Click4it Wiki – Toolkit

Conducting effective webinars

When to use webinars?

Webinars should be short and simple. They work best for accomplishing a specific objective for a small group of people over a brief period of time.
Consider using a webinar when these conditions occur:

- To teach a single procedure, task, policy, principle, process.
- For a one-time need, in other words for events that occur just once but do require learning.
- For a limited audience.

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.

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Step by Step

Before

- Determine the objective(s) of the event
- Determine compelling topic that will make people to attend and match the objective of the webinar. The core of most webinars is a presentation, such a slideshow or demonstration.
  Tips:
  - Make sure it is designed to be appealing and it does not make the attendees checking their emails.
  - The presentation material should be exciting and fast moving.
  - Create a welcome slide that let's the attendees know what to expect and include a photo of the speaker to allow people visualizing him/her.
  - It is really important to include many different visuals and not to have the same visual for an extended length of time, to keep the attention focused.
  - Avoid slides that are to be shown for a few seconds.
  - Don't build a sequence of slides that is reliant on exact synchronization between the slides and speech.
- Establish Question & Answer sessions. Typically questioning occurs immediately after the presentation during a designated session. If the subject is too complex, the speaker may pause at logical breaks to take questions from the attendees.
  - Show a relevant slide otherwise attendees will be stuck on the slide showing just before the Question & Answer session

- Choose your technology. Remember that it is the type of event that determines the technology, not the other way around. Ask yourself if it is important for the attendees to communicate with the presenter or if it is important to record and archive the event for playback.
- Select the speaker, who is recognizable to the audience, credible and with good speaking skills.
  - Ask yourself who can best convey the required information and best inspire learners e.g. Teacher/trainer, Subject-matter expert, Inspirational speaker, Panel of experts…
- Select a moderator. In case of multiple speakers, it is advisable to have a skilled moderator to improve the flow and feel of the webinar, ask the good questions, read and report the questions asked by attendees.
- Select the support team to handle any technical issues experienced by attendees.
- Select an appropriate time, taking into consideration different time zones.
- Establish a quick and easy registration process.
- Send confirmation e-mails immediately after registration and a reminder e-mail prior to the webinar. Reminders emails are the key to increased attendance.
- Practice the webinar with the speaker and content at least once prior to the actual event.

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- Review all possible catastrophes such as losing connection, audio/video problems…
- Set up a Skype account that would serve as a risk management approach when users are unable to connect. Communicate this account to the attendees in advance so that they have time to connect with the account.
- Proofread and test everything twice.

During

- Start and end the event on time: a slight delay in a face-to-face event generally goes unnoticed, but in a web event few minutes can seem a lifetime.
- The speaker, moderator and support team join the webinar at least 15-30 minutes earlier to set up the presentation and check if every device works fine.
- Headphones are recommended; otherwise the microphone will pick up the sound coming out of the speakers.
- All your phones should be turned off.
- Have a clock to monitor the flow.
- The speaker interacts with the attendees by informing them about housekeeping rules e.g. if they are muted, or how the chat feature works…
- Set up some time for questions at the end of each section so that attendees do not have to wait too long to get their question answered.
- Emphasize the main points using annotation tools. Most webinars software has drawing tools that can be used to draw attention to items on a slide.
- The speaker should let attendees know when he is going to be silent because the voice conveys his presence.
- If needed, micro-pauses are a good way to let attendees reflect. It is possible to build micro pauses by chunking the speech in short burst of words with silence in between.
- Once the session is over, the speaker wraps up and thanks participants.

After

- Use the polling, Question & Answer session and chatting transcripts to collect feedback, learn about your audience and develop a post event FAQ.
- Archive for playback for your recordings but also for future presentations, extending the reach of your event.
- The recorded session is sent to participants with a follow up message

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