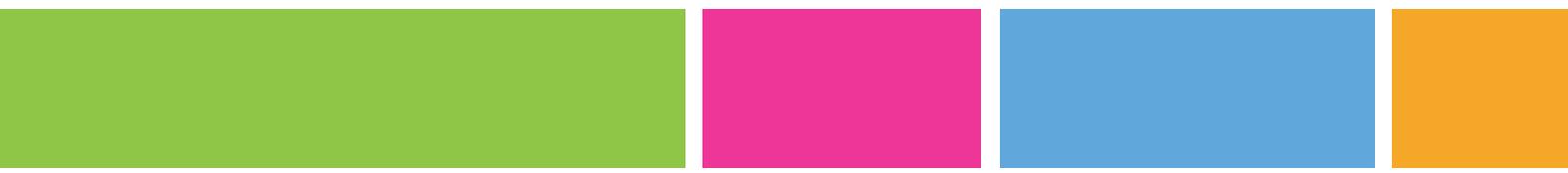


10 COMMON WEBINAR MISTAKES... AND HOW TO AVOID THEM



FALLING SHORT OF SUCCESS

Webinars have become our best tool for generating leads, accelerating the pipeline, and the educating our customers and prospects. As more and more marketers come to rely on webinars to engage with their key audiences, the competition for their time and attention intensifies. Today, simply giving a webinar isn't enough. In order to stand out, you have to deliver a really **great** webinar.

What makes a successful webinar? Well, that depends on who you ask. For webinar audiences, success is defined by the value of the content and the quality of the experience. For webinar producers, success may be defined by the number of attendees and the quality of the leads. Unfortunately, even with clearly defined goals, many webinars fall short of success. This paper will show you how to avoid the 10 most common webinar mistakes and reveal best practices on delivering a stand-out event.

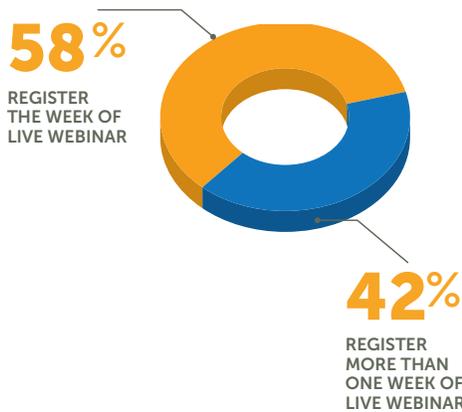


MISTAKE #1

THE 1-WEEK EMAIL PROMOTION

Due to poor planning or a well-meaning but misguided desire to cut down on emails, many companies limit their webinar promotions to around one week. These companies typically drop an initial email invitation seven days in advance, sometimes followed by a second promotion a day or two before the presentation. But leaving promotions to the week before your webinar may mean you miss out on a lot of attendees. ON24 benchmark data shows that up to 42% of the people who register for webinars sign up more than eight days in advance.

START EARLY AND FINISH STRONG



THE SOLUTION

A longer promotional cycle gives you more chances to attract an audience. When you give yourself a longer promotion period, you use three or more emails to promote from a couple different angles. For example, your first invitation could be an HTML email that focuses on the event at a high level. The second might be plain text and zero in on featured speakers or content. The third could outline specific benefits the recipient will get from attending your webinar.

The art of driving webinar registration is all about catching people at a moment of receptivity with a message that resonates with them. Extending webinar promotions beyond a week and delivering multiple messages and email types will increase your chance of successfully hitting that moment of receptivity.



Registration data indicates the value of a two-week promotional strategy.



MISTAKE #2

FAILURE TO OPTIMIZE REGISTRATION AND CONFIRMATION PAGES

ON24 data shows only 48% of the people who click “register now” will actually complete the registration form. Why are marketers losing more than half their prospective audience members at the point of registration? A few easy-to-fix issues may be to blame:

TOO-LONG REGISTRATION FORMS

Companies often ask for too much information on the registration form. Busy customers take one look at these long forms and decide your webinar probably isn't worth the trouble.

THE SOLUTION

Design a simple form that only captures the basic demographic information you need to determine whether a prospect is right for you: company, name, title, industry, revenue, and contact information. Your registration rates will jump.

INCONSISTENT CREATIVE

Attendees need visual confirmation that this registration page is the same event they saw in the promo — yet often there is a visual mismatch from promotion to registration.

