factors:

1. **Whether the full description of the event matches the expectations set in the promotion**
2. **The length and complexity of the registration form**

36% AVERAGE ATTENDANCE RATE

This rate is pretty standard (perhaps even on the high side) for most webinar program benchmarks (industry standard tends to be 30–40%). This rate can be influenced by whether the registrant has a Microsoft Outlook calendar invite with a reminder on his/her calendar, whether a reminder e-mail was sent, when the reminder e-mail was sent, how many reminder e-mails were sent and whether that reminder e-mail went into a spam filter. We include an Outlook calendar invite in the confirmation e-mail and send a reminder the day before and the hour before. These emails are text-only to reduce the probably of getting caught in spam filters.

36%

54

54 MINUTES AVERAGE ATTENDEE DURATION

(ALL WEBINARS WERE 60 MINUTES LONG)

Duration is affected by how easy it is to get into the event, how interesting the topic/presenter is and whether folks stick around during a Q&A portion at the end.

Webinar Engagement by the Numbers (cont.)

36%

55% OF REGISTRANTS VIEWED THE WEBINAR RECORDINGS

This statistic is especially interesting when added to the average attendance rate of 36%, indicating that 91% of registrants consumed the webinar content (assuming no overlap in attendees re-watching the webinar recording). This reinforces how important it is to record the webinar and send the recording to ALL webinar registrants. For more details on this, see *The Snowball Effect: Repurposing Your Webinar Content*.

54%

54% OF ATTENDEES ON AVERAGE PARTICIPATED IN POLLS

These polls were presented by the speaker during the presentation.

51%

51% OF ATTENDEES ON AVERAGE PARTICIPATED IN OPEN CHAT

Open chat was made available for specific activities for a limited amount of time.

40%

40% OF ATTENDEES ON AVERAGE PARTICIPATED IN MODERATED Q&A

This includes technical questions as well as questions for the presenter.

40%

40% OF ATTENDEES ON AVERAGE USED THE EMOTICONS WHEN PROMPTED

Only about 40% of our presenters used the emoticons as a purposeful activity.

50%

50% OF THE AUDIENCE ON AVERAGE DOWNLOADED THE PRESENTATION SLIDES

(IF MADE AVAILABLE)

These files are downloadable directly from the live webinar as well as the webinar recording. We only measured file downloads during the live event.

29%

29% OF ATTENDEES ON AVERAGE DOWNLOAD A PRODUCT SOLUTION BRIEF

This is an interesting tidbit for marketers who want to passively provide product information during a thought leadership webinar to catch shoppers early in the marketing funnel.

19%

19% OF WEBINAR ATTENDEES JOIN A DEMO BREAKOUT SESSION

At the very end of our thought leadership webinars, we invite attendees to join a 5–10 minute product demo to allow prospects to accelerate themselves through the buying cycle if they are ready.

The Anatomy of a Highly Engaging Webinar

How to build a webinar that generates—and maintains—a high level of audience engagement.

I love data. If that makes me nerdy, so be it, and I hope you find my geeky alter ego as helpful as I do.

First, I spent several weeks digging into data to uncover proof that interactivity actually leads to ***engagement and attention*** and, therefore, higher content consumption rates. In ***Webinar Engagement by the Numbers***, I shared some specific engagement statistics from a five-year-mature webinar program over the past year.

Now I will examine overall engagement scores and review the anatomy of the most and least engaging webinars produced within our program during the past 12 months. (For more on how Adobe Connect scores engagement specifically, see the Adobe white paper, ***The Rules of Engagement***.[1])

OVERALL ENGAGEMENT SCORES FROM OUR PROGRAM	
Average engagement score for the entire program across all 20 webinars	59%
Highest average engagement score for a single webinar	70%
Lowest average engagement score for a single webinar	45%
Highest spike for a single engagement activity in a webinar	88%

THE ANATOMY OF A HIGHLY ENGAGING WEBINAR

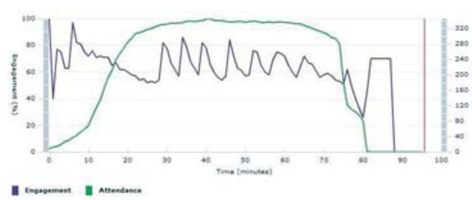
My analysis revealed that webinars punctuated periodically with engagement activities tend to have higher low points between activities, indicating that overall attention is higher throughout the webinar even between activities. This implies that the more opportunities the audience has to interact, the more likely they are to keep the webinar screen in focus and pay attention to the content delivery.

