How to Present Effectively Online

**An Osterman Research White Paper
Prepared for Citrix Systems**

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Why You Should Read this White Paper

Webinars and online meetings are excellent tools for conveying significant amounts of information for a variety of purposes: sales of a particular product, marketing of a company or technology, training new employees or any other event during which information needs to be imparted. Advantages of presenting online include:

- The ability to present to a geographically dispersed audience for up to 60 minutes (longer in some cases)

- The ability to provide easy access to presentation content to the audience

- The ability to provide an interactive online experience with the audience

- The ability to maintain a dialogue with attendees and registrants long after the online presentation has been completed

- The ability to re-use archived presentation content indefinitely with virtually no additional effort required

This white paper offers practical and actionable advice on the key steps that any presenter should consider as they plan and execute a Webinar or online meeting.

Webinars and online meetings are excellent tools for conveying significant amounts of information to a geographically dispersed audience.

Preparation: Practice with Your Guest Speaker

Preparation is perhaps the most critical element in setting up a Webinar or online meeting, since it determines both the ultimate success of the and it can be a key determinant in helping to boost the size of the audience.

Recruit a Guest Speaker

Guest speakers, particularly those who work for a different firm, can be particularly helpful in building the audience for the event. Customers, analysts or others who are knowledgeable about the subject of the presentation,can lend credibility to an event, particularly if they are known to be subject-matter experts on topics that will be covered in the presentation. Plus, guest speakers can often help boost the size of the audience by marketing the event to their own mailings lists and other marketing sources.

Recruit Subject Matter Experts for Q&A

Closely related to the best practice of recruiting guest speakers is recruiting subject-matter experts to manage online question-and-answer sessions. This will provide credibility for your online presentation, particularly if the experts that participate are indepdendent of the vendor. Plus, it will permit very detailed and technical discussion that the primary presenter may not be qualified to address.

Develop Presenter Interplay

One of the more effective techniques that can be used in an online presentation — and one that is often used in newscasts and other news-oriented programming — is for presenters to converse with eachother and not just with the audience. Presenter interaction gives the audience a chance to "listen in" on a conversation between industry experts — for example, one presenter can make a point and the other presenter can reinforce it with an example, case study or anecdote. This will help make listening to an online presentation much more interesting for attendees.

Webinars and online meetings can be made much more effective if there is interplay between the presenters, effectively allowing attendees to 'listen in' on a conversation between industry

Prepare Presentation Content

There are three critical elements involved in this phase of online presentation planning: 1) prepare, 2) prepare and 3) prepare. Because the presentation is the only visual component in virtually all multimedia Webinars and online meetings, it is critical to create content that is engaging. The content in each slide should provide valuable information — not simply marketing hyperbole — and it should include actionable information that the attendees can use now and in the future. There should be a sufficient number of slides so that content changes often enough to keep attendees interested, but not so fast that they cannot absorb all the material presented. Animations and slide changes should be tested on slower computers with relatively slow connections, if possible, to ensure that all attendees will be able to view the presentation.

Practice

Presentation practice is an important component for many Webinars and online meetings, particularly if the speakers have not worked with one another before. Osterman Research found that when a guest speaker is involved in a Webinar, 60 percent of online presenters frequently run a rehearsal session in advance of the live event while another 26 percent do so occasionally.

Practice is important for a number of reasons — establishing the timing for each component of the online presentation, ensuring that the session does not run past the allotted time, making sure that the transitions between speakers work smoothly and more. Further, it is important to practice the interplay that occurs between speakers and to establish cues for each speaker to interject their comments so that this interplay appears natural and spontaneous.

Presentation: Engage Your Audience

Share Preview Content for Early Arrivals
Some attendees will sign into a Webinar or online meeting early. Osterman Research has found that the mean length of time that a Webinar is open prior to its start time is 18 minutes. Consequently, it is important to create interesting content for attendees to view. This content can include information about the presenter, guest speaker(s) or featured products and services. In short, provide something for early attendees to view that will help ensure they stay engaged in the minutes leading up to the live event.

Start on Time
Online presentations should start on time to demonstate respect for the audience and ensure that attendees do not drift away. While it is acceptable to start the event slightly after the advertised time to accomodate those who sign on late or have technical difficulties, the presentation should start no later than three minutes after the advertised time. Osterman Research has found that the mean length of a Webinar is 58 minutes – this allows a presentation to start a couple of minutes late, but to end within the hour.

Introductions
Introductions are an important element for any online presentation, since they set the stage for both the content and the speakers. Introductions should provide enough information about the content to ensure that attendees stay on for the entire event, and they should provide enough background about each speaker to give attendees a reason to invest their time in listening to these individuals. Of course, the introductory period should also be used to provide logistics information about the presentation, as well, such as how to submit questions to the speakers, how to send a message to the moderator if there is a technical problem, if and how attendees will be provided with a copy of the presentation and so forth.

