Are you "webinar ready"?
New ebook tells the secrets for producing the best lead-driving webinars
By Mary Sullivan

When was the last time you put on a webinar? Most marketers have run webinars at one time or another; many are disinclined to do them again, in significant part because they are much more time-consuming to produce than a lot of other content options. But webinars, because of the amount of time the _users_ must commit to participating in a webcast, also draw a more interested, and I would say qualified, prospect than other types of content.

When we surveyed our KickStart newsletter readers last year, 65% of them cited webinars and webcasts as top tools for developing new prospects for their businesses. I believe many marketers would produce more webcasts if the logistics weren't so complex.

To the rescue: Mike Agron of WebAttract! WebAttract is a firm that provides full-service webinar production and consulting, and Agron has published an e-book titled "Webinar Ready." This compact guide is a must-read for every marketer who isn't totally confident about putting on highly effective webinars. The book explains every aspect of producing a webinar and is loaded with tips from professionals who do this all the time.

The various webinar platforms (GoToWebinar, WebEx, etc.) provide guidelines, but _WebinarReady_ includes handy checklists to assure that you don't miss key details for each stage of the project. Agron likens producing a webinar to putting on a play and uses the theater metaphor to break down your action steps into playbill "Acts."

In **Act I**, the Planning stage, you will get commitment from the people who will be part of your cross-functional team. You will realize from the book exactly what roles need to be filled, and you should identify early who will be able to work with you throughout the process. Of course, much of what happens in Act I is establishing the objectives and messages for this particular webcast. But you also gain a lot of guidance that will make a difference in executing your plan. You learn, for instance, to _allow one hour of pre-production time for each live webinar minute_. That means for a one-hour webinar, you'll need to allocate approximately 60 hours of pre-production time! Take heart. For many of our clients who do webinars on a regular basis to nurture prospects, this pre-production time is lower.

Act II is when you develop and send the invitation, and it happens prior to creating the webinar content. You may not send it out immediately, but doing it early focuses the team's attention on the audience. Creating the invitation first may not be intuitive, but you've already defined your audience profile and planned out your messages during Act I. The invitation, registration landing page and metrics are key parts of the webinar process.

Act III discusses content creation. _WebinarReady_ stresses that the purpose of the webinar should _not_ be to sell. The purpose is to stimulate curiosity, teach attendees, and "inspire

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them to want to have a conversation." Act III is packed with all kinds of good tips on producing your slides, both visually and in terms of content. It encourages you to frame your message as a story, much as a playwright does with a play. You'll receive reminders about using polling and other methods to make your webinar interactive and engage your audience. Also in Act III you go through multiple reviews and rehearsals during which you can refine your content.

In **Act IV** you conduct sound checks (audio quality is too often overlooked), go through a Final Checklist and go live. Congratulations! But don't think you're done. **Act V**, while it almost sounds anti-climactic, is important because you need to send Thank Yous to attendees and conduct follow-up analytics. And make sure the hand-off to sales is well defined and working smoothly so every qualified registrant and/or attendee receives follow-up from sales.

Even if you have put on many webinars in the past, you will learn new tricks and do an even better job on your next webcast if you take advantage of downloading and using this free e-book. And if you use WebAttract's consulting services you may raise your bar even higher.

Mary Sullivan, a co-founder of KickStart Alliance, helps technology companies launch new products. Mary is an experienced content marketer who works from the customer perspective and leverages social networks, blogs, written and video content for inbound marketing. Want help with content strategy? Contact Mary.

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