

How to Produce a Profitable Webinar

A TelSpan Worldwide Conferencing White Paper

Introduction

Conferencing solutions, whether audio, video or web-based, continue to prove their value as cost effective, productivity enhancing, and easy-to-use tools that achieve diverse goals within any organization. With the emergence of webinars, organizations are now able to directly profit from the use of conferencing technologies. Combining the proven effectiveness of conferencing with the revenue-generating capability of a webinar makes a powerful case for the decision to produce such an event.

As the conferencing industry has continued its drive for innovation, web conferencing is emerging as the fastest growing conferencing technology. Web conferencing continues to grow at double digit rates, in spite of recessionary pressures, as organizations look to reduce expenses and increase efficiency.

The graphic element of adding web conferencing to a regular audio conference has proven to greatly increase the opportunity to capture audience attention, while also providing an interactive platform that encourages feedback and audience participation.

Most organizations deploy web conferencing throughout their businesses as a means of improving productivity, cutting costs, and achieving a rapid return on investment. Realizing the true ROI of web conferencing is often a complex task that can be difficult to measure. Specific measurements, such as travel expenses, can be tracked to develop a picture of an organization's ROI, but do not show the complete value web conferencing brings. Most users see the inherent benefits to web conferencing but have difficulty equating those benefits to tangible numbers.

Looking at web conferencing as more than a cost reduction tool provides the opportunity to use it as a revenue generator. Viewing web conferencing from this standpoint opens up a myriad of opportunities to reach a broad spectrum of vendors, prospects, or members, who are willing to pay a premium for the message you present.

In this white paper, the business case for using webinars will be presented, along with an easy-to-follow implementation and planning guide.

What is a web conference and how does it work?

As mentioned above, web conferencing is an Internet-based application that allows you to present PowerPoint™ slides, share any application on your PC, annotate a white board or slide, or chat with the conference audience. It can also include the use of webcams so that participants can see each other, and the ability to play video and audio clips into the conference. The lack of complexity in using web conferencing tools has allowed the technology use to grow at a staggering pace. Easy-to-use features allow for a short adoption cycle for any organization.

Web conferencing requires only a PC and an Internet connection, while a separate phone line is used to dial into the audio conference. The conference audience simply logs on to a website through their browser to view what the host wishes to present. The host can display a slideshow to the audience; show an application, or even poll the audience on a particular topic. Web conferencing is a truly interactive platform that maximizes the delivery and reception of your message.

What exactly is a Webinar?

A webinar is viewed as being slightly different from what most typically consider to be a web conference. Most web conferences are based on several parties sharing and participating in a focused, and more private, collaborative session. Webinars seek to capture a broad audience that shares a common interest in a particular topic. For this type of presentation a registration fee may be charged. Depending on the audience size you seek, most webinars will have varying degrees of interaction and collaboration.

Webinars also often involve the use of a professional speaker presenting a topic of interest to your audience. A great deal of effort must also be put into the external marketing of the event and the management of audience participation. An online registration product is the easiest, and most cost efficient way to manage your webinar

from beginning to end. A good online registration product will incorporate data management, email invitations, confirmations and reminders, and process webinar payments.

Sample Event ROI Calculation

From a profit standpoint, your event ROI can be easily calculated in terms of event production costs and the registration revenue you generate.

Here is a brief example of how you obtain a profit calculation for a 60-minute event:

Revenue

80 People Virtually Attend your Webinar for a \$150 Registration Fee	\$12,000
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Cost

Speaker Fee	\$1000
Operator Assisted Conference Service Fee (\$0.195 ppm) (80 Participants X 60 minutes X \$0.195)	\$936
Web Conference Service Fee (\$0.09 ppm) (80 Participants X 60 minutes X \$0.09)	\$432
Built-in Registration System	Free
PayPal™ Fee Collection	Free
Total Cost	\$2368

Profit to Organization

(\$12,000 - \$2368)	\$9632
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Selecting a Web Conferencing Provider

Your web conferencing provider must offer technical solutions, along with excellent client management and relationship skills, to ensure a fit for your organization. If you were to compare most web conferencing products that are available today, you would see that many features are common to all. So, it is critical that you request a demonstration of a particular web conferencing platform to determine just how easy it is to use. Make sure you learn about the product's functionality not only from a host's perspective, but also from a participant's perspective.

Obtain pricing information and compare it to what you wish to spend. Be sure to find out if the vendor requires contracts, set-up fees, or any other "hidden" fees. Do they charge for training? Inquire about any free trials the vendor might offer.

Ask questions that help you determine the level of client support you will get from a vendor and compare it to what you anticipate you will need when introducing this new technology into your organization. Client support varies greatly from vendor to vendor, so be sure to investigate just how supportive they are willing to be before, during and after your event. Does the vendor simply offer pre-conference support and training? Or, do they offer "real-time" support during the hours you would need it most?

Many organizations have a clear picture of what they want to present but lack the technical expertise to determine how best to deliver that message to their virtual audience. This is where selecting a vendor who can cater to your specific event is essential. By simply providing your vendor with such details as estimated audience size, level of desired interactivity, types of applications to be presented, and other general presentation information, your vendor should be able to recommend the best solution for your webinar.

Deciding to Produce a Webinar

Before you decide to present a webinar, there are several questions you should consider.