I noticed that an interactive activity typically spikes engagement anywhere from 60–80%. Review the following engagement charts of three highly engaging webinars where the spikes indicate an interactivity exercise, and you will see that the dips are higher than even the highest points in the least engaging webinar shown in the next section.

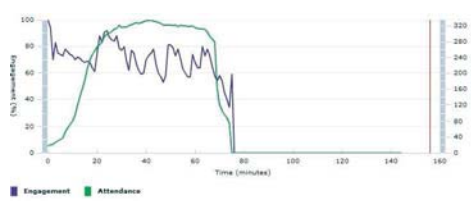
Note: The start of each webinar is at the 15-minute mark, where attendance spikes up, and the end of the webinar is at the 75-minute mark, where attendance drops off. (We open the webinar room 15 minutes prior to start to allow early birds to enter, and we close the webinar room 5–10 minutes after the webinar wraps up to answer any remaining questions in the Q&A.)

Let's dive into the anatomy of Example 3, which I find the most interesting.

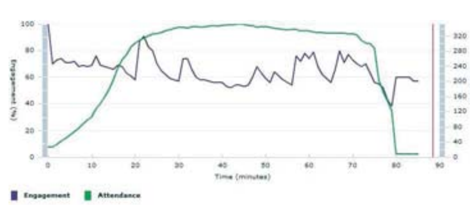
Example 1:



Example 2:



Example 3:



Webinar tip

HELPFUL HINTS

by Shelby Britton

In webinars that feature interactive exercises interspersed at 8–10-minute intervals between content delivery, the overall engagement level remains higher throughout the webinar, even between interactive activities.

The Anatomy of a Highly Engaging Webinar (cont.)

THE ANATOMY OF A HIGHLY ENGAGING WEBINAR (cont.)

- **18-Minute Mark:** Three minutes into the webinar, the presenter offered two polls, one after the other, to get a feel for the audience's experience, followed by three minutes of content.
- **22-Minute Mark:** For three minutes, the presenter ran a chat exercise using three chat pods and dividing the audience by birthday month to allow them to provide open answers to a question. This was followed by five minutes of content.
- **30-Minute Mark:** At 15 minutes into the webinar, the presenter grabbed attention with another open chat activity with two chats, dividing the audience by functional role and then reviewing/commenting on answers for five minutes. The speaker then presented content for 10 minutes.
- **45-Minute Mark:** 30 minutes into the webinar, the presenter opened an impressive four chats and invited feedback on four aspects of the previously presented content. Seven minutes was spent debriefing and discussing this feedback while keeping the chat open for further comments to roll in. This was followed by five minutes of new content.
- **57-Minute Mark:** The presenter began a rapid series of three exercises in which a scenario was introduced, followed by a poll to gather opinions (thus, the three consecutive spikes close together). This was followed by seven minutes of uninterrupted content delivery.
- **66-Minute Mark:** At 51 minutes into the webinar, the speaker again introduces a poll followed immediately by a new activity in which a video is played and impressions are gathered simultaneously in an open chat for about one minute.
- **68-Minute Mark:** The presenter gives one more learning point that takes one more minute to deliver and then opens up four more open chats to allow the audience to jot down one thing they learned from the presentation in four specific areas. This takes two minutes followed by a short conclusion and a Q&A session.

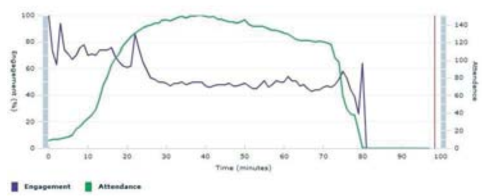
Brilliant!

If you have been following the numbers and math, you may have noticed that the longest stretch of pure content delivery between interactive activities is 10 minutes. You might also notice that the overall webinar time is almost equally divided between content delivery and interactive exercises. The actual percentage came out to 58% content delivery and 42% interactivity —which the presenter used very skillfully to deliver many key points and was thus still delivering content during the interactive portions.

THE ANATOMY OF THE LEAST ENGAGING WEBINAR

The least engaging webinar held in the past 12 months had an average engagement score of 45%. This is the graph of engagement throughout the webinar:

Example:



This webinar consisted of a slide deck presentation, one poll question and a short Q&A session at the end. Not as exciting at the first webinar we examined, is it?

The high engagement at the beginning of this webinar, around the 16-minute mark on the graph, resulted from the presenter asking attendees to type a practice answer into the Q&A pod. The spike at the 23-minute mark came from a poll. Thereafter, engagement plummeted to below 50%, where it stayed for the duration. There were no interactive activities after the initial poll.

