

Attracting Your Webinar Audience

Book 1 of a 3-part series

A Guide to Lead Generation for Marketers



How to Use Webinars to Generate More Leads

Lead generation is often regarded as the most challenging, and costly, aspect of an organization's marketing efforts. But what if there was a way to reach a large and targeted audience, while capturing invaluable information about them?

The answer is webinars.

Not only are webinars a low-cost vehicle to reach a large and dispersed audience, they are an extremely effective strategy to generate more qualified leads.

Webinars were found to be the number one source of lead generation for B2B businesses by research analyst firm Forrester.

And in 2015, webinars were used by more than 60 percent of content marketers, according to research by the Content Marketing Institute (CMI) and MarketingProfs.

Not only that, but webinars give you the most bang for your buck. According to *Bloomberg Businessweek*, a webinar can slash up to 80 percent of the cost of an in-person live event.

So how can you make webinars a successful part of your content marketing strategy? How can you use webinars to develop more qualified sales leads? In this ebook, we will take you step by step through the process of building a webinar, including:

- Selecting a topic
- Promoting your event
- Strategic lead capturing
- Finding speakers and panelists

“Successful content marketers are truly expanding the use of webinars for all aspects of the buyer’s journey.”

Robert Rose

Chief Strategy Officer
Content Marketing Institute

SECTION 1

Why Marketers Should Be Using Webinars

If you are looking for a more effective way to generate more leads, you need to be using webinars.

According to Erica Maki, a senior marketing specialist at LogMeIn, a webinar is the most effective way to engage authentically with your audience.

Erica should know. She has hosted hundreds of webinars across countless industries, and throughout this ebook she will provide her expansive knowledge and expert tips on how to make your next webinar shine. From setting up early to calm your nerves to creating compelling content for your audience, Erica’s tips will ensure your webinar is a great success.

Through webinars, marketers can more effectively and efficiently generate leads by reaching a wide audience at a low cost.



Compared to a typical email campaign, 59 percent of GoToWebinar customers find they can greatly expand their reach with webinars, a company survey found.



Additionally, a survey by MarketingProfs found that 70 percent of marketers view webinars as effective or very effective at generating qualified leads.



Webinars also have a bigger audience and a longer shelf life than in-person events — once a live webinar ends, 81 percent of GoToWebinar customers use recorded events to reach even more attendees.



And finally, don't forget that just one webinar is a true content marketing hub from which to add additional spokes. In fact, 25 percent of GoToWebinar customers use recorded events to create new marketing assets such as brief clips, white papers and blog posts, all of which are simple ways to get more life out of content that you already know interests your audience.

As webinars become the norm for B2B marketers, the question becomes not whether you should create webinars in the first place, but rather how you can create this interactive and dynamic content to develop new leads and engage customers.

Why marketers should use webinars:



How to Develop Your Content

According to 2015 research by CMI, the biggest challenge for marketers interested in doing a webinar is developing the content.

Television executives know that if you don't engage the audience, the audience will change the channel. It's the same for marketers looking to produce webinars. So how do you find great content and worthwhile speakers for your webinar?

Start by remembering that a webinar should not be about pitching or selling.

"Webinars are not about selling," says Mike Agron, a webinar demand generation expert and co-founder of WebAttract. "They are about stimulating someone's intellectual curiosity, teaching them something and inspiring them to want to have a conversation. Then you can determine how you can help them and convert them from a prospect into a customer."

As marketers, you need to find a topic that interests your audience and ties into your brand, similar to how you would seek subject matter for a content marketing blog post.

For example, a B2B software firm would bore its audience if it just talked about its product. Instead, it could get a panel to discuss the results of its annual survey on automation trends and include a technology consultant's perspective.

A good starting point for finding topics for your webinar is:



Existing marketing content

Look at a subject that has already resonated and sparked interest.



Social media

Watch what topics are trending on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.



Industry newsletters

Subscribe to those that cover your industry. Check content on your competitors' websites for inspiration.

