



# Webinars: Being There From Anywhere

# Webinars:

## Being there from anywhere

Skip those cross-country sales trips and host an online event instead. Marketers find webinars save money and build new leads. Here, we review the benefits and give you a guide to getting started.

Host a meeting in your pajamas. Attend an industry conference from the family cabin. Visit clients in Surrey and never renew your passport.



Welcome to the wonderful, wide world of webinars. That's a web-based seminar (web-inar), in case you don't speak the language yet.

Just about everyone seems to be hosting web events these days. Long the purview of high-tech software dealers and marketers, webinars have trickled down to trade associations, healthcare providers, credit counselors, lawyers, lobbyists and more.

Web conferencing gained momentum during the economic downturn when companies sought to increase productivity and reduce travel costs. Increasingly, sales staff began using the tool to educate consumers and gain sales leads.

By 2005, an estimated 107 million users participated in a Web conference.<sup>1</sup> And that's growing.

## Hosting a webinar—10 reasons to go for it

Web events have three main functions: 1) educate existing customers, 2) generate leads and 3) communicate with employees. Depending on your goals, you may have one or several motivations for hosting one of these virtual events:

### 1. Reach a lot of people at once



Tens, hundreds or even thousands of people can attend your presentation, and no one has to travel. A webinar is an efficient way to train employees or access sales prospects in multiple locations.

<sup>1</sup> "Webinars Help with Training, Sales," by Jaime Leick. *The Business News*, Sept. 12, 2005.

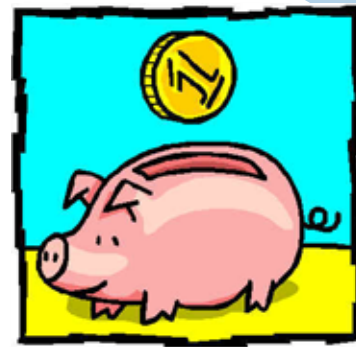
## 2. Leverage your best presenters

You know the brilliant salesperson who always closes the deal? What about that lead corporate trainer who garners top reviews? Now these stars can reach more people in less time by delivering their presentation over the Web instead of in person.

## 3. Get maximum value from your training budget

With online seminars, you eliminate travel expense, room rental, refreshment costs and a host of other expenditures that come with in-person events.

*Charlie Hagen is a corporate information systems trainer at KI, a Green Bay-based office furniture manufacturer. With more than 3,500 employees worldwide, Hagen can have people from all over the country taking his online classes at any given time. Several years ago, the company switched its main office software and Hagen conducted in-person trainings at every company office. He estimates his travel expenditures were about \$250,000 that year. After implementing online training, Hagen's annual expense account looked more like \$25.<sup>2</sup>*



## 4. Position your company as a thought-leader

It's a time-tested marketing technique: give away your expertise, and the sales will follow. No different than classic tip sheets and white papers, webinars are just another way to reach out and educate potential customers. Use these interactive events to demonstrate experience, build credibility and establish yourself as an industry expert.

## 5. Generate revenue

Of course, no one says you have to give away your content. For some companies and organizations, webinars have themselves become a new source of revenue.

*In 2006, the National Association of Dental Plans generated \$65,000 in webinar revenue—triple what it made five years earlier in 2001. And association officials expect that number to grow. The key to their success, says one company leader, is member surveys that lead to relevant topics. The*

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

organization looks for content suggestions in general member surveys and in feedback questions after every event.<sup>3</sup>

## 6. Generate quality leads

Generate interest in your company by offering attractive, useful content. For the participant, a webinar is a high-value, low-threat way to learn more about a company. No one has to commit to a one-on-one sales call, but everybody gets to join the conversation.

*"If you do this right, your salespeople never have to make a cold call again. You're calling people who already know what you do and what you're about."*  
—Rob Solomon, CEO, Bulldog Solutions<sup>4</sup>



## 7. Qualify prospects

With webinars, you'll know who signed up for your event, who actually attended, and who stayed for the whole presentation. Consider every registrant a solid lead, but the people who attend and interact are the most likely to buy. Track participant interest in follow-up offers to even better qualify your leads. Most software providers include a lead scoring system to identify top prospects.

