

Producing Wonderful Webinars

Part 2: Technology Considerations

In the first part of the series, Producing Wonderful Webinars, we explored some of the important planning tasks to create successful webinars. In this article our focus is on the technology tasks to consider prior to delivering a webinar.

During the planning the technology platform to be used was identified. It is time to consider how to configure the components of the virtual environment.



Audio

Nothing can derail a webinar faster than the participants not being able to hear clearly. Check with the audio conferencing provider to assure that their service can safely scale to the number of participants, the time of day selected does not experience heavy traffic, and there is no scheduled maintenance planned that could degrade your call.

Obtain the appropriate telephone numbers, participant passcodes and leader passcode for testing and later for participant distribution.

Webinar Software

Software and services to conduct webinars are numerous. Regardless of your choice there are basic settings that most share that should be set and tested in advance of the webinar.

- If using VoIP determine which settings need to be adjusted
- Configure “when to join” settings that dictate how far in advance of the webinar participants can join
- Security options that guide features such as “chat”
- Image size and settings for PowerPoint or other webinar materials
- Email settings to be able to send webinar invitations, reminders, and follow-ups

If the software is feature-rich there will be many more settings that will need to be configured.

Webinar Messaging

How will email invitations be handled? How will marketing to potential participants be handled? If using the email capability of your webinar software test the message. Some webinar software will add headers to a sent message. For no surprises always test.

Presenting the Content

Plan to convert any webinar materials to PDF and email to participants prior to the session. This is a smart move. Consider if some of your participants have technology difficulties and can not see the webinar. No worries -- the materials are in hand and they can still participate via the audio portion.

Organize the webinar content in an easy-to-follow fashion using PowerPoint or other presentation software.

- Include a cover slide with the Webinar title, dial-in phone number, how to obtain technical support, connection details, and any other pertinent information. Display this slide as participants are logging into the webinar.
- Number the presentation slides.
- Use good presentation design principles for the content creation such as using dark text on a light background, fonts larger than 22 point, keeping charts simple, etc.
- Include an ending slide that contains contact information, further resources, and an evaluation if necessary.

The technology set up in advance of the webinar is critical. It is equally about getting all the software settings correct, and verifying that your content displays correctly within the technology environment. If your webinars are for profit this step is not to be skipped as doing so could affect the quality of the participants' learning experience.

Rehearsing is the next topic we will address. What to do if the leader loses the internet or audio connection? Does what was planned actually work well when executed? These and other questions will be answered next time.