

A
DEMANDGEN REPORT
White Paper



Webinars 2.0: Maximizing Webinars with Social and Interactive Engagement

7 Key Areas To Maximize Your Webinar Program

New research reveals the continuing domination of webinars for the purpose of lead generation and marketing to prospects and customers. Almost 95% of companies surveyed host webinars, with more than 85% using them for marketing and lead generation and more than 52% also using webcasts for internal education and training.

Less than 20 years old, the business of web conferencing and collaboration has been maturing, changing and quickly becoming more technologically advanced since the late 1990s when it was born. What started as a basic transmission of information from one entity to another over the Internet, has since become a feature-rich, highly interactive and effective tool for lead generation, marketing and education.

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New research indicates that webinars, now well-established as a vital marketing tool for many companies, continue to rise in popularity. Almost 75% of companies surveyed recently by DemandGen Report have increased the frequency of webinars they host, with more than 38% increasing hosted webinars by more than 21%.

The “Best Practices Survey for Webinar Hosts” also revealed that companies must differentiate their webinars through interactivity, using social media, Web 2.0, engaging content and compelling presenters.

As webinar technology continues to improve and become more

sophisticated, and as more attendees are aware of the benefits of viewing a webinar, the use becomes more widespread. All indicators point to the continued growth of the medium as a successful marketing and educational tool.

This white paper will reveal the results of the Best Practices survey, analyzing responses from 113 companies that currently host webinars. The paper will uncover the most important trends related to the benefits and use of webinars by these experienced webinar users, including insights and comments from survey respondents and other industry experts.

Best Practices Survey Snapshot

- ▶ 84% use webinars for lead generation
- ▶ 75% have increased frequency of webinars in the past year
- ▶ More than 50% use LinkedIn & Twitter for webinar promotion
- ▶ 21% have had best success with 30-minute format
- ▶ 31% planning shorter events in 2011
- ▶ Industry analysts and customer case studies draw best response
- ▶ Interactive features are becoming more important
- ▶ Ease of use/setup are top consideration in choosing a platform

7 key areas to maximize your webinar program:

- 1.** Growth of Webinars
- 2.** Webinar's Role in the Lead Gen/Sales Pipeline: Measuring the Success of a Webinar
- 3.** Integrating Social Media and the Webinar
- 4.** Winning Webinar Strategies (Speakers, Formats, Incentives)
- 5.** The Benefits of Interactivity Before, During and After Broadcasts
- 6.** Improvements in Webinar Technology – Best New Features
- 7.** Post-Presentation Reporting, Follow-Up and Marketing

1. Growth of Webinars

If you search the words “webinars” and “webcast” on Google, a combined total of 112 million links are returned. By comparison, “oil spill” brings up 99 million. Point being, webinars are top-of-mind and growing in popularity. (By the way “lead generation” returns 14 million links).

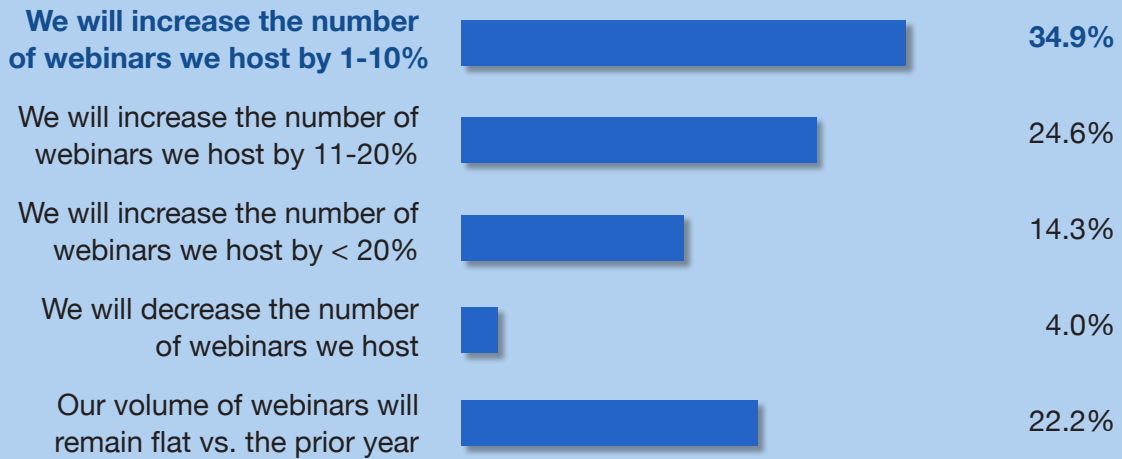
A number of factors have contributed to the growth in webinar use. First, the technology has continued to improve, offering more consistent transmissions, better quality audio and web viewing and an increasing number of features that help to improve the effectiveness and measurable results gleaned from each project.

