

Practical Tips for Hosting a Prospect Webinar

by Wendy Ackerman

Sn. Meeting Consultant, Intercall

Webinars are an excellent way to educate prospects and move them further along in your sales process. They are cost-effective, provide a global reach and are an excellent “offer” for lead generation campaigns. No wonder these events are growing at an unprecedented rate of over 20% per year. According to PC Magazine, executives believe that a vendor who invites them to a Web conference is technologically savvy, respectful of their time and budget, and smart and efficient. But delivering a successful webinar can be a challenge. How can you improve attendance? What if you run into technical difficulties? Here are some practical “before, during and after” tips to make your next webinar a success.

Before: Planning your Webinar

Proper preparation is vital to executing a successful webinar.

Select your vendor

- Not all webinar hosting vendors are alike. Choose a vendor that works with a variety of operating systems, is reliable and scalable. Also, consider vendors experienced in the latest techniques in application sharing, polling, chat and recording features.
- Some vendors also provide targeted opt-in email lists that are bundled with the webinar hosting.

Engage the help of a meeting consultant

- Vendors such as Intercall, which offers Webex, Placeware and other offerings, provide meeting consultants as part of their service. These consultants will educate you on best practices, train you on how to conduct a successful webinar, and be present during the webinar to assist with any issues that may arise.
- Choose a meeting moderator or “DJ” to assist the speaker or speakers. Intercall offers moderators trained by CNN for a truly professional moderator.

Select dates & times to maximize attendance

- Plan to host the webinar at least twice to accommodate different time zones. Avoid Mondays or Fridays as these are peak conferencing days and attendance is also often lower.
- Start at 15 minutes past the hour. Most meetings end on the hour and this gives your participants time to decompress before joining your meeting.

Prepare an exciting presentation

- Invite an industry expert, customer or partner to participate. This will stimulate more interest, drive participation and create synergy.
- Don't cram too much type or information on your slides. Keep them simple and leave plenty of white space or background.
- You may also want to use sponsorships to defray your promotional costs or to expand your reach.

During: Conducting the Webinar:

Practice webinar etiquette

- Join your meeting early and verify that all links and presentations are working. Share a "welcome" slide that says your meeting will be starting shortly.
- Before your meeting begins, provide a quick review of housekeeping items, such as how to use the chat feature, or how the Q&A session will be handled.
- Have each speaker identify themselves when speaking, and add a photo and bio of the speakers.
- Remember to mute all lines until the Q&A session begins.

Avoid "Death by Powerpoint"

- The most captivating presentations tend to be multimedia. Include animation, flash, photos, web-demos or other visual aids to make your presentation more interesting.
- Engage your audience by including polling questions at key points in your presentation. This will help keep your audience's attention.

Survey attendees before and after the Webinar

- Ask qualifying questions during registration. This gives you keen insight into your audience. Use this information to tailor your presentation accordingly.
- As people exit the webinar ask them a short series of follow-up questions to further qualify them. Questions like these can provide timely information for your sales reps:
 - What did you like most about this presentation?
 - How likely are you to use this service?
 - Would you like a sales rep to contact you?

After: Leveraging your investment

Record the Webinar and Q&A session

- Post the webinar on your website for future viewing. Build a reference library of past webinars for your customers and prospects to peruse at their leisure.
- Recorded webinars and their Q&As can also be very helpful in training new employees or reviewing customer input prior to a new product launch, selling event, or internal business strategy session.

Follow-up with every attendee and registrant

- Send a follow-up e-mail to participants thanking them for their attendance. Include additional relevant information; invite them to the next webinar.
- Send a “sorry we missed you” email to registrants who did not attend. Nurture these prospects to entice them to attend your next event.
- Pass all registrants and participants to Sales for follow-up. Include survey/qualifying information.

Conduct a post-mortem

- Review all feedback gathered from the webinar. Consider variations in the registration process, presentation, and Q&A process to determine what could make the webinar even more engaging.

For more information, please contact [Wendy Ackerman](#) at (650) 846-7783 or wackerman@intercall.com. Wendy is a meeting coach with Intercall, a service provider specializing in effective conference communications. Her expertise includes conducting effective prospect webinars and a variety of sales conferences of all sizes.