

MASTER THE FIVE FORCES OF

Content Marketing with Webinar Programs

A 1080 Group, LLC paper | Prepared for Citrix GoToWebinar®

Unless you are brand new to marketing, this news isn't new: "Interruption marketing" is a tough way to achieve your goals unless you start with a pile of money. So how do you cut through the noise, build trust, and drive sales without breaking the bank? One powerful option available to companies large and small is to combine content marketing with a proven, unique medium of delivery, the webinar.

Content marketing, while often disguised in various terms, is something that is accessible via the web. And web conferencing (which enables interactive, web-based seminars or "webinars") is a perfect medium to transform that content into findable, accessible, and shareable experiences. Together they bring us to an important question:

How do marketers transform webinars from single tactics to action-creating programs?

To help you practically accomplish this transformation, this paper will illuminate four things:

- ▶ Why you absolutely must elevate webinars to the level of content marketing program (page 1)
- ▶ How to create your "think like a publisher" framework for success (page 3)
- ▶ The five forces which must be aligned for webinar content programs (page 4)
- ▶ Five pragmatic accelerators to unleash the "force multiplier effect" for your program (page 6)

The challenge: "One shot" webinars leave opportunities on the table

A 1080 Group analysis of the webinar market shows that most individual webinars happen in isolation. However unintentionally, often the experience delivered is counter-productive to marketing excellence:

- ▶ Content tries to be too many things to too many people
- ▶ Promotion tends to be push-oriented
- ▶ Presentations and webinar formats tend to be "one size fits all"
- ▶ Data gathering rarely rises to the level of compelling, actionable intelligence

Delivering a single webinar in isolation is not “wrong.” 1080 Group and MarketingSherpa both have conducted surveys in recent years that corroborate each other: Users find webinars to be highly effective lead generation and qualification tools. The trouble is that this tends to “leave money on the table” relative to content-driven webinar programs.

Alternatively, webinar programs with a “content marketing” approach enables multiple new opportunities to develop momentum, collect better data, and mitigate investment risk.

Take Action

- ▶ Redefine “webinar” as a flexible delivery medium capable of serving more than one style of communication appropriate for content type and stage in the sales cycle
- ▶ Consider a persistent repository for program assets (e.g., a blog category or microsite) to up-level “about this webinar” content from transitory registration pages to persistent, community and SEO-friendly assets
- ▶ Go beyond “name and number” lead generation to feed additional quantitative and qualitative data into the marketing/sales process

Enable additional content marketing power by elevating webinars to programs

		Single webinars	Webinar programs
Opportunity	Approach	Often “one-offs”	Better enables an overall content marketing strategy
	Style/form	Usually “one size fits all”	Multiple webinar types based on sales cycle
	Promotion	Tend to be interruption-oriented, “direct response-to-registration”	Direct response <i>plus</i> webinar-to-webinar and SEO-friendly tactics
Risk	Content	Tend to try to cover too much	More likely to use precision topics to “cut through the noise”
	Results	Often an “all eggs in one basket” evaluation	A “portfolio approach” mitigates occasional under-performers
Results	Leverage	Usually “one size fits all”	Create momentum with a “force multiplier effect”
	Metrics	Reports occur in isolation	Better see trends, relative topic value
	Leads, data	Tend to focus on “just a name”	Enables profiling prospects over multiple sessions

Create your webinar program framework

An ongoing tension in lead generation efforts is trying to balance “bringing in a lot of leads” with a general subject and “generating high quality leads” (with multiple quantitative and qualitative data points, perhaps as defined by the sales team). One significant benefit of using a content marketing approach to webinar programs is “giving yourself permission” to avoid the “kitchen sink” and “one size fits all” approach to webinars. Success with this approach involves four “rights,” expressed as the following equation:

(right persona + right timing) determines (right content + right form)

Take action

- ▶ Match your customer buying process (top row, chart below) with critical behavioral actions you need them to take (sales stage). Remember, each action you want them to take requires us to have a value proposition to get them to take it (business need, chart below)