The research confirms this. With

95% of survey respondents stating that they currently host webinars, 82.6% of that total said they have increased the number of webinars they hosted in the past year. The greatest percentage of that group – 37.8% – has increased the number of webinars hosted by more than 21%.

Looking forward, 74% of companies surveyed report that they will increase the number of webinars they host in 2011, with the largest percentage – 34.5% – planning to increase the number of webinars hosted by 1-10%.

Looking forward to 2011, how do you anticipate your schedule for webinars will change?



2. Webinar's Role in the Lead Gen/Sales Pipeline: Measuring the Success of a Webinar

Is a webinar successful if it has more attendees, if it elicits a lot of post-presentation chatter or if it generates a lot of sales leads? Yes, yes and yes. To some degree it depends on whom you ask... what the goals of the webinar were for that particular company. The highest percentage of survey respondents cited Number of New Sales/Marketing Leads Obtained (44.1%) as the most important measure of success, while Quality of Attendees (reaching the target audience) came in second at 32.5%.

One could argue that Quality of Attendees is directly related to Leads Obtained, which begs the question: Are webinars and webinar technology meeting the needs of companies' sales/marketing departments?

"I think the real key is finding the right balance between thought leadership and the ability to incorporate the soft sell product stuff" into a webinar, noted Loren McDonald, VP of Industry Relations for Silverpop. "No one should feel like that they were part of a commercial during a webinar

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broadcast," he noted, "but when a salesperson phones up a prospect, they should be able to have an angle they can hang their hat on" as a result of the webinar.

In order of cited importance, other measures of success for a webinar are (*rating average on a scale of 1 to 7 – 1 being most important*): Number of Attendees (3.69 rating average), Number of Registrants (4.72), Ratio of Registrants to Attendees (5.08), Number of Registrants to View Recorded Webinar (5.21), Number of Minutes Attendees Stay Online (5.27), and Conversation Created in the Q&A and Chat (5.39).

These statistics make it clear that the registration process is important, and businesses should make sure they are paying attention to detail before the first invitation goes out. "It is your job to communicate a sense of importance for your event," said Ken Molay, Founder and President of Webinar Success.

"Let people know why they should be interested and enthusiastic about attending," he noted in a presentation titled *How to Engage Members With Compelling Virtual Events – 2010 Style*.

"You need to go back to your identification of audience benefits and make sure they are always highlighted," Molay continued. "Exclusivity also helps motivate people. Highlight the fact that they are part of a select group to receive this invitation because the content matches their interests. Remind them that they only have one chance to see the live event and interact with the speakers."

When the target audience message is clear and clearly stated, the next step is making sure the message reaches that audience. "Companies need to make sure they are leveraging all channels to promote their webinars," McDonald said. "Make sure every group in the company is in sync and promoting the project whenever possible," he noted, including social vehicles, naming the project in email signatures and including an article about the webinar in the company's monthly newsletter.

While the bulk of registrations will likely come from the repeated email invites, "by going beyond the core email invites there is an opportunity to increase registrations and attendance by some decent number. It is multichannel reinforcement."

3. Integrating Social Media and the Webinar

“We incorporate social media on a few fronts, it’s kind of a 360-degree approach before, during and after a webinar.”

—Amy Bills, Bulldog Solutions

Social Media is certainly the buzzword of the day and is creating special challenges for companies in their quest for new customers. Should we blog, tweet or both? Should we be on Facebook and LinkedIn?

No doubt that most successful companies are testing the waters of social media if not jumping in head first. Survey respondents have committed to social media through the four most obvious venues: Company Blog (59.7%), Twitter (58.0%), LinkedIn (51.3%) and Facebook (37.8%). Additionally, 26.9% are involved with Other types of social media.

To make the most out of social media, companies must make a serious commitment to the channel, according to Molay. “To make social networking a success it requires an ongoing commitment from an organizational level and a continuous plan to expand your reach and effectiveness,” he said.

Bulldog Solutions has jumped in the social media waters with gusto.

