reseller CONNECT

Tech Data — The Difference in Distribution

> How to Make webinars work for You

Introduction

Do webinars really work?

Webinars have become a staple in the B2B marketing mix for good reason. According to Marketing Sherpa's 2011 B2B Marketing Advanced Practices handbook, 92 percent of respondents said webinars were one of the most effective means of generating high-quality leads.[1]

Well-executed webinars deliver benefits for both you and attendees. They provide you with a high-impact, low-cost platform to reach many prospects with a single presentation. Attendees gain valuable information from wherever they are with minimal disruption to their busy schedules and no travel.

So what can you do to ensure your webinar goes smoothly and delivers solid results? There are three key factors that contribute to a successful webinar—having a plan, creating a wow experience and timely follow-up. This white paper takes a deep dive into each of these and shares best practices that'll help make sure your webinars work.

---

[1]Diana Silva, "How to Increase Webinar Attendance and Maximize Conversion," InteSolv, accessed March 6, 2013,
http://www.intesolv.com/index.php/how-to-increase-webinar-attendance-and-maximize-conversion/

Having a Plan is a Must

Thinking through the webinar process is the most important thing you can do to make sure your efforts produce results. A solid plan includes what you expect to accomplish with the webinar, as well as what you need to do before, during and after the event. Make sure your plan includes these key elements:

Identify Your Objective and Purpose
The first question to ask yourself is why you want to host a webinar. You should have a clear objective and understand the benefits to you and your organization. Typical goals include to:

- Establish credibility, or build relationships and trust
- Demonstrate capabilities
- Educate attendees on how you can solve a problem
- Gain awareness for a new product or service, or get a foothold within a new market
- Gather feedback or market intelligence
- Move prospects forward in the sales cycle[2]

Make sure your goals are measurable. There's no point in spending the time and effort if you can't measure whether or not you fell short, met or wildly exceeded your goals.

Target the Right Audience
Clearly identify who you want to show up and what they'll gain by attending. Find out as much as possible about your ideal audience. This frequently skipped step sets the stage for virtually every aspect of the webinar process.

Define a Schedule
Webinars are typically 30 to 60 minutes in length. As a general rule, avoid Mondays (too busy) and Fridays (usually filled with last-minute projects or early-departure days). Taking time zones into consideration, mid-day generally works best for all participants.[3]

Create a Communications Plan
You need a solid plan for getting the word out. Outline each step, who's responsible, how it'll be done and when. Remember, the conversation doesn't end with the webinar. Make sure your communications plan includes a specific follow-up schedule for both attendees and non-attendees.

How to Create a Wow Experience

Your attendees' experience begins when you decide to host your webinar. Every detail—from planning, promotion and registration to presentation content and follow-up—must be crafted with your ideal attendee in mind.

[2]"How to Market and Sell Services with Webinars", A Quantum Leap Marketing White Paper, June 2009, Sponsored by GoToMeeting Corporate, p3-4

[3]Ken Molay, "The Results Are In: Best Times for a Webinar," Marketing Watchdog Journal, May 2008, Issue 51, http://events.bulldogsolutions.com/newsletters/articles/leadgen_0508.html

How to Create a Wow Experience (cont'd)

Know Your Audience

Creating a memorable, and motivating, experience for your webinar attendees isn't rocket science—it's sales. And the first rule of good selling is to know your ideal prospect. Not just what company they work for and their title, but how they're compensated and measured, which aspects of their job frustrate or challenge them daily, why, what alternatives they have and how your solution uniquely saves the day. This takes some effort, but doing your homework translates into results.

The better you target prospects with a real need for your solution, the more compelling your webinar will be, and the higher your attendance. According to Ken Molay, founder of Webinar Success, a general open-call webinar typically results in a 33 percent attendance rate, while a highly targeted webinar can see an attendance rate as high as 65 percent![4] Make sure your webinar offers your audience timely, valuable content that helps make their job easier. TDAgency's resellerCONNECT and vendorCONNECT programs help you fine-tune your value proposition and profile your ideal prospects to make sure you reach the right people.

