

Webinars: 3 Steps to Success

by [Tim Sosbe](#) of [Training Industry, Inc.](#)



As today's business world continues in a technology-fueled advance to the next level of professional evolution, leaders are finding a variety of new avenues for their marketing messages. Gone are the days of relying on printed advertisements as the primary driver for new business. Instead, marketers, business leaders and tech-savvy professionals are turning to webinars and online programs to generate leads and extend their reach.

That should be no surprise. Since the technological capabilities first burst onto the scene – amazingly just about a decade ago – webinars and other web conferencing tools have become valuable solutions for marketers. Unlike the flat capabilities of a print ad, which is good only as long as a particular issue stays in current circulation, webinars are fully charged opportunities that allow complete interaction with potential customers.

Taking place in virtual, and unlimited environments, webinars allow presenters to roll out highly customized messages, materials, ideas and innovations. What's more, the messages and materials can stay current and always be available in online archives, keeping your company just a click away from its next big deal.

Success in 3 Steps

Winning with webinars is an easy sale. By virtue of their unique nature – bringing together the best elements of business presentations, expert think tanks and focus group capabilities – webinars can be quickly produced and rolled out to large audiences.

But that's not even the best part. Print and TV commercials are random-attack mechanisms, firing out the information and hoping to hit the right target. Webinars offer targeted marketing so

sponsors can control who receives the information, and trust that those who do register are truly interested buyers who just need that last little push to sign on the bottom line.

It may sound deceptively simple to say the success of a webinar program can be determined in three steps, but with the right combination of experience, message and drive, it really can be that easy.

Step 1: Partner with a Pro

Planning a webinar is like any event, whether it be an investors luncheon or the latest Broadway extravaganza. As the cliché says, well-begun is half-done. So the first step for any successful webinar is finding the right partner.

Working with a company experienced in producing webinars is the best way to ensure the success of your program. An experienced webinar producer, like Training Industry, Inc., brings with it a strong delivery platform that has all the technological bells and whistles to best deliver your message. Training Industry webinars, for instance, use Citrix Online's GoToWebinar platform, which provides unique tools including the ability for speakers to assess the interest levels of virtual audiences and respond on the fly.

Marketing needs to be part and parcel of your sponsorship package, since the whole purpose of sponsored webinars is to reach new markets for products and services. Webinar buyers should consider who their target customer is, and then work with their webinar partners to best attract those buyers. Webinar producers should have extremely large networks in which to market products, so webinar buyers should be sure to discuss targeted options when considering webinar sponsorship.

Step 2: Content Counts

Now that you have a platform and a large audience to address, it's crucial that your message be structured in the best way to appeal to the desired audience. Typically dependent upon their level in the organization and experience in business, some audiences might respond best to different kinds of programs than other professionals. For instance, executive audiences are likely to be

most interested in hearing about best practices among peer organizations, while younger professionals might benefit most from a how-to approach.

Of course, webinar producers will advise you more specifically on the content needs based on your desired outcomes. And of course, content decisions should be made before marketing begins, so as to use the program description to attract the right professionals.

Some general content advice, however, is to find the speaker that best represents your company in the online world and best serves your desired purposes. Some attendees might be most impressed by hearing your CEO or another key executive, while some attendees might benefit most from hearing a marketing professional. Some companies also turn to third party speakers, like industry analysts or experts, to give an additional level of credibility to their message.

Finally, be sure to have a discussion about the technological capabilities of your webinar producer's platform. Interactivity can be key to a successful event, especially considering the audience is sitting at work, with email and hundred of other distractions just a click away. Keeping them engaged with knowledgeable speakers, dynamic content and interactive tools such as polling, chat boards and Q&A will help ensure your outcomes.

Step 3: Practice Makes Perfect

This last step makes sense for any public endeavor, whether you're launching a webinar series or going in front of the "American Idol" judges. In short, as the old joke goes, "how you get to Carnegie Hall is 'practice, practice, practice'."

Professional webinar producers will set up a rehearsal schedule that includes a dry run program and a final meeting before the live event for a dress rehearsal of the program. Webinar sponsors can also practice on their own using platform tools offline. And of course, speakers can use all manners of public speaking tricks, such as the old standby of practicing in front of a mirror, to ensure they're properly prepared.

One caveat about webinars: Too often speakers think they can relax standards since they're essentially talking to a computer screen. The reality is a virtual audience needs more attention than a live audience, since distractions are so available and tempting. A well-rehearsed speaker with a compelling style is one way to ensure engagement, which is equally important as strong content and ongoing interaction.

Wrap It Up - Follow It Up

In conclusion, remember that despite this article, there is a fourth point to the three-point plan of attack: follow-through. When working with a webinar producer, sponsors receive full contact information on anyone who registered for the program, even those who were unable to attend. These, of course, are the leads your work generated, and they need to be managed carefully.

The availability of the webinar in recorded archives is a great reason for follow-up contact, especially with those who couldn't attend but who no doubt remain interested. Immediately following one program can also be the ideal time to market your next webinar, striking while the iron is hot to let your potential customers know what's on the horizon.

Tim Sosbe is General Manager, Training Industry Webinars for TrainingIndustry, Inc., www.trainingindustry.com/webinars. You can reach Tim at tsosbe@trainingindustry.com.