Target each webinar’s style and purpose to match the customer buying process

		Search for information	Evaluate alternatives	Understand your specific value	Extend use of your solutions
Approach	Sales stage	Generate leads	Nurture pipeline	Demonstrate solutions (prospects)	Drive adoption, cross-sell, up-sell (customers)
	Business need	Gather actionable follow up data	Uncover interests, preferences	Uncover personal/specific decision criteria	
	Content strategy	Broad appeal (e.g., industry luminary or thought leader)	Solution focus: educational, but little/no direct “sales pitch”	Organizational focus: directly ties to benefits of your products/services	
	Webinar style	More broadcast	Blended content/Q&A	Highly conversational	
Analysis	Reach	High	High	Low	
	Frequency	Low	Medium	High	
	Cost per lead	Medium	Low	Low	
	Data	Registrant data; poll/survey data for attendees	Repeat and/or topical interest comparisons; qualitative/conversation	Direct qualification; significant, actionable qualitative data	
	Lead value	Medium	High	High	

Take action (continued)

- ▶ Define personas by primary decision criteria. Remember, different personas have different decision criteria, and *these evolve over the lifecycle of their discovery*.
- ▶ Brainstorm stories that resonate in each sector. Remember, in content marketing your value proposition, your “hook,” is the value you’ve promised them in exchange for them taking action.
- ▶ Create content that delivers the optimum supporting evidence. Remember, the earlier you are in their discovery/buying cycle, the less about you this must be. This doesn’t mean, however, that you can’t share content that delivers supporting evidence for your point of view.

Matrix of example topics: SoftwareCo targeting a “widget” product development market

		Search for information	Evaluate alternatives	Understand your specific value	Extend use of your solutions
Persona	Users	Essential skills: what every developer needs to know to succeed	How to solve <this particular> widget development challenge	Lunch and learn series: How to connect widget launchers using SoftwareCo Enterprise	
	Technical decision makers	Seven reasons widget integration is taking the industry by storm	Case study: How ABC Co. created a faster development framework	How to manage multi-team roll-up progress reporting in SoftwareCo Enterprise	
	Business decision makers	Analyst/research panel discussion: New business drivers in the “widget 2.0” marketplace	How to model soft-cost savings in time-to-market analyses	Case study: How XYZ Co. used SoftwareCo Enterprise to double market releases with no more debt or headcount	

Align the five forces of success for each webinar in the program

“Force multiplication,” in simple terms, recognizes the reality that sometimes the whole of executing on a strategy is, in fact, greater than the sum of the parts. Webinar programs embody this potential when they deliver content that is intrinsically valuable and the consequence of that audience taking action produces a valuable asset (actionable intelligence) that advances tangible organizational initiatives. Finally, to get there, execution requires you to get the right people to attend (achieved with topical precision), and the presenter invokes engagement and participation.

Content marketing, using webinar programs, accomplishes this in two critical steps: alignment (this section) and acceleration (the next section). To get the most out of each webinar, evaluate both the content and delivery using the following five forces:

Intrinsically valuable

Sustainable success in your webinar program begins with content that is valuable to the target audience, in and of itself.

Take action

- ▶ Start with challenging yourself to imagine, “What would they pay for?” If the webinar is free, economic “elasticity” is in your favor (in economics, elasticity is the rate at which response will increase when the price decreases).
- ▶ Deliver only what has been clearly communicated to invitees, avoid slipping in a sales pitch unless the invitation clearly notes you will be speaking to your own products/services/benefits.
- ▶ Remember, value goes beyond content to include all elements of a live interaction. Think beyond PowerPoint broadcast (e.g., Q&A with the subject matter expert is often as valuable than the presentation itself).

Strategic alignment

The challenge with strategic alignment is *not* that organizations think, “We’ll do this webinar that will be awesome even though it won’t deliver what we want.” Most frequently it’s that it doesn’t align *specifically* to optimize the right stage in the customer buying cycle and the actionable output that webinar is expected to achieve.