Bonus tip #1: Include one or two qualifying questions on your registration form, but be careful not to overdo it, or many will decide it's too much work or too invasive. Another option is to include a few questions in your confirmation or reminder emails, such as what their biggest obstacles are to moving forward with your type of solution. Make it clear you're asking because you want to make the session as productive and informative as possible.[5]

Promote, Promote, Promote

There's nothing worse than putting together a must-see presentation that took months to put together and delivering it to three people—so you need to get the word out to as many people as possible (who fit your ideal profile, of course) and make sure the message strikes a chord.

There's a fine line between not promoting your webinar enough and leave me alone already. According to Natalia Valencia's How to Best Promote Your Webinar blog post dated Aug. 15, 2012, it's safe to kick-off promotion efforts 15-30 days prior to your event. If you start before that, chances are invitees will forget or lose interest. If you wait, they won't have time to plan and attendance will suffer.

The best promotion methods depend on your specific target audience, but here are some suggestions on ways to invite people to your webinar:

- Email is the most popular method. Keep in mind the best times to send emails are usually in the morning, Tuesday through Thursday.[6] Include in-house prospect and customer lists.

[4]Diana Silva, "How to Increase Webinar Attendance and Maximize Conversion," InteSolv, accessed March 6, 2013,
http://www.intesolv.com/index.php/how-to-increase-webinar-attendance-and-maximize-conversion/

[5]Ken Molay, "Best Practices for Webinars, Increasing attendance, engaging your audience, and successfully advancing your business goals,"
Webinar Success, accessed March 5, 2013, (2009) p4,
http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobatconnectpro/webconferencing/pdfs/Best_Practices_for_Webinars_v4_FINAL.pdf

[6]"When is the best time to send emails?," Topic: Reports and Tracking, Updated February 3, 2012,
http://kb.mailchimp.com/article/when-is-the-best-time-to-send-emails

How to Create a Wow Experience (cont'd)

- Send a short blurb with a link to employees and ask them to add it to their email signature.[7]
- Offer partners the opportunity to co-sponsor the event and, in exchange for increased visibility and reach, request that they market to their lists.
- Include a short blurb with a link in all existing marketing efforts—newsletters, blog posts, banner ads
- Post event details and a link on your home page and other relevant sections of your website
- Natalia Valencia's Aug. 15, 2012 blog post on How to Best Promote Your Webinar suggests you create a group on LinkedIn, post the event to Facebook and promote it on Twitter
- Put out a press release announcing your event

A Few Email Pointers

Make sure your email invitation includes the key details—webinar title, day and time, compelling benefits and a call-to-action to register. Give them at least two places to take action—one (maybe a text hyperlink) towards the top of your email and a second (preferably a button that begs to be clicked) at the bottom. Outline a series of emails to send at specific intervals to non-respondents. The primary content can remain the same but switch-up the subject lines and headlines.

Go Big on Benefits

One of the biggest mistakes people make with webinar invitations and registration pages is not making a compelling case for prospects to attend. No one's going to make time to attend a sales pitch. Your prospects have a full plate, just like you, and are probably bombarded by webinar invitations by the hour—so listing a few bullets with features of your solution or basic points you'll cover won't cut it.

You need to connect the dots and paint a vivid picture of their challenges, what they'll learn, and how this knowledge will make their job easier and fuel their success.[8] Include three to five compelling, benefit-rich bullets—the more specific, the better. Tell them how much time or money they'll save, how much their sales will increase. Tap into emotions such as frustration, stress, fear, relief, freedom and excitement.

How to Raise Registration Rates

Many factors impact the number of people that'll register for your webinar. Common culprits for low registration include not inviting the right prospects, offering a topic that's not relevant, missing the mark with your invitation and registration messages, not scheduling the event at the right time, and making the registration too complex. Expect the majority of your registrations within 10 days of your webinar.[9] Here are some tips to help boost registrations:

Stick to a one-step registration (click a link or button that sends them to the registration page). Don't ask for more information than you absolutely need on the registration page. Even if a field is optional it makes the form look daunting. There's a significant drop after five fields.