As you can see, the baseline engagement score for webinars like the one above, with little to no interactive activities, is below 50% (with no interactivity, engagement is only scored on whether the screen is in view or not). This was the case with other low-scoring webinars as well. After an interactive activity, the engagement score trended toward 50% or lower unless another interactive activity was conducted relatively soon (within 8–10 minutes).

For webinars with more interactive exercises sprinkled throughout, overall engagement remained higher throughout the webinar, even between activities. You can also observe on this graph that the audience started dropping out 30 minutes into the webinar presentation, whereas attendance remains level throughout the entire 60 minutes in highly engaging webinars.

THE BASIS FOR THIS STUDY

At Adobe, we have a very extensive webinar program as part of our content marketing and lead-generation efforts throughout the organization for various products. For the Adobe Connect product alone, we hold about 20 webinars every quarter—a mix of thought leadership webinars, product demo webinars and training webinars. This study was conducted based only on the thought leadership webinars within the Adobe Connect program produced within the 12 months preceding March 2014. All webinars were conducted using Adobe Connect webinar technology.

[1] *The engagement score in Adobe Connect reflects whether the webinar room window is in view for the attendee as a baseline and then adds explicit engagement points for whether attendees participate in chat, Q&A, file downloads, polls and use of emoticons.*

Generating QUALITY LEADS with Webinars

Generic Messaging is Dead

Or, at least, it should be.

Generic messaging is hazardous to your webinar program. In this day of digital chaos, if you are not delivering **relevant content to the right people at the right time**, no one will listen.

Killing and replacing generic messaging takes a lot of effort from busy marketers who are already juggling several responsibilities—especially marketers in smaller organizations. However, the effort put into crafting targeted webinar topics aimed at a very specific group is well worth the time. So grab an energy drink, dig into your approach on webinar promotion and lead follow-up messaging and enjoy the results.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

- **Is your target audience segmented?** If your product or service solves a problem for or serves more than one specific group, you will want to develop messaging specifically for each group, focusing on their unique pain points. In a webinar program, this may look like specific tracks targeted at each different group within your overall webinar program.
- **Are your invitations specific and relevant?** Take a look at your webinar invitations and ensure that you are clearly communicating what this segment of your target audience will gain by attending your webinar (briefly, of course), and then deliver on that promise. Ensure that you are crafting e-mail invitations dedicated to only one webinar (rather than a newsletter-like approach).
- **Are you "spraying and praying"?** If so, change course and start looking for ways to intelligently target each specific group in your target audience. Remember, your goal is to reach the right people with relevant content. This might mean smaller list acquisitions and smaller webinar audiences, and that is okay. Think quality over quantity.
- **Do you use the information you gather?** You collect all kinds of information from your webinar audience: their registration information, whether they attended, whether they viewed the recording, their engagement during the webinar, feedback survey answers and, of course, the content of the webinar they registered for. Be sure your sales reps have access to all of this information for use in crafting unique and specific follow-up communications.
- **Is sales using the right follow-up message?** Take the time to brief sales on the marketing programs you are running and familiarize them with the information you are gathering. Then make some recommendation on the best message to use for each particular program and each response related to that program. Sales is your partner, and you need them looped in to achieve your goals.
- **What does your webinar content tell you?** If your program includes some webinars focused on best practices relevant to your product or service and some webinars that actually deliver a demo of the features and benefits of your product or service, you can gauge the interest level and sales readiness of each inquiry based on that content. For example, if a webinar registrant just attended a best practice webinar, that might tell you that they are the right person to talk to about your product but they may not yet be actively shopping, so avoid the temptation to send these inquiries to sales. However, if they attended a demo webinar, send them on through to sales with confidence.
- **Are you sending prospects down the right path?** After a contact has responded to a webinar you produced, put some thought into what that person might want to see or do next. If they attended a thought leadership webinar on a particular solution related to your product, perhaps the next communication they should receive from you is an invitation to a demo on how your product can benefit them in that particular solution area.

Don't Start with a Demo Webinar!

Why a product or service demo webinar is rarely the ideal first touch.

If you are in the B2B marketing space, you are already aware of how tough it is to get the attention of your target audience. Trying to get attention by dishing up an invitation to an online demo of your product is not going to get the job done, unless you and your prospective audience already know each other.

Try offering some value first, perhaps with a thought leadership or educational webinar with a luminary presenter who provides your audience with some best practices or tips on how to do their job better that is relevant to what you are marketing.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP OR EDUCATIONAL WEBINARS ACHIEVE TWO BENEFITS FOR YOU:

1. **Attract the right audience into your lead-generation funnel.**
2. **Start a relationship with your target audience by providing some value up front with a soft touch.**

Once you have started out the relationship on the right foot, you can now try inviting these prospects to see a demo of your product or service. Here are a few ways to accomplish that both during your first-touch thought leadership webinar and after.

