



**Dakota Performance Solutions**

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# Webinar Best Practices

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## **Webinar Best Practices**

### **Content is king**

No one wants to attend a Webinar that's an infomercial. Instead, pick a subject that really speaks to the audience you want to reach—one that is educational or answers a problem they face.

What's the target's "hot button?" If you offer a topic they need to know about, you'll grab their attention. Give them useful information and a learning experience.

Content is your top priority. Each of your targets will ask, "What's in it for me?" Select a good topic and they will come.

### **The Main Attraction**

Many companies believe it's a good idea to get a "name" speaker. But there are divergent theories on this, even among companies quite experienced with Webinars. Some believe it's the topic, not the name, that attracts the audience. Further, if you bring in somebody from the outside, you set him or her up as "the" expert. Why not use your own people, thus setting yourselves up as the expert?

There's also middle ground. Even if you bring in a known quantity from the outside, you can still have your own people take part by mixing and matching. Many companies believe having two presenters is a better idea anyway. If necessary, you can offer to share leads with a presenter from the outside rather than pay them. If the speakers you really want are reluctant, invite them for a roundtable discussion instead of asking for a formal presentation.

### **Presentation Format**

Keep it to no more than an hour, and keep it moving. Have your moderator welcome everybody and give brief biographies of the speakers. Consider having two subject matter experts, with each giving a talk of no more than 20 minutes, showing slides as they go but not reading from them. Then go for a Question and Answer Session of maybe 15 minutes. This could cover live questions or questions submitted during registration. Asking attendees to submit questions during registration is a good strategy. Your moderators will love you for it because it gives them time to prepare, and it tells you exactly what your audience wants to know.

Regarding the slides, ask your speakers to submit them in advance for editing. Make sure they are not too marketing oriented – make sure they're going to advance the Webinar in the right direction. Use big



type, keeping in mind people are going to be seeing them on their computers. Be brutal with the editing. No fluff, no marketing, nothing but real information. You probably don't want any more than 30 slides per entire hour.

Do at least one rehearsal, and consider doing two. When the big day arrives, assign one of your people to time the event. The moderator will flip slides, introduce speakers, and send instant messages to speakers who need any sort of prompting. It's not a good idea to let speakers flip their own slides. They tend to get mixed up. The physical location of your speakers is important as well. If they don't have a lockable office, have them use a lockable conference room.

Another option is prerecorded Webinars, which can be less stressful to conduct but can be more expensive.

Consider running a series of Webinars — each adhering to a theme, but related in some way that offers continuity while also keeping everybody's interest. A series of Webinars will likely pull more and better qualified leads.

### **Timing is everything**

You might have the greatest Webinar ever, but if you have it on the wrong date, weekday or time of day, your target audience will be doing other things. Think about your prospects and check the calendar.

Eliminate holidays and the days before and after them. Forget about Mondays and Fridays. Mondays are too busy, and Fridays are for last-minute projects or early-departure days. Are there any tradeshow that may conflict? How about end-of-the-month quotas?

Consider the time zones of your expected audience. Since most attendees will participate at their desks, when will they be there? If you market nationwide, a good time is 1 p.m. Central time. If you market in only one or two time zones, schedule the event between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Many prospects like to attend during lunchtime.

### **Promoting your Webinar**

Once you pick a date and time, when should you begin promoting the event and accept registrations? Thirty days is the optimum timeframe. Any amount longer, and the prospect may forget or lose interest. Less than 30 days doesn't give you enough time to promote for maximum attendance. Also, it's easier for your prospects to plan to attend something a month away than it is to plan for next week.



Realize that if you are planning only one Webinar, some of your hoped-for audience won't be able to make that day or time. A series of Webinars is better, or a choice of two dates for the same topic would help solve that problem.

Trying to hit a home run with just one big event on one day is not the best strategy. Some valuable prospects may be vacationing, traveling or ill that day—give them a choice of days or a series.

### **Four strategies will ensure a full house**

Here they are:

1. **Leverage existing relationships.** Take a good look at your trade groups, associations that pertain to the topic, your affiliates and your vendors. How can they help? Perhaps they may cosponsor the event. Publicize it in their newsletters. Place a registration link on their Web site. Ask them to participate in some way.
2. **Use your customer base.** Unless you're a one-product or one-service provider, your existing customers should be contacted often. They already know the value of your company and are very likely to attend the Webinar. However, all too often, they may not know about your new offerings. They are your best prospects.

New, qualified prospects are the lifeblood of any company. The goal of the Webinar is to identify and deliver them. It's easier for new prospects to respond to an informative Webinar, because their worry about the sales pitch is lessened.

3. **Merge promotion into your normal marketing program.** That is the most economical method, because there is little or no additional cost. All your advertising—search engine ads, newsletters, email, banner ads, your own Web site, even print and broadcast—is ideal for mentioning the Webinar and giving the link to register. It's also a response-builder.

If you exhibit at a tradeshow, have fact sheets and registration materials on display and urge staff to meet, greet and mention the helpful free Webinar. Talking about the Webinar may quickly lead into serious discussions of products and services on the spot.

