Click4it Wiki - Toolkit

Checklist for hosting a webinar

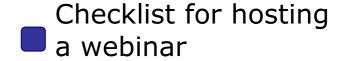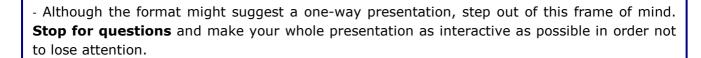## Typical pitfalls to avoid when hosting a webinar

The challenge: Owing to the fact that you do not see your audience and often they do not see you either, you face a bigger challenge to get and maintain their attention. During live seminars, other factors (your personality, looks, eye content, the room, etc.) could compensate and enhance the value and convincing effect of your presentation but in webinars you do not have these external tools to support you. So what can you do? Develop great content, first of all. Here are some further tips, to avoid the common mistakes people make during webinars.

- During a webinar there are several distractions your audience has to deal with (having the Internet browser open, other programs running,incoming emails, etc). **Your content must be to-the-point,** informative and interesting.

- **Avoid Death-by-PowerPoint** – A webinar is not merely a PowerPoint presentation delivered real time, online. If it was so, your audience could just watch it on their own, without any guidance. It is important that you keep the audience active, engaged and able to make use of the fact that there is an expert presenting the topic.

- Despite the fact that you deliver your presentation in a digital format, **you still need to connect and speak to the audience** as if it was person-to-person.

- **Show, don't tell**. Make use of the numerous resources on the Internet. Refrain from making your presentation too wordy; use a variety of media (pictures, sound, video clips, or demo applications) to involve your audience and get your message across in a more effective way.

- Take advantage of live chatting between host and audience, but also among the audience. Interactive webinars give participants a **sense of community** and make the experience more effective in terms of learning.

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- Although the format might suggest a one-way presentation, step out of this frame of mind. **Stop for questions** and make your whole presentation as interactive as possible in order not to lose attention.

Step by Step

Before

- Choose your date carefully:
    o In order to accommodate different time zones, you might consider hosting your webinar twice,
    o Try to avoid Fridays and Mondays as they tend to be conference days,
    o Start your webinars 15 minutes past the hour; as meetings usually end on the hour this would give time to your participants to get ready,

- Survey your audience during registration – use the given information to tailor your content to the needs/experience/previous knowledge of the participants,

- Develop good quality content and invite experts if possible,

- Think about and list possible questions participants may ask in order to get your Q&A session flowing,

- Add a photo and bio of your speakers to the webinar,

- Practice your webinar – having a test audience will help you get familiarized with the software, will call your attention to parts where you need to be more engaging or clear,

- Create a comfortable environment:
    o Eliminate potential distractions (visual or noise) from your room where you present from,
    o If you use video broadcasting make sure your background is free from visual disturbances,

- Have a «pre presentation « that you loop continuously, containing quick reminders, a welcome message, and other pieces of information participants need to know before they start the webinar,

- Join your webinar early and make sure that the presentations, links, etc are working properly.

During

- Make speakers introduce themselves at the beginning (if there is no video transmission – make speakers identify themselves before speaking),

- Ask participants to mute their microphones until the interactive parts in order to avoid background noise,

- Watch your tone and energy level, if it is voice-only, indicate if you are taking a pause to think (otherwise participants might think that there are technical problems),

- Use diverse methodology and tools for presentation (flash, audio, video, photos, demos, charts etc) – by over utilizing Power Point you risk losing your audience's attention and interest,

- Use quick polls to check understanding,

- Stick to your schedule – respect the time of the participants by keeping yourself to the announced schedule and timeframe.

After

- Survey the participants again – review their feedback to improve your webinar,
- Archive your presentation – this will help you improve your future webinars by giving you the chance to listen to yourself from another perspective,

- Upload your webinar to your website for future viewing – this allows your participants to listen again and also help you promote your future events,

- Send a follow up e-mail:
   o   Thank participants for their attendance, inform them about upcoming events, webinars, ask them to sign up to your newsletter, etc.
   o   Do not forget those who registered but did not participate: inform them about how to access the recorded version of your webinar and invite them to upcoming webinars.

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