Take the creative process up a notch. Here's how:



Don't go it alone

Hold a brainstorming session with your sales team. It is a strategy used by entrepreneur Richard Branson who says there is no need to act as the 'lone ranger.' He recommends bringing in people from different departments who can spark new and fresh ideas.

"Use brainstorm sessions to obtain your team's perspective, listen to and follow up their best ideas, but in the end you need to make a choice and then take responsibility for that decision," says Branson.



Be your audience

Another tip is to ask yourself: What would an audience be eager to hear? This is a tactic that former U.S. President Bill Clinton successfully used when he was running for office. Just as Clinton was trying to appeal to voters in his speeches, your webinar content should aim to appeal to a targeted audience.



Tell a great story

Keep in mind that people are always interested in hearing tips, lessons learned or new ways to improve a business. Your aim is to present content that will deliver relevant information, which will teach your audience something, inspire them and stimulate their curiosity. One way to accomplish this is using a case study to drive your webinar. For example, you could get a company executive to tell his story of how new technology transformed business processes, reduced costs and freed up staff to focus on customer service.

Not only would the audience come out of the webinar with a way to improve their own businesses, but they would also associate that improvement with your business, which is exactly the marketer's goal.

Once you have a topic, next you need to decide who will present it.

Research by CMI in 2015 found the most successful B2B webinars were those with experienced speakers.

Find thought leaders, storytellers and experienced panelists to be part of your webinar, says Agron.

The most captivating webinars are those that bring in experts who can add varied perspectives and engage the audience. If possible, aim for between two and four presenters. Think about how many people would be needed to create a lively discussion within your allotted time, without feeling too crowded.

To start determining who would make a good panelist, have a clear goal of what you want to get out of the webinar. If quantity of lead gen is your number one aim, you may want to recruit a panelist who can help attract a larger audience, as we'll talk about more in section 3.



Creative webinar formats to try:



Q & A or panel discussion

During this webinar, the speaker or a panel invites questions from the audience. This is a great format as it automatically commands audience interaction and can often generate some lively debate. Questions can be submitted before the webinar or posed during the event.



Interview

This can be an engaging way to conduct a webinar. The interview between one or more participants can be done on video, over the phone or via a screen share. It is particularly effective when you have a highly animated interviewee or someone who rarely gives interviews.



Reveal insider information

A global leader in manufacturing and design innovation, Munro & Associates hosted a webinar in which it revealed the secrets of BMW's latest release. It attracted attendees by sending them a slideshow of the design. During the presentation, there was a Q & A about the vehicle's design innovations and the manufacturing process.



Less is more

The late Steve Jobs was a powerful communicator. One of his rules was that the average PowerPoint slide must not have more than 40 words. For example, when he was unveiling the iPhone, the first three minutes of his presentation used just 19 words across 12 slides. Jobs' presentation philosophy of simplicity had enormous impact – creating immediate buzz and, in the case of the iPhone, the product sold out in minutes.



Target pain points

Solid Finances conducted a series of webinars to educate the audience on the need to take control of their personal finance. Taught by faculty from the University of Idaho, South Dakota State University and Montana State University, they include tips on money management tips, student loans and property investment. The regular webinars have created a strong following.

If you want to try a more product-specific approach that garners fewer new leads but has more potential for conversion, consider having a client as a panelist in order to provide a testimonial. Keep in mind, though, that the client-testimonial approach should still not be a hard sell.

Think about who in your networks you would want to associate your brand values with and who would stimulate an audience's curiosity to help give more legs to those leads.

Also, consider searching for speakers who have participated in other webinars or conferences, or client or industry experts you may have seen speak at a conference and who have impressed you with their ability to captivate an audience.