“We incorporate social media on a few fronts, it’s kind of a 360-degree approach before, during and after a webinar,” said Amy Bills, Director of Field Marketing. “First we use it as a promotional vehicle. We enable all of our employees as well as the speakers and anyone else involved to share the webinar among their networks. That is a pretty powerful way to get exponential traction.”

Bills continued: “We create messages tailored specifically to share on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. This makes it fast and painless for everyone to share, and keeps them on-message. Social media is also a great way to turn the webinar into conversations. We create a Twitter hashtag for the events so people can tweet during the live event. That helps us see what is really resonating with people.”

Post-webinar, Bulldog shares transcripts of the webinar Q&A across social media channels. “If social media is about conversation, our feeling is let’s give the community lots to talk about!” Additionally, companies share recordings of the webinar post-event on their networks.

Most survey respondents are on board with the commitment to social media, with 88.3% reporting plans to increase social media interaction in 2011 and of that total, 30.3% plan to increase their social media participation by 11-20%.



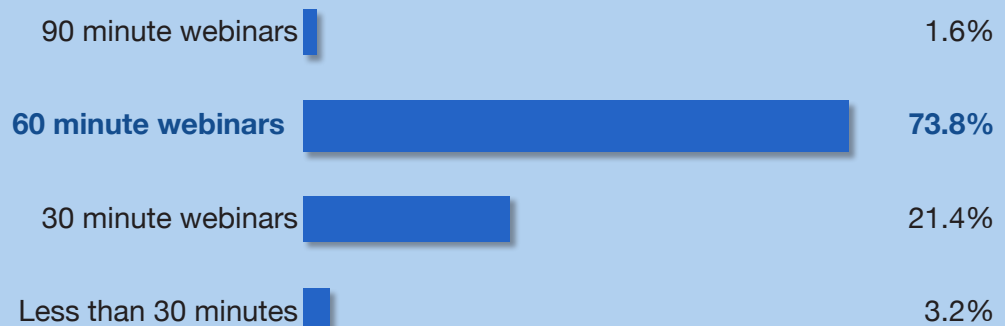
4. Winning Webinar Strategies (Formats, Speakers, Incentives)

Once the registrants and attendees are on board then content becomes king.

While getting the word out about the webinar is a vital aspect of the project's success, once the registrants and attendees are on board then content becomes king. "I believe the most important need is for businesses to improve the quality of the presentations they are delivering via webinar so that attendees see webinars as valuable and beneficial," Molay said. "This is a reversal of Marshall McLuhan's quote that the medium is the message. It is turning out that the message is influencing the perception of the medium. If the content being presented is not seen as valuable, no amount of technology will save the business."

Some of the areas businesses should be focusing on in the quest to deliver relevant and interesting content include choice of presenters, value-added incentives and presentation format. The most popular webinar format is 60 minutes, with 73.8% of respondents citing that length as the most effective. More than 20% also prefer the 30-minute webinar, with very few opting for 90-minute or less-than-30 minute choices. Too long and too short just don't work; the 30-minute segment often is a valuable lunchtime tool. But overall the 60-minute format gives the speakers a chance to present and leaves a reasonable amount of time

What format have you had the best success with?



“Everyone loves free stuff, but make it relevant.”

—Justin Gray, LeadMD

for Q&A, polls, chats and additional audience interaction.

When it comes to presenters, survey respondents reported that industry analysts are the most valuable webinar speakers, with 36.9% rating them as most important. Delivering case study examples packs the second-most powerful punch, with 28.6% of respondents citing the customer case study as most important. Other valuable presenters include authors and industry peers. Bloggers, company executives and consultants ranked lowest.

Incentives Must Be Relevant

Webinar attendees want information that is relevant and not readily available elsewhere. Industry analysts and customer case studies offer that type of

value. Attendee incentives should offer a similar type of value. “Everyone loves free stuff, but make it relevant,” noted Justin Gray, CEO of LeadMD. White papers, E-books and free trials are a few of the incentives that make sense for webinar participants, he said.

Survey respondents agree. A Free Research Report is the number-one most important attendee incentive, according to 44.0% of respondents. Free white papers and books (often authored by one of the presenters) also fared well in the rankings. Prize drawings and discount offers were least palatable to survey respondents.

Offering a chance to win a free iPod or Starbucks gift certificates can actually serve to “cheapen your brand,” added McDonald. Also, “You risk attracting the wrong type of prospect.”

5. The Benefits of Interactivity Before, During and After Broadcasts

57.1% plan to make webinars more interactive in 2011.

