



## Webinars that Work

### 6 Essentials for a Successful Webinar

By Drew Zagorski  
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Webinars are a great way to create strong connections with clients and prospects, to present you and your company as 'thought leaders' in your industry and very useful for promoting your message and your brand. However, if executed poorly, they can do just the opposite. If you're going to deliver a single webinar, or a series of them, take the time to plan well, make sure your content hits the mark and that you always account for Mr. Murphy - when it comes to technology, it's not a matter of when a glitch will pop up, but when.

Here are 5 essentials for producing and delivering webinars that work...

#### 1. CONTENT IS KING

You can put together a great format and have the best tools for delivering the content, but if it's not relevant or your audience isn't aware of it, you might as well pack it in before you waste any more time. Keep your ears open about what people are looking for, where their pain is, what they want or need to know about and base your content on that. Don't assume that because you're an expert on some topic that it will be meaningful or attract the attention of the people you want to invite to the show. Place your (or your speaker's) expertise in the context of the audience's needs. If they can see the value of your information from their perspective, they won't see your webinar as a dressed up sales pitch (which, of course, it isn't).

So:

- ☛ Make your content relevant to your audience and approach it from their perspective. Training seminars, panel discussions and straightforward presentation of new/groundbreaking information will all work if you package them the right way.
- ☛ Engage with your audience by opening a two way discussion with them. Make sure that whatever tools you're using enable the audience to see the content (slides) and participate in the discussion and ask questions.
- ☛ Keep the selling out of it. Let your knowledge and the content do the selling for you. Selling will only cause participants to drop off the line.

- ☛ Respect your audience's time - Don't be afraid to break a webinar up into two or more sessions, though one will work best. Most people will hang in there for about 30-60 minutes. Any longer than that, your content will either put them to sleep or they'll need to drop out of the webinar to get on with their day.

#### 2. SCREEN YOUR SPEAKER(S)

Make sure your speaker will be able to carry the audience - you don't want them to have the same delivery as the teacher from the Peanuts cartoon. If you're doing the speaking, screen yourself by presenting the topic to a small audience of people who will be honest with you about your delivery. Here are some other criteria for your speakers:

- ☛ **Presentation/Speaking Experience** - Make sure the speaker(s) have experience in presenting to an online audience. The dynamics of interacting with an online crowd are very different than interacting with an in-person group. The speaker's tone, for example, is very important when there's no gesturing or stage motion to keep the audience's attention.
- ☛ **Credibility** - Whether you or some other high profile person will be doing the speaking, make sure they come with credibility. Sometimes, a high profile person will get more interest from prospective attendees. That's nothing against your abilities, experience and knowledge, but who would most people be more inclined to listen to? You or Bill Gates? You or the Governor? You get the point. All this doesn't mean you can't be just as credible, but it's highly likely that credibility will exist mostly with those people who already know you. If you're looking to capture a new audience, someone with more visibility might be a better draw.

You can also put together a panel, which you can participate in or moderate. If you're considering a panel, keep in mind that these work well for video webinars, since multiple presenters can add confusion for attendees who are viewing slides and cannot discern which party is speaking.

- ☛ **Passionate about their topic... and compensated** - Try to find speakers who are passionate about what they do, as opposed someone looking to simply promote themselves and their services.



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Compensating the speaker with cash is the best way to keep them on time with deliverables and on message, without self-promoting themselves. Compensating with shared leads can lead to self-promotion.

- ☛ Be perfectly clear - Be up front with your speakers about expectations, timelines and schedules. Make sure you have a written agreement with them for what they're going to do and not do, and work directly with the speaker if at all possible, not an admin or assistant.

### 3. KNOW YOUR WEBINAR TECHNOLOGY

There are many webinar tools out there, and at this point in the evolution of the technology, most of them are pretty comparable. However, whatever tool you select, make sure you know it inside and out, especially, how to trouble shoot when an issue comes up. Here are some other considerations:

- ☛ Make sure it's easy for the end user to use. Assume you're audience doesn't know a thing about using webinar tools.
- ☛ Make sure it has all the features you need... not just those you want, i.e.: moderated-chat capability, data collection and reporting capabilities, Mac and PC compatibility, compatibility with all connection speeds, an interface that allows for branding...
- ☛ One of the benefits of offering webinars is to be able to add that content to your website. With that in mind, you may want to make sure the service you select allows you to share files (including video and music), offers screen sharing and web-cam capability, offers a license so you can run the webinar on your own server, provides white boards and polling capability, allows you to record and replay the webinar on demand, and if you have rights to recordings if you switch providers.

### 4. TIMED RIGHT

Timing applies to the timeliness of your content as well as respecting your audience's time. Plan you webinars for the middle of the week, the middle of the month, and middle of day. If your audience is in multiple time zones, you may want to plan for several sessions to accommodate for the difference. Also, avoid scheduling close to or on holidays.

### 5. GET THE WORD OUT!

Start promoting your webinar about three to four weeks in advance so that you give attendees a chance to plan, but not enough time to forget. Web channels such as email, social networks (for those of you looking for an ideal use for Twitter, this is it!), and e-newsletter or blog tie-ins work well, especially assuming that registration will take place online; but you might also use tradeshow and whitepaper promotions to get the word out.

You might also consider cross promoting with the speaker or your business partners. Provide promotional tools (email blasts, mailers, web banners) for your speaker to help them promote the event.

Finally, a day or two before the webinar, send out an email reminder to all the registrants.

### 6. REGISTRATION CONSIDERATIONS

Make sure your registration process is easy and bullet proof. Here are a few things to consider when setting up your registration process:

- ☛ Provide all the details about your webinar, including date, time, length, and cost (if your webinar is free, it will help to advertise that fact, as well).
- ☛ Include an compelling overview. Make sure the audience knows why this will be beneficial for them and a good use of their time.
- ☛ Highlight what attendees stand to learn, and speak to the professional experience of your speaker.
- ☛ Include a list of frequently asked questions, as well as contact information for addressing any questions or concerns.
- ☛ Of course you want to also make sure you collect all the relevant contact information from registrants so you can stay in touch with them before and after the webinar.
- ☛ You should also always confirm registration by email and use that opportunity to once again ask registrants to invite others to join.

Finally, when you have a chance to exhale and the webinar's been completed, send a follow up email to all who participated to thank them. Better still,



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include a link to an online survey to collect their feedback and input on the content, as well as suggestions for future webinar topics.

Webinars can be a powerful marketing tool if delivered effectively. Take the time to do yours the right way!

*Drew Zagorski is the Principal of LeftBrainRightBrain Marketing. You can reach him at [drew@lbrbmarketing.com](mailto:drew@lbrbmarketing.com).*

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