- Include a slide about your product in a rotating slide deck in your lobby before the thought leadership event begins.
- During your very *brief* welcome, let people know *briefly* about an upcoming opportunity to learn about your product (notice the repeated and emphasized use of the word "brief").
- Provide a solution overview document for download from a file-sharing area in one of your layouts for interested attendees.
- Plan a 10-minute breakout session after the webinar is over for those who want to stick around to learn more about your product.
- Include a link to the next product demo webinar on your post-event thank-you/we-missed-you e-mails.
- Send the entire registration list an invitation to your next product demo after the webinar.

At Adobe, we have seen a 500% conversion lift just by implementing this concept into our webinar program. Give it a shot!

Webinar tip
HELPFUL HINTS
by Shelby Britton

You'll find people much more receptive to an invitation to a product or service demo if you first offer them value through a thought leadership, educational or best practices webinar.

Eight Ways to Qualify Webinar Leads

Registration, attendance and interaction level reveal a great deal of information on your webinar sales leads.

Webinar content and behavior are as important as demographic information when qualifying marketing leads. While webinars themselves are a tactic; it is the content that determines where the webinar falls in the B2B marketing lead generation funnel. The webinar content indicates which stage the potential buyer is in, and also what they are interested in. This will dictate which webinar registrants are simply contact acquisitions and which ones are truly sales-ready. Knowing the difference will improve the quality of leads sent to sales and build the sales team's trust in marketing leads.

The rich and interactive nature of webinars offers B2B marketers a unique opportunity to qualify leads on the spot using real-time behavior.

MARKETERS WHO USE EVERY POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITY TO MEASURE WEBINAR ATTENDEE INTEREST DURING THE EVENT ARE GATHERING VALUABLE INFORMATION ABOUT THE REGISTRANTS THEY HAVE ATTRACTED, AND DRIVING BETTER RESULTS.

1 *BUYER STAGE DETERMINES CONTENT.*

Webinars as a tactic are chosen for their rich and engaging medium. Adding content to the webinar will determine where to plug the webinar(s) into the marketing mix based on the buying cycle—whether it is thought leadership, education, product demonstration, competitive comparison or product training. Thought leadership webinars are very effective for inbound marketing and contact acquisition. A product demo or competitive comparison webinar would most likely fall further down the buying cycle as the content could indicate shopping behavior. While the thought leadership webinar registrants are most likely not sales-ready, the leads from a product demo webinar are appropriate to send on for a sales follow-up e-mail. The trick here is to understand what the needs of a typical buyer are, and deliver the necessary content at the right moment.

2 *CONTENT INDICATES SOLUTION OF INTEREST.*

Not only does content type indicate buying stage, it also pinpoints the individual's interests and needs. Using webinar content to determine this information is especially helpful for products that offer multiple solutions or serve more than one target audience. Consider a product with two main solutions: conducting two monthly webinars on best practice topics (one for each solution) at the top of the marketing funnel will tell a marketer which solution each group of registrants is interested in and dictate the next appropriate step for each group. The benefit of using content to determine interest rather than demographics is that you are allowing the individual to select their true interest, rather than relying on title, industry or other demographic-reported information, which may be misleading or inaccurate. Using the content to determine a prospect's interest shows that your company is full of true listeners, when it comes to customer needs. Additionally, by studying the profiles of webinar registrants showing interest in content related to a particular solution, marketers can uncover new target segments and adjust content creation appropriately for that new audience.

Webinar tip

HELPFUL HINTS

by Shelby Britton

The content of the webinar for which an individual registers tells you a great deal about which stage of the buying cycle that potential buyer is in—and whether you should consider them a sales-ready lead or simply a contact acquisition.

Eight Ways to Qualify Webinar Leads (cont.)

MARKETERS WHO USE EVERY POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITY TO MEASURE WEBINAR ATTENDEE INTEREST DURING THE EVENT ARE GATHERING VALUABLE INFORMATION ABOUT THE REGISTRANTS THEY HAVE ATTRACTED, AND DRIVING BETTER RESULTS (cont.).

3 *INTEREST IS NOT ALL ABOUT ATTENDANCE.*

"Attended" or "not attended" is the most basic way to look at this behavior, but webinar attendance does not tell the whole story. Tracking the recording views of each registrant is an extension of the story because registrants are still taking the time to consume the content. Realistically, attending a webinar live is not always an option. Keep in mind that just the act of registering for the webinar demonstrates interest in the content offered regardless of attendance or recording consumption. When determining score assignments for attendance, consider options for giving varying scores to a registrant who stays for the entire webinar or watches the entire recording versus someone who attends but leaves early or does not attend at all, while still giving consideration to the time they took to register for the webinar due to their interest in the promoted content.