4. **Facilitating your invitations.** In addition to merging the Webinar promotion into your normal marketing, be sure to facilitate these best practices to increase attendance through Telemarketing and strategic e-mail blasts.



### **Involve your sales force and in-house staff**

Invitation calls by your sales force to customers and current prospects are a wonderful way to get registrations and warm up prospects. A personal invitation is usually appreciated and remembered. It's an easy call to make and take, and may lead to some business right on the phone.

In-house staff can also help in the promotion. Be sure they are aware of the Webinar. Provide them a script for discussing it with every customer and prospect they help.

### **Keep it simple, but get what you need**

A quick and easy registration process helps maximize attendance. You don't want to lose a good prospect by making registration too cumbersome or lengthy. Your goal is to get complete contact information, reinforce the value of attending, find out the source of the lead and get some qualifying information.

All promotions should have the same registration page link so that you work with only one database.

### **Don't lose two out of three**

Our experience has shown that unless you send reminders and make telemarketing calls after the registration, 67% of registrants won't show up for the event. What a waste!

To prevent this loss, send an immediate "thank you for registering" email with a request to mark their calendar. Follow this up with another email reminder about 10 days before the Webinar, a phone call reminder the day before and another email one hour before the Webinar starts.

### **Maximize attendance *after* the Webinar?**

Even with all the reminders, some registrants won't attend—an unscheduled meeting, an illness, the press of business that day... things happen. You don't want to lose these prospects, because they have already expressed a level of interest.

Record the Webinar as a Flash file and put it on your Web site. Send non-attendees a "sorry you couldn't attend" email with a link to the file on your Web site. Preparing the file costs around \$500, but this gives you a permanent Webinar that's on your Web site for other prospects to view.

If you choose not to archive the event, at least send non-attendees another email (or call) with dates and times of repeat Webinars.



### **Are they hot, or warm?**

Right at the end of the event ask the attendees to complete a quick, on-the-spot survey. Webinars are interactive. Use this feature to get immediate feedback and more qualifying information.

About 75% of attendees usually fill out the survey. They ask other questions, provide input that improves future events and, most important, give you insights about their level of interest, needs and timeframe. Plan your survey carefully.

### **Follow up quickly**

After the event, send each attendee a “thanks for attending” email. Send a survey to those who didn't complete one earlier.

Now that you have hit the jackpot with all of these qualified leads—some warm, some hot, some as connections for the future—implement your sales plan. Get the information to your sales force and monitor progress and results. With a carefully planned event, you are sure to win new business.



**Event Checklist**

Prior to contracting with a Client for DPS Webinar Event Management Services, several prerequisites must be identified. Four key fundamentals outlined by DPS.

- Prerequisite                      The Client to identify Target Audience. Achieving this will assist in promotional targeting as well as selecting the appropriate presenter and presentation.
  
- Prerequisite                      The Client to create Lead Management Process. The client’s system to manage leads must be in place.
  
- Prerequisite                      The Client to secure internal presenter or third party facilitator/presenter.
  
- Prerequisite                      The Client must have processes in place to immediately advise DPS appointed Internal Program Manager (PM) upon execution of Contract.

DPS developed a highly detailed, executable checklist to ensure a successful Webinar. Once the prerequisites have been met DPS and the Client enter into a Contract, the appointed Program Manager (PM) will refer to this checklist during weekly conference calls with the Client counting down to the day of the Webinar Event.

Days to Event	Project Plan
<b>35</b>	The Client to schedule Presenter. The PM will train the Speaker on how to use The DPS Webinar tool.
	Schedule web conferencing visual/audio functionality and establish meeting date within the platform; set up web conference with all details. DPS will advise on web conferencing details.
	DPS to receive completed Webinar set up document that Includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Webinar Title</li> <li>• Description of Webinar</li> <li>• Date and Time of Webinar</li> <li>• Presenter Information – Including Picture of Presenters</li> <li>• Panelist Information</li> <li>• Registration Field Requirements</li> <li>• Polling Questions</li> <li>• Post-Webinar Survey Questions</li> </ul>
<b>32</b>	Create HTML format for Webinar e-vite and (if necessary) design for printed invitation. You need to have a graphically appealing piece.