*From November 2004 through 2005, the Xerox Corp. ran three informational webcasts. More than 2,000 IT managers watched the broadcasts, and more than 40 percent of them met the company's criteria as a qualified lead.<sup>5</sup>*

## 8. Create goodwill

Many businesses opt for the soft-sell approach and focus on valuable industry information or best practice content. Give attendees new knowledge, and you'll earn appreciation and trust that can pay off in the long run.

## 9. Gain new insight into your customers

Pay attention to the questions customers ask during the question and answer period. This is an opportunity to learn customer "pain" points and opinions. After the event, email attendees a link to the Q&A transcript and answer



<sup>3</sup> "Sharing the Secrets of Great Webinars," by Stephen Pelletier. *Associations Now* supplement, June 2007.

<sup>4</sup> "Webinar Essentials," by Karen Bannan. *B to B*, June 13, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> "Marketers Align Events, Strategy," by Mary E. Morrison. *B to B*, vol. 91, issue 5.

any questions you couldn't during the original presentation. This is a great way to extend the reach of your presentation and gauge attendee interest.

## 10. Save the environment

These days the webinar business is about more than saving time and money. As companies look to green their business practices, they're turning to remote conferencing to reduce the need for automobile and plane travel.

*The environmental impact of classroom training is significant. According to web conferencing provider iLinc, 15 students traveling 200 miles by car to attend a training can release as many as 15,000 pounds of carbon emissions. Travel by air, and the emissions are much, much higher.*

*The iLinc Green Meter, a standard feature in its software, automatically calculates CO2 reductions by measuring the distance between the instructor and all students based on their IP address and figuring whether the trip would have required a drive or flight. One customer, Global Knowledge Training, calculates that it prevents more than 4.4 million pounds of CO2 emissions each month.* <sup>6</sup>



## Getting started

It's a connected world, and webinars have become a key part of marketing arsenals. If you're not doing them already, now's the time to test the waters.

Start out slowly. Look at your existing marketing plan, and identify two or three campaigns that could be supplemented with an online event. You might plan a webinar after a trade show, for example. Or schedule your event after a live speaking engagement, and encourage attendees to send colleagues to your webinar.

Once you get started, you'll have a valuable new way to reach customers and build your prospect list. Here are a few tips to get you going and help make your event a success:



<sup>6</sup> iLinc Case Study: Global Knowledge Training. [www.ilinc.com/resources/casestudies/globalknowledge](http://www.ilinc.com/resources/casestudies/globalknowledge). Accessed Dec. 27, 2007.



## Be compelling

Don't leave guests wondering "What's in it for me?" Your webinar should address a timely industry issue or a significant client need. Help attendees solve a problem, grow their company or advance a career.

Talk to your sales staff and conduct client surveys to get ideas. Whatever you choose, give your webinar a catchy headline that conveys the benefits of attending:

