



Webinar Handout: How to Plan and Produce Engaging Webinars

In the recent survey I conducted about best practices when presenting online, one concern came through loudly from the 600+ respondents:

“How do I plan and deliver engaging webinars that engage audiences?”

It was this question that this webinar, sponsored by Citrix GoToWebinar™, answered. We both explored principles and delivered “how to” for approaching webinars, from planning to execution to delivering data that sales teams love.

As a supplement, this handout provides two things:

One, there is a high level summary of the key points in the presentation. Note that this is intended as a reminder, not a full recap. If you missed the webinar, I’d encourage you to view the recording.

Two, there are additional resources listed to help you accelerate your online presentation mastery. Though these were not discussed during the live webinar, they are provided here for your reference.

From all of us at 1080 Group, thank you for being part of a great webinar. Here’s to your engaging and interactive success!

Roger Courville

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Plan a purposeful project

Identify the webinar’s place in the marketing mix

The nature and content of any marketing or sales communication depends on its place in lead-to-close cycle. Too often, webinars are viewed as a type of communication instead of a vehicle for a message. The power of webinars is that they’re live and can develop rapport and trust at a distance in a way that on-demand content can’t deliver, and they’re appropriate at every stage of the cycle. To optimise your efforts, focus.

Big Idea: Webinars are just a delivery vehicle, like a paper. Get clear about the purpose and outcome to focus your topic and planning.

Pick your topic

According to a 2010 survey by 1080 Group and Quantum Leap Marketing, the top reason people attend webinars is the topic, and specifically topics that answer “how to” or deliver actionable content. This

might even be sales content at the appropriate stage in the sales cycle, but the biggest mistake you can make is trying to slip in a sales pitch if you've promised something different.

Big Idea: Clarity of topic is foundational to clarity of messaging in your invitations.

Create a project plan

Great events of any kind look flawless to the audience because of a lot of work and preparation before hand. As we quip at 1080 Group, "Microsoft will teach you how to use Word, but they don't teach you how to be a writer." The good news is that solutions like GoToWebinar are easy to use, but there's more to a great webinar than using a piece of software.

Big Idea: Great webinars don't just happen. Without planning, you'll be rushing at the last minute and quality will suffer.

Promote the "PPP"

Highlight the Problem

"Most people seek consistency or balance among their cognitions," as Alan Monroe puts it. If we're going to cut through the noise and get someone's attention, we improve our odds if we can implicitly or explicitly create imbalance. They need to perceive they've got a challenge that they need to take action to resolve.

Big Idea: Create imbalance. Make the pain of doing nothing bigger than the pain of doing something.

Paint the Promise

Next communicate the desired outcome, the potential balance. Be certain to not only communicate the "what," but include the "why." You want to speak the language of your audience (don't write a poem for engineers), but just because you have to cover factual or technical information doesn't mean your audience doesn't have powerful emotional motivators for what they want to get out of your webinar.

Big Idea: You've called their attention to the problem. Now answer, "What's in it for *me*?"

Guide them down the Path

Ask for action, explicitly and immediately. Common in training is to say something like "Register now to learn..." followed by the top takeaways they'll achieve (often in bullet form). Like we saw in the case study, the clarity of the desired outcome creates focus on what "the Path" is.

Big Idea: What is the one, single most important thing you need to create or develop the lead? Let that guide your call-to-action.

Design an experience

Design for short attention spans

Recent research has shown that nine out of ten webinar attendees multitask. The reality is that people are multitasking in our in-person audiences, too. Unfortunately, as Garr Reynolds puts it, "Death by PowerPoint is so common that it's considered normal," and since your audience can read more quickly than you speak, bullet points hurt your chance to engage visually and add impact to your message.

Big Idea: Think visually to engage visually. If you don't, you'll miss the opportunity to deliver your message with impact as people wander elsewhere.

Design for change

Remember that people are wired to notice change, and they generally don't want to miss something that is relevant. Have one concept per slide, and if there is more than one point you need to make



about a given slide, consider duplicating the slide. Putting the key idea of the slide in the slide title helps attendees only giving you part of their attention to quickly get the point.

Big Idea: Not more content, just move that content over more slides.

Design for interactivity

Just like an in-person meeting planner pays attention to what people will see at each step of the experience, think through how the audience will experience you presentation at each step of the way. Think through the various ways you engage an in-person audience and adapt that into the online environment. Where do you ask for a show of hands, or ask a question, or open up the discussion for audience input, etc.?

Big Idea: Plan to turn a passive audience into an active audience. Plan an experience...even the 'spontaneous' parts.