Take action

- ▶ Define: “When this webinar will engages <this> audience to solve <this> problem, their participation will deliver <this> actionable intelligence to fuel <this> strategic initiative.”
- ▶ Set yourself up for success and avoid misplaced expectations by communicating these specific measures internally.

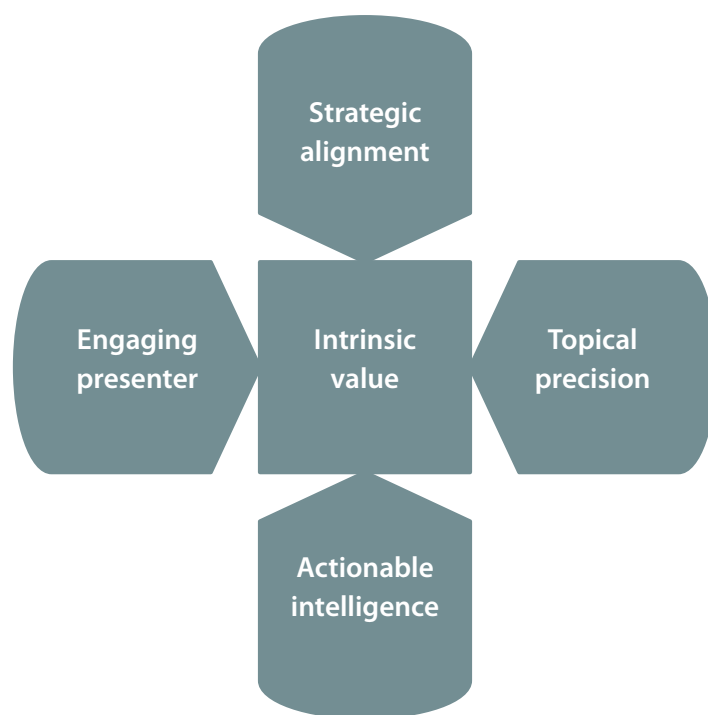
Topical precision

Surveys by 1080 Group in 2011 yielded two insights. The number one reason attendees leave webinars early is “content not as advertised.” “Duration of webinar” was the number two factor for why invitees register (behind practical/pragmatic content), suggesting that shorter webinars may be of value.

Specific and well-targeted webinar content helps marketers attract quality leads and improve response rates. Specificity enables you to promote your webinar with short, clear phrases, appropriate for social media or improving the likelihood a blog post will be found in a search.

Take action

- ▶ Consider alternatives to the “one hour” webinar that attempts multiple objectives. A program of shorter webinars may prove effective in both response rates and in the accuracy of the actionable intelligence they deliver.
- ▶ Test your topical precision by creating a Twitter post and hashtag (or equivalent). Attempt to go beyond “informational” to “compelling.”



Actionable intelligence

Unlike many on-demand forms of content marketing, every webinar has a lifecycle with multiple data collection opportunities. Registration and custom questions, polling, attendance, questions/chat, and post-session surveys which, with a little forethought, deliver insight both for program success and successful sales followup.

Take action

- ▶ Determine and communicate an action plan. Data is useless if unused.
- ▶ Add “kaizen,” or continuous improvement to your data strategy. Analyze the data not only for quantity and quality of leads, but also for feedback that can improve the following webinars.
- ▶ Consider easy tactics beyond the webinar platform itself. Example: A tracked link promoting the next webinar in the program could be added to the follow up email.

Conversational presenter

Content marketing success is tied to the *form* of delivery. One powerful differentiator for webinars is the fact that it is live and interactive. Guide presenters to develop communication that is responsive and adaptive, improving attendee engagement both passively (better “listenability”) and actively (such as poll responses).