THE SOLUTION

Assure your prospects they are in the right place by using consistent colors, imagery, and language in all your materials, including banner ads, social media, emails, and landing pages.

NOT OPTIMIZING CONFIRMATION PAGES

Confirmation pages can be a great opportunity to boost attendance. Many companies miss this opportunity to re-engage an audience that's already indicated their interest in the event.

THE SOLUTION

Enable social sharing. Embed Twitter, Facebook, and other social tools directly in the confirmation page so registrants can tweet or post that they just signed up for your webinar. Over time, the additional viewers you capture via social sharing can add up to significant numbers.

NO CALENDARING TOOL

If you don't provide a quick and easy way to put your webinar on their business calendar, chances are good that your prospects will double-book or miss your event.

THE SOLUTION

Calendar tools dramatically improve registration-to-attendee conversion rates. Embed a calendar tool on every landing page, allowing registrants to place your webinars on their business calendars. Include login details in the information that goes to the calendar.

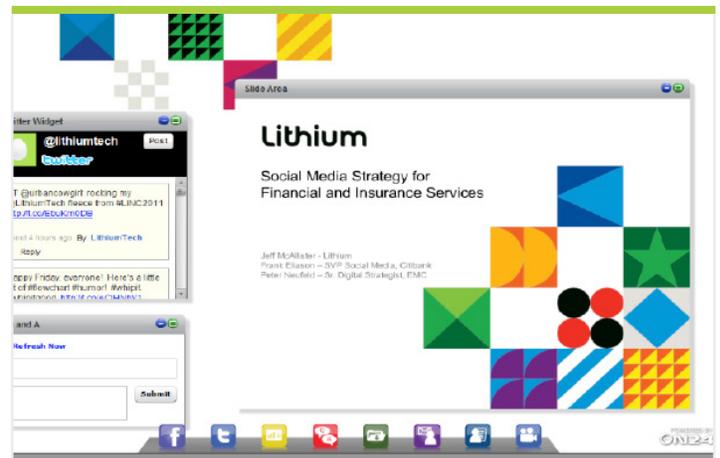
MISTAKE #3

THE VANILLA WEBINAR CONSOLE

It's easy to think of your webinar attendees as a captive audience, but they can log out as easily as they logged in. When you ask your customers and prospects to attend a webinar, you are asking them to stare at a fixed location for up to an hour. If that location is not visually engaging, they probably won't stick around for the whole 60 minutes.

THE SOLUTION

A great webinar console helps you retain the focus and attention of your audience throughout your presentation. It also provides an opportunity to reinforce your branding and top-line message. Every webinar console should highlight your corporate logo and color scheme, and display the presenter's top-line message at the top of the screen. If attendees remember nothing else, they'll remember your key message after staring at it for an hour. To make the background of your webinar console even more visually appealing, use bold colors, images, and graphics.



MISTAKE #4

LEAVING YOUR AUDIENCE OUT OF THE CONVERSATION

Audience interactivity is one of the most important advantages of webinar technology. It's no longer acceptable to ask attendees to stare at a static screen for up to an hour without giving them a chance to engage. With so many audience participation tools now at our disposal, we must stop thinking about webinars as a way to deliver a presentation and start thinking about them as a way to have a conversation.

THE SOLUTION

Take every opportunity to open up the lines of communication with your audience:

- + **Live Q&A.** Live Q&A consistently ranks as the most widely used interactive tool in the webinar experience. It is a great way to directly engage with your audience and address their questions, comments, and interests in real time.
- + **Polling.** Webinar polling is one of the most powerful tools in your arsenal. It lets presenters directly engage with viewers, gives the audience something to do, ensures viewers are paying attention, supplies an important snapshot of your audience's interests, and enables attendees to benchmark themselves against their peer's votes.
- + **Social media.** Most people are used to sharing their thoughts and reactions with their social networks in real time. They are going to do it anyway; rather than forcing them to leave your webinar to access their social platforms, give them the tools to share directly from your console and keep them in your webinar. As an added benefit, social sharing advertises your event to a larger audience.
- + **Group chat.** Allowing audience members to converse directly with each other during the presentation generates additional discussion about your topic.

TIP

Use interactive tools, such as polls, surveys, Q&A, and chat, to have authentic conversations with your attendees.