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Audience Engagement Tools

The Webinar or online meeting interface should provide tools that make it easy and appealing for attendees to interact with the presenters and the moderator. These tools should include the ability to ask questions that will be addressed during the online presentation itself or offline. A chat function is very useful if attendees want to contact the moderator to ask a technical question.

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Retain Your Audience

Obviously, the fundamental goal of a Webinar or online meeting is to attract and retain an audience that will hear what a presenter is trying to tell them. Here is some advice on how to retain that audience.

Audience Interactivity

One of the most effective ways of engaging an audience is to make an online presentation interactive, and one of the best ways to accomplish that is to allow attendees to ask questions of the speakers. Osterman Research has found that nearly two-thrids of attendees ask speakers questions during the course of an online presentation, and that four out of five attendees want to be able to communicate with presenters via a chat or instant messaging function within the interface. It is critical, therefore, to use a tool that allows such interaction and that makes it easy for attendees to learn and use these tools.

Attendee Response

Why do people attend Webinars and online meetings? Osterman Research has found that the most important reasons cited by attendees are to get more information about specific products (mentioned by 76 percent of survey respondents) and to understand issues about which attendees do not have a lot of information (61 percent). Other reasons include product evaluation for upcoming purchases, to learn about industry trends and to learn more about vendors. Further, one-in-eight attendees report that Webinars help them "a great deal" when making buying decisions about particular products, while another one-third report that Webinars help them in this regard.

Response Stimulation

Because it is important to keep an audience engaged during the course of an online presentation, it is important for the presenter to motivate attendees to become and remain engaged. Polling attendees is a good way to help maintain

attendee interest during a presentation, particularly if the results of the poll are discussed during the presentation itself. These results can be used to compare the audience with an industry survey to help both the attendees and the presenter understand similarities and differences between the audience and the industry at large. Polling is less useful for true market research, since an audience may be skewed in one direction or another.

Build Upon Your Call-to-Action

Just like a sales call, no Webinar or online meeting is complete without some sort of call to action. It is incumbent upon the presenter, therefore, to make sure that attendees are given the opportunity for follow up after the presentation has been completed.

Survey

One way of engaging the audience after the online presentation is to conduct a survey. Osterman Research has found that one-third of online presenters conduct such surveys among attendees frequently, while almost as many presenters do so occasionally.

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Follow-Up Emails and Archives

A presenter has an excellent opportunity to contact attendees of a Webinar or online meeting with a sales call, literature or other follow-up communications. Because attendees typically expect and invite such communications, the contact will seldom be regarded as a "cold call" or an unexpected intrusion. Similarly, for those registrants of a Webinar that did not attend, an email welcoming them to view an archive of the online presentation is an appropriate follow-up communication and allows the presenter an additional opportunity to share content.

Using GoToWebinar and GoToMeeting for Successful Online Presentations

Citrix® GoToWebinar™ and GoToMeeting™ offer online presenters a do-it-yourself tool that provides cost savings and efficiencies while enhancing the effectiveness of their message.

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Chart 1
GoToWebinar for Large Online Audiences

Presenter Objective	Benefits of Using GoToWebinar
Effective Preparation	The simple GoToWebinar planning tools allow you to set up your Webinar quickly and easily, without special training or technical support. After presenters follow a simple three-step process, GoToWebinar automatically generates a registration landing page and manages pre-Webinar email communication with all Webinar participants.
Audience Engagement	Presenters can easily engage their online audience by launching GoToWebinar instant polls and answering attendee text questions.
Audience Retention	The GoToWebinar Presenter Dashboard enables you to measure audience interest at a glance and easily engage your audience by launching instant polls and answering attendee questions.
Audience Call-to-Action	GoToWebinar follow-up emails, online surveys and on-demand attendee reports help presenters to optimize and measure their audience call-to-action.

Chart 2
GoToMeeting for Smaller Attendee Groups

Presenter Objective	Benefits of Using GoToMeeting
Audience Gathering	GoToMeeting reaches globally dispersed prospects that were not within reach before, driving greater audience participation. Presenters can easily invite online meeting participants with the built-in integration with Microsoft® Outlook®, Lotus® Notes® or various instant messenger applications.
Audience Engagement	Presenters can keep online meeting participants involved by drawing on-screen and instantly changing the presenter role to any participant.
Audience Retention	GoToMeeting keeps interactivity high by securely sharing keyboard and mouse control with any participant.
Audience Call-to-Action	Meeting recording and on-demand attendee reports help presenters to optimize and measure their audience call-to-action.

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Summary and Conclusion

Webinars and online meetings are an increasingly popular and reliable methods of conveying significant amounts of information to a completely opt-in audience. However, it is critical for the presenter to take specific and measured steps to make the experience informative, interesting and interactive for attendees and registrants who may later view the content. Online presenters must take specific steps to ensure success by choosing the right tools, recruiting guest speakers, engaging their audience and retaining attendees to the greatest extent possible.