4 *TEASE OUT SHOPPERS AT THE TOP OF THE FUNNEL.*

Adding a breakout session to the end of a top-of-funnel thought leadership webinar for a short demo of your product/service is a great way to identify current shoppers early in the marketing funnel. Tracking attendance to this session is very valuable information to pass to the sales team and should trigger accelerated interaction with these contacts.

5 *GATHERING INFORMATION IS A PROCESS.*

Take the interactive opportunity available via the webinar medium to ask a few more questions and gather more information about attendees during the live event beyond the registration data. Polling is an easy tactic to add to any webinar; however, it is also easy to use polling incorrectly. For instance, asking something you already know based on the registration information collected, or based on the content of the webinar, is a turn-off for webinar attendees. Additionally, beware of collecting information during a webinar without delivering value first. When rolling up behavior into a lead qualification score, assign specific poll answers differing scores, based on sales team input regarding qualified lead indicators.

6 *TRACK FURTHER VOLUNTARY CONTENT CONSUMPTION.*

Providing further resources for live and post-webinar consumption is a great way to track interest and engagement, which can add to the lead intelligence gathering, and therefore the lead score. Resources made available during the webinar and the webinar recording, such as a product overview PDF to download or a web link to a "Contact Us" form, are very valuable behaviors to track and add to the lead qualification process. Consider giving each file or web link a unique score. For instance, if someone downloads the PowerPoint presentation from the presenter, that is not as valuable as if they downloaded a solution overview about your product or service. Passing on specific intelligence to sales regarding what content each attendee consumed will guide the sales team's approach to lead follow-up correspondence, and could potentially produce a more fruitful conversation with that prospect. Depending on the webinar platform being used, this type of behavioral information can also be tracked for webinar recordings because the file download and web link options may remain live.

Eight Ways to Qualify Webinar Leads (cont.)

MARKETERS WHO USE EVERY POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITY TO MEASURE WEBINAR ATTENDEE INTEREST DURING THE EVENT ARE GATHERING VALUABLE INFORMATION ABOUT THE REGISTRANTS THEY HAVE ATTRACTED, AND DRIVING BETTER RESULTS (cont.).

7 *REAL-TIME CONVERSATIONS ACCELERATE THE PROCESS.*

Q&A is one of the most commonly used interactive tactics during webinars. Depending on the content of the webinar, attendees may be asking questions about your product and service, so having a way to flag these questions that indicate shopping behavior or strong interest is extremely valuable. Whether this behavior is wrapped up into an overall score, or the information is simply passed on to sales with the rest of the lead information, be sure not to overlook the richness of the information collected during Q&A. If applicable, inviting a sales representative to assist with attendees' questions during the webinar will accelerate the conversation with prospects in real time, while also facilitating a smooth hand off to sales.

8 *OVERALL ENGAGEMENT POINTS TO INTEREST LEVEL.*

Planning out interactions throughout the webinar will help marketing and sales gauge individuals' interest level. Adding chat participation, use of emoticons, participation in polls and activity during Q&A to the behavior scoring equation can give the sales teams an overall sense of how engaged each attendee was during the webinar to get a general sense of interest level. Some webinar platforms will generate this overall engagement score automatically. If not, marketing automation or CRM systems can wrap this data up into an overall score. Whether or not your systems can wrap up webinar behavior and content interest into a nice neat score, taking steps toward passing all the behavioral and content information collected before, during and after the webinar to sales in a meaningful way will help sales prioritize leads and provide a relevant follow-up effort.

Webinars, above all other marketing tactics, give marketers and sales a unique opportunity to interact with prospective clients and qualify leads based on real-time behavior. Scoring on webinar content and behavior is easier than ever before due to the digital nature of webinars, which allows for ease of tracking and integration with existing marketing systems. Generating sales-ready leads is the highest priority of any marketer responsible for lead generation, and gathering demographic information is not enough—it is time to take lead qualification to the next level.

The Snowball Effect: Repurposing Your Webinar Content

Tips on repurposing webinar content to maximize the benefits of your investment.

Approaching a webinar as a one-and-done event is a missed opportunity. Webinars can actually be the start of a "content snowball" that will help you build your content and offer library -– a perpetual challenge for content marketers. A lot of time and effort is poured into the content and delivery of each webinar. Why not milk that effort for all it is worth?