- + **Group collaboration and idea generation.** These tools let you present ideas for audiences to vote, rank, and comment on, keeping the conversation flowing throughout the presentation.

These interactive tools enable multi-directional communication: presenter-to-audience, audience-to-presenter, and audience-to-audience. Choose the interactive tools that best support your content, and you will see a sharp boost in audience engagement.

MISTAKE #5

DEATH BY 1,000 BULLETS

Want to bore your audience to death? Give them PowerPoint slides crammed with line after line of text. Soon they will tune out to check email, talk to a colleague and, eventually, exit the presentation.

THE SOLUTION

Presenters have long struggled with the problem of excessive text. More words do not strengthen your message — they weaken it. Always remember you are telling a story. Your visuals are there to support that story, not convey it word for word. Build visually interesting slides that put the focus on powerful images, then support those images with a few bullets that highlight key points. And don't simply read those bullets — nothing turns off an audience faster than feeling like they're listening your notes. The best presentations let the speaker tell the story, not the slide.



MISTAKE #6

SELLING, NOT HELPING

No one wants to be pitched. Audiences come to your webinars to get answers to pressing problems and to consider new ideas. If you are leading them into a sales pitch, you are missing a valuable opportunity to establish credibility and earn trust. When you give prospective buyers new ways to think about their toughest business problems, you establish yourself as a trusted advisor — a position that ultimately will enable you to more effectively present your solutions, products, or services.

THE SOLUTION

Great webinars solve problems. Every year, we study thousands of webinars, and the ones that do well have titles like “How to Optimize...,” “7 Keys to Successful...” or “How to Build a” This is not to say you cannot address your products or solutions — you can, just do it from the angle of how it solves a problem.

Also, be careful to avoid the bait and switch. You know the trick: you attract an audience with the promise of addressing a specific business problem but then give that problem only surface-level treatment before jumping right into a detailed product pitch. This tactic will backfire every time with attendees dropping off fast — and deleting future promotional emails. Every webinar is an opportunity to help people, and helping is the best kind of selling.



MISTAKE #7

THE CELL PHONE PRESENTER

Poor quality audio is a webinar killer. It is incredibly frustrating for audiences who are interested in your content to have to struggle to hear what you have to say. There is no quicker way to get audience members to drop off of your webinars than poor audio quality. Even worse, bad audio makes your whole presentation feel unprofessional, which can lead to a poor perception of your company as a whole.

THE SOLUTION

We understand presenters are busy people who are constantly on the move. However, audio quality is simply too important to leave to chance. Next time you present, follow these important guidelines to ensure great audio:

- + Never use cell phones or speaker phones.
- + Use a good-quality handset or headset.
- + Present in a small room, since big rooms often have an echo.
- + Turn off air conditioning, heaters, or other noisy devices; you may think they can't be heard over the phone line, but they can.
- + If your cell phone is in the room, turn it off so it doesn't ring during the presentation.
- + If you are using a room in your office building, place a DO NOT DISTURB sign prominently on the door so co-workers don't barge in unexpectedly.
- + Mute the volume on your computer speakers.
- + Sound-check every presenter and guest speaker 30 minutes before the webinar, so you have time to address any issues with audio quality.



MISTAKE #8

NOT RESPECTING YOUR AUDIENCE'S TIME

When someone signs up for your webinar, you enter into a pact in which you promise to present the stated content within a specified period of time. If you exceed that time, you break your attendees' trust, and they may not come back.

THE SOLUTION

Here are five important rules for showing you respect your audience's time:

- 1] Do not exceed the advertised webinar length.** Not only does it make you appear unprofessional, you put people in a tough position by forcing them to choose between finishing your event or making it to their next meeting on time.
- 2] Schedule your webinar length based on your content.** Many marketers default to the 60-minute webinar: a 45-minute presentation followed by 15 minutes of Q&A. But if you have only 20 minutes of great content, schedule a 30-minute presentation and include 10 minutes of Q&A. Don't fall into the trap of padding content to expand the presentation time. People know when they are getting filler, and they'll drop off the call. These days, a lot of people prefer shorter webinars and will be thankful for a 30-minute event.
- 3] Start on time.** It is a fairly standard practice to start webinars about two minutes after the hour. Many attendees will be running from another meeting and it can take that much time to get to their computer, put on a headset and log in. Any delay longer than two or three minutes, however, abuses the time of waiting attendees.
- 4] Allow ample time for the Q&A.** Attempting to compress Q&A into a rushed minute or two at the end of a presentation does your audience a disservice. It prevents them from being able to get answers to the many questions they may have about your content. To ensure you have ample time for Q&A, rehearse your presentation, ideally two or three times. This is the only way to know for certain how long it will be. If it tends toward running long, pull some material out to allow plenty of time for audience questions.
- 5] Finish early if necessary.** If there are still five or ten minutes left in your allotted time, but your presentation is complete and no more questions are coming in, don't be afraid to end your webinar early. Your audience won't think less of you — they will thank you and appreciate getting a few minutes back. In fact, this could earn additional goodwill.