Present authentically

Rehearse by role

One old success adage is "work with the willing." In other words, you can't force someone to do something. While some people you work with on your webinar will want to learn the whole webinar product and everything else, many won't. As the "executive producer," your job is to have a great webinar, regardless of where they are. Sometimes this means getting the really basic basics for the role they play in the webinar and no more.

Big Idea: Meet 'em where they're at. Rehearse only what is needed.

Remember your virtual "body language"

Since the audience can't see you, learn the art of providing both visual (using annotations, pointers, etc.) and verbal direction (such as "in the lower right portion of this slide you will see). Remember the "I didn't say it was your fault" exercise and the importance of what you're communicating with your voice. What seems exaggerated to you probably doesn't seem exaggerated to your audience.

Big Idea: Direct attention both visually and verbally.

Learn to make virtual "eye contact"

Since the audience isn't sitting right in front of you, use new tools to watch them in real time. Open up the questions or chat panel, make sure you can see the "hand up" feature. Like an in-person presentation, sometimes you will ask them to wait a minute before you answer their question, but if you don't make 'eye contact' with them, you'll not be able to connect and dialogue naturally.

Big Idea: You can't make 'eye contact' if you have your blinders on.

Dialogue!

In two separate studies I've conducted about online presentation best practices respondents have overwhelmingly expressed their disdain for reading...either what is on the slides or worse, scripts. Authentic connections don't happen because what we say is perfect, they happen when the audience senses that we genuinely seek to help them get to the next level in what they're trying to do.

Big Idea: Talk *with* the audience, not *at* them.

Capture "the goods"

Extend your reach with recordings

Unlike in-person events where recording and distribution is costly and time consuming, webinar solutions make it push-button easy. All content has a shelf-life, but for as long as the webinar content is



valuable, the recording is an awesome tool for generating more leads or educating prospects in the sales cycle.

Big Idea: Don't just think of recordings as a follow up for registrants who missed the webinar. Encourage sharing for viral reach.

Capture actionable data

What sales team wouldn't want warm calls instead of cold calls? Beyond just capturing registration data for leads, webinars are fabulous tools for building trust and capturing additional data. Polling responses and end-of-webinar surveys nicely supplement registration data, and some solutions like GoToWebinar provide additional data such as lead scoring based on audience attention.

Big Idea: Set the sales team up for success. Deliver more than just names and phone numbers.

Below are a number of links to resources you may find useful as you grow your mastery of presenting online. As I have not used every resource here, this isn't an endorsement, but I trust you'll find some good stuff.

Chart about how to create charts (the example I used in the presentation)

http://extremepresentation.typepad.com/blog/2006/09/choosing_a_good.html

Free alternatives to Photoshop

<http://www.webdesignbooth.com/15-great-and-free-photoshop-alternatives/>

A chart to jumpstart thinking visually

<http://www.thevirtualpresenter.com/?p=113>

100 (legal) sources for free stock images

<http://www.virtualhosting.com/blog/2007/100-legal-sources-for-free-stock-images/>

Example ROI calculator for moving training online

http://training.cuna.org/trainers/roi_calc.html

Add a funny image

<http://www.thevirtualpresenter.com/?p=117>

Color tools

<http://websitestips.com/colortools/>

A BUNCH of public speaking blogs

<http://sixminutes.dlugan.com/public-speaking-blogs/>

About 1080 Group, LLC

Roger Courville is author of *The Virtual Presenter's Handbook*, principal at 1080 Group, and internationally sought-after speaker/teacher on the use of web seminars to deliver business results. A ten-year veteran of the web seminar business, Roger has engaged more than 18,000 people in 2009, and he's reached tens of thousands more with guest writing appearances for *Workshifting.com*, *SpeakingAboutPresenting.com*, *Training Australia Magazine*, *PlannerWire*, *eLearningGuild*, and more. His 2008 white paper "*Five Keys to Moving Training Online*" won *TrainingZone.co.uk's* Reader's Choice Award for "Top Download of the Year."

1080 Group is a training and coaching firm helping executives design and deliver interactive webinar presentations and programs. 1080 Group also conducts behavioral research specific to web seminars with a goal of delivering pragmatic, action-oriented recommendations. The 1080 Group team has a collective experience that includes hundreds of clients, thousands of web seminars, and more than a million web seminar attendees. Learn more at www.1080group.com, www.theVirtualPresenter.com, or contact them at info@1080group.com or +1.503.329.1662.

About this Document

This is a handout for participants in a March 2010 webinar sponsored by Citrix Online. Its intended use is as a supplement to the webinar content. Links provided in this document were working at the time of its creation but may change over time, and they lead to content publicly available on the web. Please respect the intellectual property rights of those website owners.