[7]Diana Silva, "How to Increase Webinar Attendance and Maximize Conversion," InteSolv, accessed March 6, 2013, http://www.intesolv.com/index.php/how-to-increase-webinar-attendance-and-maximize-conversion/

[8]"How to Market and Sell Services with Webinars", A Quantum Leap Marketing White Paper, June 2009, Sponsored by GoToMeeting Corporate, p7

[9]"How to Market and Sell Services with Webinars", A Quantum Leap Marketing White Paper, June 2009, Sponsored by GoToMeeting Corporate, p6

How to Create a Wow Experience (cont'd)

- Track where registrations come from and who attends to fine-tune content and promotions for future webinars.
- Sweeten the pot with a special incentive such as a white paper, eBook, or demo. Offer something that's related to your topic. Prizes such as gift cards and iPads are okay, but remember your goal is to attract attendees who can truly benefit from the content, not just get people to plug in for the freebie.[10]
- Create a compelling webinar title that makes it clear who should attend and why. How to topics and Top 10s work well.
- Make sure the event description is brief, punchy and easy to read. Tee up the challenge (why they can't afford to miss it), introduce the solution designed to solve that challenge and include three or four benefit-rich bullets of what they'll learn and how it'll help them.

It's Attendance That Counts

Registrations are great. Attendance is better. Here are some tips for not just getting them to say yes, but increasing the odds they'll actually participate:

- The best way to get people to show up is to give them a compelling reason. Show them they'll walk away with actionable insights versus just seeing a demo or listening to features of your product.
- Remind them of the event. Often. But not too often. Studies have shown that unless you send reminders, as many as 67 percent of registrants won't show up.[11] So what's the right frequency for reminders? Send an immediate confirmation when someone registers, then time reminders for one week, 24 hours and one to three hours before the webinar.
- Keep registrants focused on the benefits of attending in your reminders with revved up subject lines like "Remember, tomorrow is your opportunity to learn how to slash storage costs by 50 percent with ABC technology."[12]
- Tie the incentive to attendance rather than just registration.[13]
- Turn the waiting period into an active experience. Make confirmation emails engaging by including a white paper or case study to get them thinking beforehand, or ask them to submit their burning questions.[14]

[10]Diana Silva, "How to Increase Webinar Attendance and Maximize Conversion," InteSolv, accessed March 6, 2013, http://www.intesolv.com/index.php/how-to-increase-webinar-attendance-and-maximize-conversion/

[11]Todd Davison, "A Full House Brings a Jackpot of Qualified Leads: Drive them to your webinar event, Part three of a series," Bulldog Solutions, http://www.internetviz-newsletters.com/bulldog/e_article000254458.cfm

[12]Ken Molay, "Best Practices for Webinars, Increasing attendance, engaging your audience, and successfully advancing your business goals," Webinar Success, accessed March 5, 2013, (2009) p4, http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobatconnectpro/webconferencing/pdfs/Best_Practices_for_Webinars_v4_FINAL.pdf

[13]Howard J. Sewell, "Does Offering a FreeiPad Increase Webinar Registration?," Spear Marketing Group, http://spearmarketing.com/blog/does-offering-a-free-ipad-increase-webinar-registration/

[14]Karen Gedney, "Drive Webinar Registrations via E-mail," July 11, 2007, http://www.clickz.com/showPage.html?page=clickz_print&id=3626373

How to Create a Wow Experience (cont'd)

Keep Your Presentation on Point

Most webinars run for one full hour—which is a significant slice out of someone's busy day. Consider offering a 30-minute webinar as an alternative to test if that boosts attendance.[15] Here are a few best practices to keep you on track:

- If you have a lot of content to cover, offer a webinar series to keep your audience wanting more without losing their attention.
- Cover the most important content first in case people drop off or lose interest.[16]
- Assign someone to monitor questions and chat during the event so you can focus on the presentation.
- Have prepared questions in case no one speaks up. If you kick things off, others will follow naturally.
- Tell attendees you'll follow-up directly to address questions you don't have time to answer.
- Leverage every opportunity to deliver a call-to-action. First, right after you've completed your core content before jumping into Q&A. Again at the end of the session before closing. Finally, in your post-event emails.[17]
- Try standing up while presenting—and smile! It'll come through in your voice and the audience will sense your extra energy.[18]
- Show versus tell—use examples, facts and case studies as often as you can.
- Create your own notes to keep you on track and practice so it feels conversational.

Bonus tip #2: Mentally picture your audience as one person sitting in your office. Speak as if you're having a one-way conversation with him or her.

Keep Listeners Engaged

More than 80 percent of people surveyed admit to multitasking while on a webinar.[19] What can you do to peak their interest and keep them focused on your presentation? Plenty!