*"PR nightmares: How crisis planning can keep the media from haunting you."*

*"How one company got healthy and saved thousands, and you can too."*

*"10 deal-breakers that can ruin a sale...and how to avoid them."*

*"5 Security Tricks That Crooks Know and You Don't."*

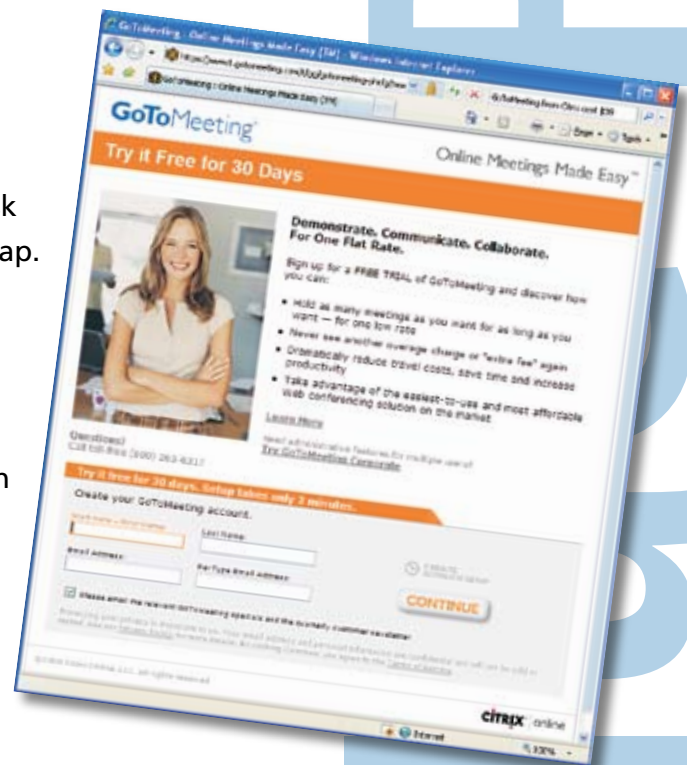


To draw attendance, consider hiring an industry expert or corporate celebrity, such as authors, trade-association executives, notable journalists, academics or successful CEOs. If you share the leads and promote the event well enough, you may even get them to speak for free.

## Choose your software

You don't really need fancy software to run a webinar. Set up a phone conference, email your slide deck and ask participants to follow along. Simple. Low-tech. Very cheap.

But if you do want some of the bells and whistles that come with real event software, you have plenty of vendors and payment options to choose from. Some packages like [GoToMeeting from Citrix](#) cost \$39 a month for events with up to 10 attendees, while other companies like iLinc charge per minute, per user, and still others charge several thousand dollars in annual fees for comprehensive packages with unlimited use.



Before you start evaluating vendors, consider these common options and decide which would be most important to you:

- Do-it-yourself tool or total event support
- Maximum number of users
- One-time use, monthly or annual subscription
- Live event moderators
- Automated email invites, reminders, thank-yous
- Record for later playback
- Editing recorded event
- Polling/surveys
- Chat/Q&A features
- Participant monitoring
- Lead evaluation/interest rating
- E-commerce/billing features<sup>7</sup>



Find out if the emails and registration pages can be customized with logos, colors and fonts to match the rest of your brand identity. Ask about scalability if registrations exceed expectations. And ask to sit in on another client's event or review a recorded event online.

## Market your event

Marketing, of course, is critical. At the very least you'll want to post the event to your website, email your client list and send a press release to the appropriate media outlets. Reach additional prospects by co-sponsoring the event with a supplier or guest presenter or by buying a prospect list.

Integrate webinar advertising throughout your standard marketing initiatives, including direct mail, print ads, e-newsletters, TV and radio.

Begin promoting your webinar at least 30 days in advance. Participants will register anywhere from weeks to minutes before the event. Once you have those early registrations, keep following up. Todd Davison, president of webinar software provider Bulldog Solutions, says that unless you send reminders, 67 percent of registrants won't show up.<sup>8</sup> Send a reminder the week before, the day before and again the morning of your event.



<sup>7</sup> "How to Host a Successful Webinar," by Todd Davison. MarketingProfs.com. Posted Feb. 17, 2004. Visited Jan. 3, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> "How to Produce Better Webinars for Fortune 500 Exec Prospects." MarketingSherpa.com. Posted Dec. 1, 2004. Visited Jan. 3, 2008.

## Practice and prepare

Please, this goes without saying. Do a run-through of your presentation using the actual software you'll be using the day of the webinar. From audio glitches to corrupt images, plenty of complications can occur.

If participants weren't able to download your slide deck ahead of time, have it ready in a PDF so you can email it to anyone having problems with the online display.

As with in-person presentations, have a print copy of your presentation on hand, just in case you also have problems with the visual display.



## Follow up

Your sales people should be making calls within the next 24 to 48 hours after an online event. Beyond phone calls, use email to connect with participants and offer bonus content or promotions related to the webinar.