1. Do I have a compelling topic or speaker that is appealing to my audience?
2. Do I know what resources I need to have in place to properly present my webinar?
3. Do I know the audience I wish to reach?
4. Do I have an effective method to market this event to my intended audience?
5. Do I have a plan as to how I will collect participant payment, either manually or through an online registration product?
6. What are my three main objectives for producing this event?
7. Once you feel comfortable that you are able to answer these questions, you can then begin your first planning phase.

Planning your Webinar

Planning Phase 1: Set Your Objectives

You should have a general idea of what you want to accomplish by producing this event. The opportunity to create profit from an event may be one of the primary drivers, but there are many other considerations:

- Do you want your organization to gain more exposure?
- Is this a revenue-generating event to fund other activities?
- Do you have an area of expertise you wish to showcase?
- Are you trying to increase membership or retention?
- Do your members need certification in certain areas?
- Are you trying to generate leads and prospect data?

Having your event goals in place at this stage will help you determine the speaker you need, the approach you need to take to advertise the event, and even what types of data you should collect for future use.

Planning Phase 2: Select Your Topic, Speakers and Event Date and Time

In this phase, you must determine a valuable topic of interest for your intended audience, create an appropriate agenda, arrange for a speaker, and possibly develop collateral. Webinars eliminate many of the scheduling issues that you might have confronted in the past. It no longer matters where the speaker you wish to use is physically located. In this phase, you are tasked with the following:

1. **Select Your Topic:** What matters to your audience? Is there a particular expert who is easily recognizable in the field of interest?
2. **Select Your Speaker:** A well-recognized speaker will automatically generate more interest and participation in your event. Select someone who has excellent presentation and speaking capabilities.
3. **Select the Host:** The host of the event will be an internal member of your organization. They can be tasked with such items as speaker introductions, clicking through a slide presentation, facilitating an interactive chat, and so on. The host is there to support the speaker in any way and to ensure that the technical aspects of the webinar flow smoothly.
4. **Establish the Event Date:** The speaker's schedule as well as the season is an important factor in this decision. If you are in tune with the cyclical business times of your audience, you may better determine the best day and time to hold your event.
5. **Finalize the Details with Your Speaker:** From the beginning, leave no surprises for the host or speaker. This will give all presenters plenty of time to properly prepare. Agree with the speaker on presentation materials and agenda. Do they wish to use slides only? Do you want to poll the audience for feedback? Refer back to the objectives you wish to accomplish to make sure the tools you utilize will help achieve your goals.

Planning Phase 3: Market the Event to Your Audience

In this phase, you are marketing to your audience to attend your event. For this to be successful, it is critical to know your audience. How do they wish to be reached? Are there multiple forms of communication that would work better than just a single type? Will you have a response deadline? How do you prefer they pay for the event? All of these details should be planned out well in advance to present a clear and concise picture of your event to your targeted audience. Using an online registration product is usually the best way to solve your event marketing, data management, and payment processing needs.

Planning Phase 4: Receiving and Processing Participant Information

Registration confirmations must be sent to clearly state the event start time and date, the topic, the conference codes to be used, and the computer system requirements that are necessary. You will also need to include your conferencing provider's instructions on how to perform a simple web browser check prior to the webinar start. A good online registration product will work with your conferencing platform to smoothly integrate all of this.

Planning Phase 5: Pre-Event Rehearsal for Host and Speaker

It is critical that at least a week prior to your event, all who are directly involved with the presentation are on the same page in terms of product knowledge and systems requirements. Checking Web browsers, practicing using the tools of the product, and getting familiar with the flow of events will all contribute to the ultimate success of your event.

Full-service web conferencing providers will always recommend this, and some will even schedule this rehearsal event for you. A client-focused provider will also have a support person attend this session with your team.

Planning Phase 6: Pre-Event Web Conferencing Check for Participants

Your participants may come from varying backgrounds in terms of their technological proficiency, the type of computer system they have, and the level of connectivity they have to the Internet. Your registration confirmation should contain directions on how the participants can check their Web browser for compatibility. This compatibility test is a simple test that takes only a few minutes to perform and will identify any issue prior to the start of the actual event. Your conferencing service provider should offer to provide support for any attendee who is performing this test so that any issues can be resolved immediately.

Planning Phase 7: Audience Event Reminder

It is absolutely necessary to send an event reminder to your audience one to two days prior to your event. As easy as it is to participate in a virtual event, it is also easy to forget to attend. Eliminate forgetfulness with an easy email reminder through your online registration tool.

Planning Phase 8: Activities for the Day of the Webinar

At this point, if you have followed each phase, you should feel comfortable that your event is ready to take place. Check in with the host and speaker and make sure they have everything they need at least two hours before your scheduled event start time. Your conferencing provider's staff should be available during the event, should you or any of your attendees require assistance.

Post Webinar Activities

Now that the event is over, what should you do next? First and foremost, follow-up correspondence should be sent to all the attendees, thanking them for their participation. Also, offer them the chance to ask questions and to receive any collateral that pertained to the presentation. Consider offering a fee-based playback of the recorded conference for those who missed it the first time.

Communicate all follow-up actions you intend to take at the conclusion of the webinar. If you included reports, charts, or any other type of important information, you may consider offering those as well. If you intend to post an archive of the webinar to your website, be sure to communicate the location to the participants.

Call 1-800-800-1729 or [contact us](#) to learn more about conducting online training utilizing **TelSpan's** web conferencing platform, **TelSpanVenue**, as well as **TelSpan's** online registration tool **RegistrationPlus**. Let **TelSpan** show you how to utilize these services to produce a profitable webinar for your organization today!