Checklist: Steps to set up a great webinar

- 1 Choose the topic**
Find an actionable topic that compels attendees to give weight to what your brand says.
- 2 Find the panelists**
Recruit those who are comfortable speaking in front of others and who would give your brand a positive association.
- 3 Choose a date**
Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays work best for attendees.
- 4 Choose your webinar platform**
A complete webinar solution will give you the automated tools you need to plan and deliver the webinar, as well as the reporting you need to measure success and capture leads.
- 5 Create a landing page**
Put the date, time, topic and panelists on the registration page. Have your attendees provide basic information such as email address and job title.
- 6 Send the invites**
Use your existing email databases and social media to promote the event.
- 7 Plan the content with the panelists**
Determine whether the panelists will put their own materials together or whether you will.
- 8 Develop clear and concise slides**
Consider using a presentation tool such as Prezi that can make the slides more dynamic. Keep the audience engaged with clean, captivating slides that aren't text-heavy.
- 9 Practice, practice, practice!**
Webinars do not have to double as improv class. Most webinar solutions allow you to run unlimited webinars, so take advantage of this feature by completing practice sessions until you feel comfortable.
- 10 Give attendees action points and handouts**
Consider sharing PDFs of the presentations before the webcast even begins as well as during and after the event to keep engagement levels high.
- 11 Use interactive tools**
Features such as polls and virtual hand-raising allow attendees to participate and contribute to the content.

SECTION 3

Create a Plan to Capture Leads

While a webinar is a great medium to attract a targeted audience, the real jackpot is the data you collect from attendees.

The biggest challenge B2B marketers face with lead gen is generating high-quality leads. In fact, according to a survey by B2B Technology Marketing Community, 61 percent of marketers found it an enormous hurdle, which is why it is crucial to take advantage of the quality leads that webinars can bring.

So how do you effectively capture leads and convert them to sales?

1. Collect and share data with sales

Marketing and sales need to work as a team when it comes to planning your webinar lead gen strategy.

Work with your sales team from the outset to determine what information they would like to glean from the registration landing page. The objective is to learn about those who are registering without being too invasive.

We recommend capturing the following information:



Full name, email, phone number



Organization, job title, industry



State or province, zip code, country



61 percent of marketers found generating high-quality leads an enormous hurdle.

This enables your sales team to quickly establish whether it makes sense for them to target the registrant further.

Also, ensure your webinar software integrates with sales and marketing automation platforms, such as Salesforce, HubSpot or Marketo. This will significantly improve the efficiency with which marketing and sales drive revenue from lead gen.

Additional information that is helpful to your sales team includes:

- Create your own questions – ask questions on the registration page such as “What would you like to learn from this webinar?” This helps your sales team know how to categorize the leads and helps you create compelling content for the event.
- Enable questions and comments – always check this optional field as it allows people to ask for follow-up before the webinar.

In our third ebook in this series, we will delve into how a webinar platform can measure and report on attendees, and provide crucial information for lead scoring.



2. Build an effective landing page

You have five seconds to convince a person to read your email, so make sure your event landing page grabs their attention.

Landing page solutions company Unbounce says essential components are:

- A captivating headline, with the title of the webinar
- A set of three to five bullet points, including the date, time and highlights
- A clear focus on what your audience will learn from attending

Remember, at least a third of individuals will abandon the registration process midway through, so you need to optimize our sign-up flow by creating a powerful landing page.

3. Push leads to sales

GoToWebinar offers integrations to push your leads directly to lead and sales management solutions such as your Salesforce dashboard.

“By taking an ‘audience development’ approach and integrating webinars into more stages of the buyer’s journey — marketers have a much better reason to ask for an increasing amount of information during registration, and can begin to improve the quality of their marketing database,” writes CMI’s Rose.

Some other key strategies to build an audience, according to Unbounce, are:

Unique selling proposition

Tell your potential audience what they will learn from the webinar.

Create a sense of urgency

No one wants to miss out, so promote the exclusivity of your event, such as only 20 of the 100 spots are left.

Hero shot and testimonial

A photo and short bio of the speaker will pique people’s interest.