VIEWING TIME



57^{MIN}
AVERAGE
VIEWER TIME

MISTAKE #9

NOT HAVING AN ON-DEMAND STRATEGY

We are undergoing a major change in the way audiences take in content. ON24's most recent benchmark report revealed that nearly one in three webinar registrants are attending webinars on demand. Some of these people even miss the live event entirely. There are two trends driving the increase in on-demand viewing:

- 1] Mobility is changing the way people absorb webinar content.** Now that most webinar platforms support mobile viewing, registrants are free to view your content when it is most convenient for them. Since most people don't have a lot of time during the day, they are choosing to watch at off times, such as during long commutes, on mobile devices.
- 2] The increasingly global nature of business means international audiences, scattered across multiple time zones and continents, are viewing your webinar content.** This makes it impossible for everyone to attend live. Think about it — all the tools you use to promote your webinars are borderless, including your email lists, website, and social media applications. A borderless audience means your webinars have to be available on-demand for instant viewing, anytime, on any device.

THE SOLUTION

With on-demand viewing providing such a massive opportunity to extend the life of your webinar, marketers must have a strategy to not only archive the event but to promote it beyond the end of the live date.

Here are five best practices for promoting your on-demand webinars:

- + Ensure your webinars are available within 48 hours of the live event.
- + Notify all registrants, not just those who missed the webinar, that the archive is available, and include a link to the on-demand event.
- + Host the link to the archived content on your web site.
- + Send the link to your sales department so they can promote it to their prospects.
- + Use the results of the live event to promote your archived event; for example, if you have an interesting poll result, use it to pique prospects' interest and draw them to the archive.

ON-DEMAND ATTENDANCE BY REGISTRANTS



ON-DEMAND VIEWING TIME



MISTAKE #10

TREATING ALL LEADS EQUALLY

Many organizations fall into the bad habit of taking all the leads from a webinar and dumping them into the CRM system, essentially handing them over to the sales department without any pre-qualification. This approach means that your sales department will have to work their way through a lot of dead ends, while hot leads may be cooling off in the pile. All leads are not created equal, and effective lead scoring can increase the value of your leads and the success of your sales follow-up.

THE SOLUTION

One of the marketing benefits of webinars is that they provide a wealth of data on the interests of attendees. Intelligent lead scoring simply requires a process to evaluate and score leads based on two primary criteria:

- 1] Basic registration data.** Registration data is your chance to find out whether a prospect is right for you. You can quickly establish company size, industry, job title, and revenue, making it easy to decide whether it makes sense for you to target a prospect further.
- 2] Behavioral data.** The increased level of interactivity in webinars not only serves to engage the audience, but it also provides a wealth of data on the interests of your attendees. This data can be combined to create an engagement score that provides you with the interest level of the prospect. Behavioral data can include viewing duration, content downloaded, questions asked, results of polls and surveys, social media engagement, and more.

Registration data combined with an engagement score can provide you with a set of basic parameters to establish whether a lead requires immediate follow-up or further qualification. By simply prioritizing the stronger leads, you will increase the effectiveness of your sales efforts and the ROI of your webinars.



LIVING UP TO YOUR POTENTIAL

It's sometimes the small steps that determine whether your webinar is a huge success or a total failure.

As you create, promote, and deliver a webinar, you want to make sure that both you and your audience get the most from every event. Though that can sound overwhelming, in practice it's pretty simple: just think about your audience experience, give yourself plenty of time, and watch out for the simple yet potentially catastrophic errors that prevent too many webinars from fulfilling their potential.

By avoiding these common webinar mistakes, you'll get more leads, your audience will have an engaging and informative experience, and everyone will feel that their time was well spent. In short, you can take your webinars from good to great.