	Design landing page (mini-site) for attendees to view after event. Visitors will go here for more information, download presentation, any special white paper offers, etc. You will be able to measure effectiveness of presentation. This is also where they can click on a link to listen to recorded presentation. (Not Provided by DPS)
	Client to define and secure offer. What are the incentives for the target audience to register?
30	Secure all internal approval for e-vite and/or printed invitation copy. Need Client approval of e-vite copy. (Printed invitations not provided by DPS)
	Convert e-vite copy into HTML and lay out e-vite. Merge the copy with the layout for e-vite and printed invitation.
	Create text e-vite from HTML invite. Text version required for electronic email (not everyone will accept HTML mail).
	Content for landing page is approved and posted. The copy should be short, compelling and in keeping with the rest of your company website.
	Establish tracking code, provided the Client has CRM system and/or elects to utilize SalesCycle.net
	Secure list sources and lists.
	Telemarketing team starts calling invite list for personal invitations. External E-Mail invites go out.
	Check e-vites and registration links. Does everything work?
22	Client and DPS Program Manager to prepare response e-mails "Webinar Don't Forget", "It's Today", "Thank You for Attending", "Sorry We Missed You" e-mails. Send to registration management group.
20	Test e-vite mailing with online mailing system for the internal list.
16	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt E-Mail Invites go out.
	Prep DPS Lead Generation: intent, content, objectives, follow-up and scripts. This is the group that will perform the Post Webinar follow-up.
	Conduct e-mail marketing and Voice Broadcasting.
10	Process registrations.
8	Client and PM to create post-event Survey. The post event survey should focus on the user experience, the value of the content, gauge interest in the Clients' products/services, and request recommendations for future events.
7	Establish DPS Technical Support for this event, so if any attendee has a problem they can contact someone directly at DPS.
	Client and Program Manager to finalize and prepare audio questions or any polling questions. You want your audience's questions & polling questions to be set-up or frame the discussion for each section of the presentation.
	Client to finalize their presentation. Note: Your title page should include the audio line & technical support line at DPS.



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3</b></p>	<p>Presenter Preparation. DPS will act as a facilitator so as to guide the activities of the presenter, and prepare the presenter for the Webinar presentation. This includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Coaching &amp; training the presenter(s): This includes review of presenter's content/presentation, advising the presenter accordingly, as well as review/advising the presenter as to Webinar procedures, i.e., what to expect during the Webinar. DPS will prepare and walk the presenter through all aspects of the session.</li> <li>(2) Create opening and closing dialogue copy to be presented at the Webinar session, and ensure delivery of this dialogue during the Webinar session. This includes introducing the presenter and topic, closing out the presentation, delineating the call to action for the audience, introducing the Q&amp;A session, and closing out the session.</li> <li>(3) Performing Webinar set-up, preparation and managing the session: presenters are properly trained on web conferencing platform; audio is properly set-up, etc.</li> </ol>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1</b></p>	<p>Conduct dry run. Work the kinks out of the presentation, and if multiple presenters, ensure presentation coordination. DPS recommends two individuals run the event and the other respond to online chat as well as manage the polling features. Ensure the Presenter is comfortable with using The DPS Webinar tool prior to event.</p> <hr/> <p>Last Chance to Register E-Mail Invite Send out reminder email and Voice Broadcast “don't forget” to registrants.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Showtime</b></p>	<p>Three hours prior to Webinar, send out the reminder e-mail. Ensure maximum attendance</p> <hr/> <p>DPS to assign a customer service representative to assist with Webinar.</p> <hr/> <p>Conduct Webinar / the DPS Webinar tool. The DPS Webinar tool will set the pace of your Webinar appropriately, which can be easily done using The DPS Webinar tool's feedback mechanism that lets the presenter know that everyone is in synch with the presentation.</p> <hr/> <p>Conduct Webinar / Public &amp; Private Chat. Features keep your presentation interactive by using both private and public chat, messages can be sent with the click of your mouse without having to type each message.</p> <hr/> <p>Conduct Webinar / Polling Questions. Create a poll to ask the audience, get instant feedback during the event. This will allow you to make any adjustments required to make sure you are getting the appropriate message to your audience. This is also going to be very useful information to have post Webinar and it will help keep the attention of the audience because they have an action themselves to take care of.</p> <hr/> <p>Conduct Webinar / Annotation Features Bring attention to important points in your presentation. When showing a PowerPoint slide use the annotation feature in The DPS Webinar tool to highlight important bullets that you want to make sure your attendees take notice. Or, place a check mark or star next to each bullet so the audience follows along. It's important to have a good speaker but also have action in the presentation to keep the audience engaged.</p> <hr/> <p>Conduct Webinar / Share Active Content Whether you are a software company that is releasing a new version of their software application that wants to demo it live to the audience or an author of a new book that wants to scan a few pages and read a few excerpts while the audience is following along as you are dragging the cursor across the page. The more active you can keep the presentation the more likely you will keep the audience engaged.</p>



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	<p>Conduct Webinar / Record Webinar Record the event - not everyone will be able to make the time you schedule but they may still be interested in viewing your presentation. Archive the seminar and make the recording available for future playback. Recordings can be managed for playback directly for the DPS Webinar tool server and tracked in the same way as the live event or can be recorded in either Windows Media or QuickTime format that can be accessed from webpage or even distributed on a CD.</p>
	<p>Monitor Attendance. Periodically monitor the attendance online so as to determine presentation "staying power".</p>
<b>Post show</b>	<p>Send "Thank You for Attending" e-mail with the event questionnaire. Follow-up with phone calls.</p>
	<p>Send "Sorry We Missed You" e-mails with link to review presentation. Follow-up with phone calls.</p>
	<p>Link to recording of presentation (if appropriate) given to webmaster. Link tested on web-page.</p>