[15]Diana Silva, "How to Increase Webinar Attendance and Maximize Conversion," InteSolv, accessed March 6, 2013, http://www.intesolv.com/index.php/how-to-increase-webinar-attendance-and-maximize-conversion/

[16]Ken Molay, "Best Practices for Webinars, Increasing attendance, engaging your audience, and successfully advancing your business goals," Webinar Success, accessed March 5, 2013, (2009) p6, http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobatconnectpro/webconferencing/pdfs/Best_Practices_for_Webinars_v4_FINAL.pdf

[17]Ken Molay, "Best Practices for Webinars, Increasing attendance, engaging your audience, and successfully advancing your business goals," Webinar Success, accessed March 5, 2013, (2009) p12, http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobatconnectpro/webconferencing/pdfs/Best_Practices_for_Webinars_v4_FINAL.pdf

[18]Ken Molay, "Best Practices for Webinars, Increasing attendance, engaging your audience, and successfully advancing your business goals," Webinar Success, accessed March 5, 2013, (2009) p7, http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobatconnectpro/webconferencing/pdfs/Best_Practices_for_Webinars_v4_FINAL.pdf

[19]"Webinar Presentation Tips, 8 Hot Tips For Engaging Clients During a Webinar," How to Webinar, March 7, 2013, http://howtowebinar.com/webinar-presentation-tips

How to Create a Wow Experience (cont'd)

- Keep it simple and use lots of images.
- Include your photo on the introduction slide. This helps create a more personal connection.
- Tell attendees how they can submit questions and when they'll be addressed. Also use polls.[20]
- Refer to the questioner by first name and use the word 'you' throughout your presentation so they feel as if you're talking directly to them.[21]
- Offer them something worth sticking around to the end for—such as a special report or giveaway. If there's a lot of data to share, think about providing it as a handout they'll get at the end.[22]
- Pepper your presentation with phrases such as, "If there's one thing you need to take away from this webinar it's this," or "Write this down…"[23]
- Use humor—it's not as hard as you might think. Use a humorous image. Share an "in" joke from the industry. Make fun of yourself. Use a silly poll or play a funny video.

The Webinar Presentation Formula

Pulling together a solid webinar presentation doesn't have to be complicated. Stick with this formula:

- For a one-hour session, plan on 40 minutes of actual presentation time, starting about two minutes after the hour to allow for late arrivals, and 15-18 minutes for Q&A and wrap-up.
- A good presentation flows at about 2-3 minutes per slide, 10-15 slides max
- Start with basic housekeeping—how long the session will run, how Q&A will be handled and what they can expect to receive after the session.
- Lead with a strong introduction including why you're the best person to be sharing this information.
- Run through the agenda, including your objective and what's in it for them.
- Don't try to include everything but the kitchen sink—limit it to two or three core components.
   o Paint a clear picture of the problem
   o Cite industry references and share case studies to reinforce the significance of the problem
   o Describe your solution and why you're uniquely positioned to meet their needs
- Set aside five to ten minutes for Q&A
- Wrap up, thank attendees for their time, include next steps and provide your contact information.
- Close the session with a clear call-to-action. Communicate what you want participants to do and how they'll benefit.[24]

[20]Ken Molay, "Best Practices for Webinars, Increasing attendance, engaging your audience, and successfully advancing your business goals," Webinar Success, accessed March 5, 2013, (2009) p12,
http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobatconnectpro/webconferencing/pdfs/Best_Practices_for_Webinars_v4_FINAL.pdf

[21]Ken Molay, "Best Practices for Webinars, Increasing attendance, engaging your audience, and successfully advancing your business goals," Webinar Success, accessed March 5, 2013, (2009) p7,
http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobatconnectpro/webconferencing/pdfs/Best_Practices_for_Webinars_v4_FINAL.pdf

[22]"Webinar Presentation Tips, 8 Hot Tips For Engaging Clients During a Webinar," How to Webinar, March 7, 2013,
http://howtowebinar.com/webinar-presentation-tips

[24]"Webinar Presentation Tips, 8 Hot Tips For Engaging Clients During a Webinar," How to Webinar, March 7, 2013,
http://howtowebinar.com/webinar-presentation-tips

Don't Forget the Follow-up

This is the most important step, but falls by the wayside. Why run a marathon and stop five feet before crossing the finish line?

