

## Five Strategies for Better Webinars

Webinars offer a dynamic, convenient way to deliver presentations to audiences anywhere without having to travel! Like any presentation, engaging and effective webinars take a lot of work and preparation. The following are five strategies to help you and your team develop webinars that are interesting, engaging, and outcomes-focused:

### Focus Your Content

Well-prepared content is the key to a great presentation in any context.

- **DO: Focus your energy on one or two objectives and take your time exploring them.** Presentations are often overburdened with too much information. Narrowing your scope will help to ensure that your audience understands the purpose of the event and takes away your intended messages.
- **DON'T: Slack in preparation.** Even if your presentation is one that you've delivered a hundred times, take the time to read through and rehearse it again with a critical eye. If possible, review your content with other experts to make sure you haven't overlooked anything essential.

### Unclutter the Screen

Your visual display should enhance your content and improve your audience's experience.

- **DO: Use your slides to emphasize key points.** Replace lengthy text with eye-catching images and key words or phrases that communicate your message clearly and succinctly. Always make sure that your visuals serve a purpose and are not there as filler or distraction.
- **DON'T: Use your slides as a teleprompter!** Use the slide's notes section (included in most presentation software) for your presentation script or talking points, or write them out separately. You are the one telling the story—don't make your audience read it too.

### Establish Rapport

Webinars offer a limited window into another person's world. Use your introductory time to create an environment where participants feel comfortable interacting with you and one another.

- **DO: Quick introductions.** Provide presenter bios in advance, but allow a few minutes at the start of the session to briefly greet and introduce yourself to participants. Treat each other on a first name basis, if appropriate.
- **DON'T: Forget your audience is present!** Especially if you hope to encourage audience dialogue, set the tone by having your audience participate early and often. Open the phone lines, use chat boxes, or use polls to ask your audience questions and solicit their responses. Make sure to only ask about things you genuinely want to know about.

## Engage Your Audience

Your audience is there because they are interested and want to learn about your topic. They can also be an important resource to your presentation.

- **DO: Include “hands-on” activities.** Consider ways to *demonstrate* your content using activities or exercises. For example, share a story and allow your audience to weigh in on the outcome. Then review the story and outcomes together. You might learn something, too!
- **DON'T: Talk the whole time.** Build in opportunities for participants to bring their experience and knowledge to the presentation: Ask *them* to share a story or help troubleshoot a challenge. Actively engaging participants in webinar proceedings allows you to tap the expertise of not only the official presenter, but of everyone in the virtual room. It also decreases the likelihood that participants will engage in other activities while on the phone.

## Have Fun!

When it's time for the live event, have fun with it!

- **DO: Keep your energy level high!** Participants will sense your energy level and enthusiasm. Keep yourself lively and energetic and your audience will have fun too.
- **DON'T: Let technical glitches get you down.** Technical difficulties can happen. If they aren't enough to stop your webinar, don't let them become your focus—or they will become the focus of your audience.

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