In a recent Adobe study, it was discovered that on average **55% of webinar registrants view the webinar recording**. When you add this to the industry-standard average 30–40% live attendance rate, it indicates that 85–95% of webinar registrants consume webinar content between the live event and the recording.

Reaping such high content consumption rates from your webinar production efforts simply by recording the live event seems like a no-brainer (and effortless!). In fact, a webinar recording is content that keeps on giving—offering 100%+ content consumption for months (and even years) to come.

Webinar tip — HELPFUL HINTS by Shelby Britton

On average, 55% of registrants will view the recording of the webinar for which they registered. This is higher than the average 30–40% who will actually attend the live event, making the webinar recording an important part of your content offering.

HERE ARE FIVE IDEAS TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR WEBINAR AFTER YOU PRESS "RECORD."

1 *SEND THE RECORDING TO ALL REGISTRANTS*

Attending a webinar live offers the advantage of interactivity and direct access to the speaker, but life happens for many well-intending webinar registrants. Keep in mind, however, that the act of registering for the webinar indicates a strong interest in the content you are offering. Take advantage of this interest by capturing the content and sending the recording to everyone that registered. As stated above, you will be rewarded by an increase in the content consumption of that webinar by 55% on average.

2 *RE-PURPOSE THE FULL WEBINAR RECORDING*

Now that you have recorded the webinar, you have an everlasting piece of content. If it is thought leadership content, consider posting it on YouTube or your website for immediate access by your target audience. Generate awareness for it via Twitter, LinkedIn or other social media resources at your disposal. If the webinar was a bottom-of-funnel activity, such as a demo, consider allowing access to the recording via a form to continue gathering leads after the live event.

3 *BREAK RECORDING INTO SEGMENTS*

Downloading the recording offline onto your desktop and using a tool like Adobe Premiere Elements allows you to break the recording into several segments. For continual lead generation, it might make sense to create a short teaser using an interesting part of the webinar to entice more folks to sign up to view the entire recording. Or perhaps you can pull out an interesting segment that can stand alone as a new piece of content. If there are several segments that can be pulled out, consider using them together as a series of content.

4 *CONVERT THE WEBINAR TO WRITTEN FORMATS*

If you have a blog that needs content, write up a short summary of the key points from the webinar, using some screen shot examples from the recording to visually spice up your post. Conclude the post with a link to the actual recording. You can also take this idea to the next level and write what I call a "webinar guide," which is a more detailed review of the webinar content, similar to a whitepaper or case study. Think about using this as a call to action in an e-mail or nurture campaign.

5 *ENSURE YOUR WEBINAR RECORDING IS INTERACTIVE*

Many webinar platforms offer interactive activities that can be deployed during the webinar, which makes the webinar so powerful in the live format. Some platforms will preserve this interactivity in the webinar recording itself. Look for ways to include activities in the live event that will also make your recording interactive even after the webinar—such as providing files to download or live web links to click on.

Go on—press "record"! You'll be glad you did.

Don't Waste Time on One-Off Webinars—A Case Study

Increase webinar effectiveness and ROI with an integrated, strategic series.

Feel free to steal some of the ideas in this case study, based on the Adobe Connect webinar program at Adobe, to build your own strategic webinar programs that produce fantastic results and make you the hero for your sales team…

Many a marketer—including myself a few years ago—spends a great deal of effort and budget promoting and producing product-focused webinars held sporadically throughout the year. More often than not, these webinars are not part of an integrated strategic plan and are mainly a one-and-done, stand-alone event intended to generate a bunch of sales leads. Registrations are collected, the event is produced and the contact information is sent to the sales team.

End of story.

And a sad story at that, since the results are typically mediocre at best. Poor results lead to a discouraged and untrusting sales team, as well as a frustrated webinar manager or marketer.

Now let me tell you a story with a happier ending that I hope will inspire you to approach lead-generation webinars strategically and with renewed enthusiasm.

Once upon a time…

I was staring at a spreadsheet of lackluster numbers related to my latest round of webinars—low e-mail-open rates (17%), lower click-through rates (5%), poor webinar registration and even worse lead-conversion rates (< 1%).

What is a marketer to do with such dismal results? Start over! And so I did. I still believed webinars were the right tactic for our product's marketing message and belonged in the marketing mix, but something had to change.

Our approach at the time was to hold webinars about how great our product was a few times each quarter. For each webinar, we put together a promotion plan consisting mainly of list rentals. This meant we were hitting a cold audience with whom we had no rapport with a hard sell. It struck me that this was like knocking on someone's door at dinner time to sell them Christmas wrapping paper in July.