Take action

- ▶ In large webinars, adopt a conversational style between the moderator and speakers. Consider extending that conversation before and after the webinar via social media.
- ▶ In smaller webinars, build in white space, to enable more dialogue with attendees and the flexibility to respond/adjust on the fly.

Focus the forces for optimum program impact

Once you’ve optimized the five forces of your webinar program, the next step is to take advantage of that which happens over the life of a program. Consider:

Plan: Think like an “agile social publisher”

By nature, webinars have the potential to be highly interactive. In other words, they can be quite *social*. Your content marketing program likely plans to use multiple different touch points and technologies to be part of your conversation with the marketplace, and incorporating webinar programs into the fabric of your overall publishing plan will fuel webinar programs, if not gather better data than many social media efforts. Example: Something big happens in your industry. You not only engage social media immediately, but tie those thoughts together with an invitation to the next webinar. The webinar closes with an invitation to continue the conversation via social media and in the next webinar.

Create: Write it once, publish it 15 times

Creating quality content takes time. While you don’t want to recycle content verbatim, a little imagination can increase its usability exponentially. Example: A story has a user, technical, and financial angle, and each could support an in-depth analysis (an entire webinar) and be summarized for supporting evidence in other webinars.

Promote: Unleash your promotional “force multiplier”

Your webinar program “force multiplier” only happens when you go beyond promoting a single webinar at a time. Examples: Create a category in your blog for upcoming webinars, enabling people who find one to be exposed to others; the webinar moderator opens and closes one webinar mentioning the next in the series; the presenter might respond to an audience question and use the occasion

to highlight a future webinar on that topic; the “thank you” email includes a link to the next (or similar) webinar, the follow up email not only includes the link to the recording, but also delivers a “register for the next webinar” link or invitation to connect on Facebook.

Deliver: Teach your presenters how to help the cause

Your subject matter expert can play a huge role in drawing in the audience, encouraging interaction that better captures actionable intelligence. Example: Guide the presenter how to increase poll response, how to ask an open-ended question that encourages the audience to share responses that will help the sales team, or how to close their presentation in a manner that elicits that next action.

Measure: Mine the whole, not the hole

Data, both for the sales team and your own continuous improvement, is king, queen, and court. Go beyond contact name and number to leverage the data that only happens in multiple-webinar programs. Examples for sales: Did they register for multiple webinars? If so, which topics were of greater value than others? How did they answer polls and end-of-event surveys? What questions did they ask during those webinars? Examples for marketing: How do different webinars in the program compare in registration rates, attendance rates, average attendee time on the webinar? What is your sell through rate (getting attendees from one webinar to register for the next)? What additional actionable intelligence are you capturing as you progressively gain trust?

The bottom line

Webinars deliver content in a uniquely engaging way, making them perfect for a content marketing portfolio, and webinar software is as easy to use as ever. Excellence in webinar programs isn't hard, either, but the rewards only go to those who connect the dots between individual webinars and promotional activities.

That effort, however, has a huge upside. As more organizations transform from simplistic broadcast tactics to momentum-gathering programs with ongoing, trusted conversations, slow adopters will face one more critical question:

Are you leaving money on the table without a content marketing-driven webinar program?

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About Roger Courville and 1080 Group, LLC

Roger Courville is author of *The Virtual Presenter's Handbook*, contributing author to *Business Expert Guide to Small Business Success*, and Principal at 1080 Group, LLC. An internationally sought-after communicator on virtual presentations (webinars). Roger has delivered webinars for tens of thousands, and he's reached tens of thousands more with clients such as American Management Association, *Training Australia Magazine*, eLearningGuild, and, of course, Citrix Online. His 2008 paper *Five Keys to Moving Training Online* won TrainingZone.co.uk's Reader's Choice Award for "Top Download of the Year." His real-world expertise is backed by that of the seasoned team at 1080 Group who together have worked with hundreds of clients on thousands of webinars involving more than a million attendees. For more information visit www.1080Group.com, call +1.503.476.1080, or subscribe at <http://bit.ly/cyKZUJ>.

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