

Producing Wonderful Webinars

Part 1: Planning

Webinars are a powerful communication tool for conducting meetings and training sessions. Successful outcomes do not just happen; they are designed for success. This multi-part article will cover the essential elements of producing a successful webinar: Planning, Technology, Rehearsing, and Conducting.

Planning involves determining objectives, budget, technology, audio considerations, and scheduling tasks which lead to knowing the target audience, content, speakers/trainers, date/time, invitation process, attendee limit, fees to be charged, prerequisite knowledge or information participants must have, and other important information.

Objectives

Setting the objectives early will help guide all other aspects of the webinar including:

- Learning objectives
- Topics to be covered
- Target audience
- Marketing approach
- Webinar length
- Follow-up plan

Create a planning sheet or checklist to keep on track.

Budget

Budget may be a consideration. How much can you spend on technology, trainers, and getting the word out? Know your budgetary limits up front as getting a budget established early will help guide the remaining decisions.

Technology

Which technology is to be used? Not all technology platforms are created equal. Some webinar technology platforms may be better suited for training purposes and others for information dissemination.

Audio

Determining how to address the audio portion of your webinar may take some research. Would setting up a conference bridge fit within the needs and budget? Would VOIP be better suited? Which technologies do your participants have available to them? Which technology is easiest for the participants to use?

Scheduling

Scheduling seems trivial on the surface but the time of day and the day of the week are important considerations to the success of the webinar. Typically Tuesdays and Thursdays tend to be good days to hold webinars. If the attendees are across multiple time zones, 11 a.m. PST is a good time to hold the session. Are multiple sessions needed?

Do not forget to schedule practice sessions, both to practice using the technology and to practice conducting the webinar. Schedule technology practice sessions in advance of conducting the webinar practice sessions to ensure that the technology solution works.

Planning is time consuming. Planning for all the bits and pieces up front forces you to think through all aspects of producing the webinar. Creating the checklists will help solidify your thoughts. It is well worth the time spent to ensure the pieces will seamlessly fall into place.

Next month we will delve into the technology aspects of producing wonderful webinars.