We needed to build rapport with our target audience and provide some value before we asked them to buy something from us. And it needed to be relevant and timely. So I scratched the old program and rebuilt one based on an integrated drip-style strategy by breaking out the program into several levels and solution tracks.

THIS IS HOW OUR PROGRAM LOOKS TODAY:

LEVEL ONE: SOLUTION WEBINARS

What: Best practices related to the solution our product category offers (in our case, one product and two solutions—therefore, two distinct target audiences). This level of webinar provided best practices that would help our target audience do a better job at their job. We typically have a third-party speaker, such as an industry expert, analyst or author, present on our behalf.

Why: This level accomplished two things for us: 1) Provided value to our target audience, thus building rapport; and 2) Ensured we had the attention of the right audience. For example, if they signed up for a webinar on Solution 1, we knew they either already had a product in place for Solution 1, making it a potential competitive-replacement sale, or were looking to implement a Solution 1, making them potential first-time shoppers.

Promotion: We pour our entire promotion budget into this level—making this the level where we generate all of our raw inquiries. Sometimes we still rent opt-in lists, but mainly we moved to a model where we partner with third-party organizations that already have a relationship with our target audience and will promote these webinars on our behalf.

Are These Leads? We think not. We call these inquiries (which we consider simply quality contacts), and we no longer send these to our sales reps.

LEVEL TWO: PRODUCT WEBINARS

What: These webinars are demos of our product's features and benefits relevant to the solution we are highlighting. They are held monthly (after the supporting solution webinar), and all registrants from the solution webinar are invited to attend the next available, relevant product webinar.

Why: Once we have built rapport with the target audience by introducing ourselves via the solution webinar, we have found that the receptiveness to an invitation to come and learn about our product is much higher. Our e-mail-open rates went up to 30% and click-through rates increased to 11%. These are about double the rates from our previous one-off webinar approach.

Promotion: We spend little money on promotion here, relying almost solely on the registration lists developed at the solution webinar level.

Are These Leads? Yes! Our conversion rate spiked to 20%, up from less than 1%, using this approach.

Don't Waste Time on One-Off Webinars—A Case Study (cont.)

LEVEL THREE: COMPETITIVE-COMPARISON WEBINARS

What: A feature-and-benefit comparison of our product to other top competitors in our category. After a year or so of running level one and two webinars, we added this level three to our funnel.

Why: We began to see a need to share a competitive comparison with attendees from the product webinars who were obviously shopping. We developed the level three webinar to fill this gap and facilitate discussion—wanting to be sure we were part of any conversation around comparisons. We had to tread carefully and involve our brand and legal teams, something you will want to keep in mind if you decide to implement a similar type of webinar.

Promotion: Again, we typically spend little money on promotion here, relying almost solely on the registration lists developed at the product webinar and solution webinar levels. We include the solution webinar level registrants, because, again, we have already been introduced and not every buyer is at the same place in the buying cycle. This level is a nice ongoing program for us even outside our webinar program funnel, because it gives our sales reps a place to send prospects for information and gives us a content offering if we are running a competitive-replacement campaign elsewhere.

Are These Leads? Definitely. The conversion rate on these, as you might expect, is quite high. Our conversion to closed sale is in the 30% range at this level.

THE FINAL BUCKET

As a last touch in our conversation with the inquiries that enter the top of our funnel, we send an invitation to sign up for our trial. These trials are supported by a live daily training program.

What: We provide a trial for 30 days and support that with tips and tricks via e-mail to trial users during these 30 days. The live daily training program includes a series of five webinars that build on each other and guide users through the getting-started basics to more advanced features.

Why: We find the trial is very important for our product category and is the industry standard. The live daily training program holds trial users' hands, so to speak, to ensure that their experience is a good one and they experience all the product has to offer. If a trial is not used, it has no impact.

Promotion: The last touch inquiries receive after entering our funnel is an invitation to sign up for a trial. The trial program with the daily training series did exist before we developed our multi-level webinar program—we just incorporated it into our program.

Are These Leads? Yes. We see a 30% conversion rate from trial to sale here.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

In the funnel graphic, you may have noticed a note regarding breakout demo session at the solution webinar level.

What: This is a brief 10–15 minute demonstration of our product that we offer at the close of a solution webinar in case some folks decide they would like to see a demo that day.

Why: Not every buyer is in the same place in their buying cycle, so we added this element to catch those buyers who are farther along in their shopping and ready for a product demo.

Promotion: We mention it at the start and again at the close of the solution webinar. We provide a link to a different webinar room where they can go to participate in the demo that starts immediately upon close of the main event. Typically, we see 3–6% of solution webinar attendees join the breakout demo session.

Are These Leads? You bet!