According to MarketingSherpa, only 20 percent to 35 percent of most webinar registrants actually attend. Sure you'd like to do a lot better, but remember, everyone who registered is a lead. Everyone who registered expressed at least some interest in your service or information. Nurture those contacts.

## Post online

Finally, maximize your investment by recording the event and posting online. Attendees can view the presentation at their own convenience—all they miss is the opportunity to ask live questions.

Talk with your software provider about recording and playback options. You want to be able to edit your presentation into segments so that online visitors can skip forward in the presentation.



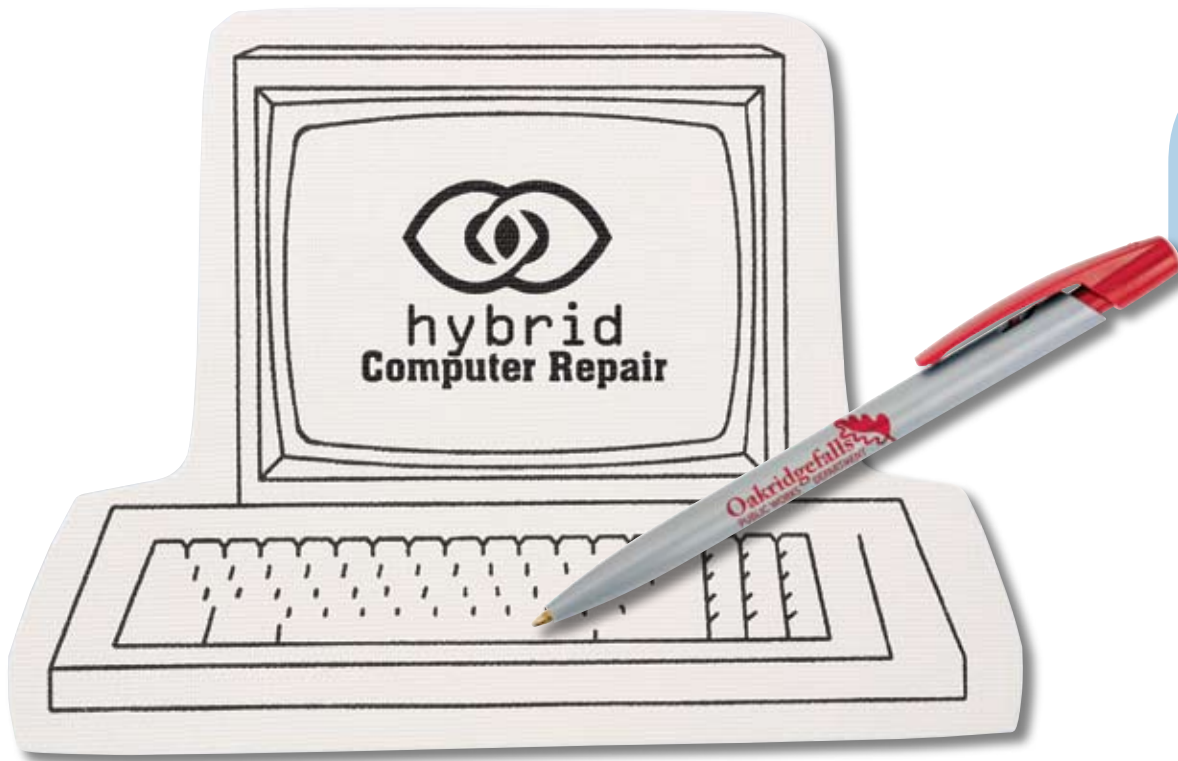


## Well-established

No longer a novelty or experiment, webinars have become a standard medium for delivering content. The technology is reliable and powerful. The concept is familiar. And attending is oh, so convenient.

Today, webinars have the ability to rival the effectiveness of in-person events. With on-demand playback, your event can influence decision-makers years into the future. Plus the convenience factor means CEOs and other senior executives are more likely to attend.

For small companies, webinars are a great way to level the playing field. With online events, you have the same power on the Internet as any huge corporation. We think that's pretty exciting and pretty liberating.



are popular