Savor the Statistics
Your webinar software should provide plenty of data to help you prioritize leads and fine-tune future efforts. Review how many attended, how long they stayed, how engaged they were and answers to polls. Take note of the high and low points of your presentation, and identify your best prospects. Compare statistics from session to session to look for trends regarding registrations, attendees (at both the beginning and end of sessions), survey results, number of leads and engagement.

Thank Attendees
Follow-up with attendees within 24 to 48 hours while the information is fresh and motivation to act is high.[25] Send attendees a thank you email within an hour of the event that drives them online where they can download a white paper or offer them a free trial. Ask them if they have any unanswered questions or topics for future sessions. Schedule another email one to three days after the event that includes items you promised in your presentation and re-states special offers or calls-to-action.[26]

Reach Out to Non-Attendees
Don't assume the folks who didn't show are a lost cause. We all have last-minute schedule conflicts. Send a "sorry we missed you" email within 24 to 48 hours to everyone who registered but didn't attend that offers them the opportunity to listen to the recorded session and download giveaways. Track who takes action and have sales follow-up.[27]

Don't Stop There
Maximize the impact of your webinar by posting the link to the recording on your website, in email signatures and newsletters, and on social media sites.

Conclusion

Putting on a successful webinar requires work but can really pay off. Follow these best practices—start with a solid and detailed plan, create an informative and engaging experience, and perform timely follow-up—to significantly improve your success. Tech Data helps vendors and resellers fine-tune their value proposition, clearly profile target customers and effectively promote their webinars. Call us at **800-668-5588, ext. 26996** or email us at **resellerconnect@techdata.ca** today to see how we can transform all your marketing efforts to drive maximum results.

[25]Diana Silva, "How to Increase Webinar Attendance and Maximize Conversion," InteSolv, accessed March 6, 2013, http://www.intesolv.com/index.php/how-to-increase-webinar-attendance-and-maximize-conversion/

[26]"Best Practices for Making Your Webinar a Success: Post-Event Evaluation," Frost & Sullivan, April 2010, p 2, http://www.readytalk.com/legacy/docs/brochures/readytalk-best-practices-post-event-evaluation-fs.pdf

[27]Diana Silva, "How to Increase Webinar Attendance and Maximize Conversion," InteSolv, accessed March 6, 2013, http://www.intesolv.com/index.php/how-to-increase-webinar-attendance-and-maximize-conversion/

Bibliography

"Best Practices for Making Your Webinar a Success: Post-Event Evaluation," Frost & Sullivan, April 2010, p 2, http://www.readytalk.com/legacy/docs/brochures/readytalk-best-practices-post-event-evaluation-fs.pdf

Todd Davison, "A Full House Brings a Jackpot of Qualified Leads, Drive them to your webinar event, Part three of a series," Bulldog Solutions, http://www.internetviz-newsletters.com/bulldog/e_article000254458.cfm

Karen Gedney, "Drive Webinar Registrations via E-mail," July 11, 2007, http://www.clickz.com/showPage.html?page=clickz_print&id=3626373

How to Market and Sell Services with Webinars, A Quantum Leap Marketing White Paper, June 2009, Sponsored by GoToMeeting Corporate

Ken Molay, "Best Practices for Webinars, Increasing attendance, engaging your audience, and successfully advancing your business goals," Webinar Success, accessed March 5, 2013, (2009) http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobatconnectpro/webconferencing/pdfs/Best_Practices_for_Webinars_v4_FINAL.pdf

Ken Molay, "The Results Are In: Best Times for a Webinar," Marketing Watchdog Journal, May 2008, Issue 51, http://events.bulldogsolutions.com/newsletters/articles/leadgen_0508.html

www.readytalk.com, readytalk-ama-web-event-best-practice.pdf, pg 7

Howard J. Sewell, "Does Offering a FreeiPad Increase Webinar Registration?," Spear Marketing Group, http://spearmarketing.com/blog/does-offering-a-free-ipad-increase-webinar-registration/

Diana Silva, "How to Increase Webinar Attendance and Maximize Conversion," InteSolv, accessed March 6, 2013, http://www.intesolv.com/index.php/how-to-increase-webinar-attendance-and-maximize-conversion/

"When is the best time to send emails?,"Reports and Tracking, Updated February 3, 2012, http://kb.mailchimp.com/article/when-is- the-best-time-to-send-emails