CONCLUSION

Congratulations on taking steps for improving your webinars or for thoughtfully leaping into developing a new marketing program using webinars. As you most likely now know, I hope you plan to create a program strategically integrated throughout your marketing funnel, rather than one-off webinars here and there. You also no doubt now understand that webinars do not belong in just one place in the customer-engagement cycle—they can be used throughout the funnel to accomplish varying goals.

If you took my advice in the introduction to skip around and you went straight to the conclusion, here are the takeaways that I hope stick:

- Webinars are a tactic—the content determines where they fit in the marketing funnel
- Webinars are effective at all stages in the funnel, especially thought leadership
- Choosing the right platform is critical, and often hard to change once selected
- Ensure you procure the right resources and team members for your program
- Think through your contingency plans—you will be glad you took the time
- Webinar technology is powerful—use it to produce immersive experiences
- If your audience is not listening, your webinar is failing—engage, engage, engage!
- Record and re-purpose
- Analyze, measure and optimize at all stages of the webinar program lifecycle
- Work closely with your sales team to define sales-ready leads and tease out leads

I hope you have learned a lot and feel prepared to start your webinar journey. I welcome you to connect with me to continue the conversation—questions, feedback or critique! Although, if you found a spelling error, I don't need to know about it—I already know I'm a poor speller. You can find me discussing webinar best practices on Twitter using my handle ***@shelbyadobe*** or on my blog ***www.adobe.com/go/webinarblog***.

I look forward to hearing from you, and good luck!

APPENDIX

Webinar Platform Selection Checklist

FEATURE	IMPORTANT TO ME			VENDOR 1: ___________ VENDOR RATING			VENDOR 2: ___________ VENDOR RATING			VENDOR 3: ___________ VENDOR RATING			NOTES/ COMMENTS
Basic Considerations	**No**	**Somewhat**	**Yes**	**Poor**	**Fair**	**Good**	**Poor**	**Fair**	**Good**	**Poor**	**Fair**	**Good**	
Number of hosts/presenters													
Audience capacity													
Polling													
Moderated Q&A													
Open Chat													
File sharing/upload for display/ presentation/play (PPT, PDF, JPG, FLV, MP4, MP3, etc.)													
Screen sharing													
Flexible room design													
Mobile access													
Audio options (VoIP, teleconferencing, UV, or all)													
Free vendor product training													
Price													
Specific Needs and Customization	**No**	**Somewhat**	**Yes**	**Poor**	**Fair**	**Good**	**Poor**	**Fair**	**Good**	**Poor**	**Fair**	**Good**	
Persistence of content													
Content library and uploaded content													
Recording, including editing and view tracking													
Video (webcam) streaming													
Video (rich media) streaming (FLV, MP4)													
Registration functionality													
E-mail functionality													
Branding and customizability													
Passwords/attendee log-in security													
Presenter-only area functionality													
Tracking, Scoring and Reporting	**No**	**Somewhat**	**Yes**	**Poor**	**Fair**	**Good**	**Poor**	**Fair**	**Good**	**Poor**	**Fair**	**Good**	
Attendance reporting (yes, no, duration)													
Campaign tracking													
Engagement tracking													
Lead scoring													
Attendee behavior tracking (poll results, files downloaded, Q&A)													
Marketing automation and CRM integration													

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Shelby has been in high-tech marketing since 2004, having led the marketing departments for channel partners of IBM and Adobe, and, most recently, implementing programs in field marketing, demand generation and product marketing at Adobe. During this time, she has produced and managed over 500 webinars. Previously, she ran a small business in professional sports entertainment in California. She has an MBA with a dual-focus in Marketing and Management from San Diego State University and a BA in Literature and Writing from the University of California San Diego, Revelle.

About Adobe Connect Webinars

Adobe Connect Webinars have been designed with the specific needs of marketers in mind.

Adobe Connect
Webinars for Content Marketing

Using *Adobe Connect Webinars*, marketers can generate leads effectively by delivering immersive customer experiences and measuring content engagement. Powerful built-in analytics measure results to identify the most relevant leads and optimize campaign investments. The creative flexibility and wealth of interactive options allow marketers to deliver thought leadership content in a dynamic and memorable way. Adobe Connect is the ideal solution for any marketing organization committed to delivering content via truly impactful events to showcase products, services and thought leadership.

ADOBE CONNECT WEBINARS PROVIDE:

- Immersive customer experiences
- Deeply engaging content delivery
- Campaign management and lead scoring
- Behavior and engagement reporting
- Complete event management tools
- Fully customizable landing pages and environments
- Custom-branded experiences
- Webinar room design and content persistency
- Easy access from virtually any device

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