There is little more discouraging during a webinar than watching the number of attendees drop off during the session, or seeing the attentiveness reader decline. Attendees get distracted by their email boxes, other work and office activity and can tire of the webinar if the content does not keep them engaged. Bringing more interactivity

into the sessions may help keep attendees alert and interested. Study respondents are working on this, as 57.1% plan to make webinars more interactive in 2011.

There are several ways to approach webinar interactivity. Some consider Q&As and surveys during the presentation as the beginning and end of interactivity. But industry

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experts suggest that webinar hosts look beyond the live presentation to bring interactivity to pre- and post-presentation.

“In the next generation of webinars it is going to be huge to be able to continue the conversation after the webinar,” McDonald said. For example, “A blog post could live on the page with the link to the recording, then the conversation can just continue on.” Businesses also could enable the blog pre-presentation, by beginning a conversation about some aspect of the webinar topic.

Bills added that interactivity can

breed marketing leads. “When you offer opportunity for interaction you can capture that activity: for example, you can capture the specific answer someone gave to a poll question then the marketing department has information to help target a prospect’s needs. It can be a gold mine for marketing.”

Survey respondents cite interactive tools as some of the most important features of the webinar. Recording the webinar is most critical (83.1%), then Q&A (78.6%) and Chat (46.5%). Post-Session Surveys and Polling also are considered beneficial by many respondents.

6. Improvements in Webinar Technology – Best Features

Generally webinar hosts are pleased with improvements in webinar platform usability; user interfaces have improved and are relatively intuitive. Some users continue to seek improvements in reporting and analytics capabilities.

In addition to the interactive features mentioned above (Recording, Q&A and Chat), some of the features respondents find critical include: Automatic Email Reminders to Registrants (75.9%), Email Registration Templates

(67.0%) and Application Sharing (43.6%). Features considered beneficial by respondents include Polling (58.1%), Audience Attentiveness Meter (54.4%), Hand Raising for Attendees (51.8%) and Post-Session Surveys (47.9%).

The most important aspect of the webinar platform for users in the Ease of Use/Setup, according to 42.5% of survey respondents. Reporting and Archiving also are considered important.

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7. Post-Presentation Reporting, Follow-Up and Marketing

"Don't think of a webinar as a static event, It should be an ongoing dialogue."

—Loren McDonald, Silverpop.

To achieve the greatest ROI from a webinar, businesses must maintain a high level of focus during all stages – before, during and after the event. Starting at the top, company division must work well together to plan the concept, create the content, promote the presentation and follow-up effectively to reach the goal of the session, particularly when the goal is generating sales leads.

Webinar hosts can stay on top of the webinar following the live presentation by sending out follow-up emails and analyzing the post-presentation report. Survey respondents are attentive to both of these strategies, with 70.6% sending out Automatic Follow-Up Emails most of the time and 68.9% of respondents viewing Post-Presentation Reports most of the time.

Keeping the dialogue going can be a key component in a business' desire to stay top-of-mind for attendees. Maintaining interest in the webinar after the live event also will serve to generate new interest in archived recording.

"Don't think of a webinar as a static event," McDonald said. "It should be an ongoing dialogue." To that end, webinar hosts should consider all the options of how to utilize the content post-presentation. "I call it Return on Slides (ROS)," he explained. "You can tweet about it, blog about it and link to it." McDonald referred companies to a site called SlideShare that allows anyone to upload presentations and make them available by Internet search.



Conclusion

Webinar technology has come a long way and businesses are realizing the benefits of incorporating webinars into an overall sales/marketing strategy. As companies continue to increase the number of webinars they present each year, they are becoming more focused on engaging attendees in innovative and creative ways by improving the content, incorporating interactivity and participating in different types of social media.

Overall the webinar platforms available are working effectively for users. Improvements in usability and user interfaces have made the process more user-friendly. Some improvements on the horizon will likely involve analytics and reporting.

About the Survey

The Best Practices Survey for Webinar Hosts includes feedback from 119 executives in companies who use webinars for Lead Generation, Demand Generation, Social Media and related purposes. The survey was conducted in July and August of 2010.

The feedback came from Directors of VP, CEOs and Sales/Marketing executives in a variety of verticals, from software and business service to finance, healthcare and media/Internet.

The survey skewed to companies with less than \$50M in revenue (62.9% of respondents) and 1-50 employees (40.9%).

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