Giveaways

Entice people with a free gift, such as a excerpt from the presenter’s new book, or a yet to be released white paper.

Benefits

Add short, sharp and powerful copy that outlines what your audience will gain by attending the webinar.

Call to action

Create a clear call to action that directs them to register.

“GoToWebinar is an incredibly effective sales tool, and we’ve found that approximately 50-70% of our webinar attendees convert to paying customers.”

Daniel Miller
Sales Manager
Benchmark Email

SECTION 4

How to Promote Your Webinar to Attract the Biggest Audience

To maximize attendance – and generate more qualified leads – it’s essential to plan your communication strategy.

Consider these tactics:

Targeted invitation strategy

As a best practice, invite prospects who have expressed interest in the topic or have downloaded related content from your website. The webinar is now the opportunity to take their expressed interest and invite them to evolve from simply a prospect to someone who is willing to engage with your brand.

The webinar itself may not be the best time to sell, but it can give you a starting point for a later dialogue with those potential clients. Your in-house prospect list isn’t the only vital asset in targeting potential attendees. Consider inviting existing clients in your database to register for the event. Those existing clients can help increase virality of the webinar, increasing the odds of greater lead generation.



Over 95 percent of GoToWebinar customers utilize emails to promote their events.

Erica Maki's top tip:
Automated reminder

We recommend sending invites out about a week before the event. Create a reminder email in addition to the confirmation email and set reminders to go out a day before your webinar, and then three hours prior.

Here's how to boost your webinar attendance:

- 1 Use social media as your ally**
By tweeting about your webinar with a sign-up link, for example, a follower may retweet that message. According to the International Data Corporation, 75 percent of B2B buyers use social media when making purchasing decisions.
- 2 Ask panelists to promote it**
Speakers can spread the word through their own social networks or company newsletters.
- 3 Give something away**
We all love giveaways, so promote your webinar by offering a free piece of content that only registrants receive. Perhaps it's a chapter of the speaker's book or a white paper that they can access early. Be sure to deliver what you promise.
- 4 Get repeat attendees**
At the conclusion of the webinar, have your attendees take an exit survey through GoToWebinar. They can then opt in to attend future events.
- 5 Encourage your sales team to promote to prospects**
Alert your sales team to your webinar and ask them to reach out to any prospects who they think might want to attend.
- 6 Include in newsletters**
Promote your webinar in your company newsletter or an email blast.

“Webinars are a critical, proven lead generation tactic that can fuel your pipeline with buyers across all stages.”

Lauren Collopy
Salesforce Webinar Lead
Corporate Campaigns

Congratulations! You're now ready to start setting up your first webinar. Yes, it can be a bit daunting, but it is an investment worth making to boost your lead generation and expand your audience reach.

Nearly half of GoToWebinar customers choose to use webinars because they offer turnkey and do-it-yourself functionality, and over half say they've reduced the time and effort necessary to host online events.

On top of that, it can be the engine that drives your content marketing hub. Think about how rewarding it will feel to have 25 percent more qualified leads, along with ideas for blog posts, white papers and social media campaigns at the ready. And after your first webinar, you'll have a foundation from which to more easily create new webinars in the future. In our third ebook, we'll dive deeper into how a webinar can launch an entire content ecosystem including white papers, infographics and blogs. But for now you're ready to get started putting together your webinar.

Good luck!



Erica Maki has years of customer and technical support experience. Since joining GoToWebinar in 2010, Erica has managed over 200 webinars, reaching more than 60,000 attendees and helping customers in a variety of industries ace their online meetings, webinars and trainings.

GoToWebinar is the easiest to use do-it-yourself event tool that projects your message to up to 1,000 online attendees. With GoToWebinar, you can reduce travel costs, generate more qualified leads at a lower cost and enhance communication with customers, prospects and employees. Host unlimited webinars for one low flat fee and give attendees the option to join from a Mac, PC or mobile device. To learn more, visit www.gotowebinar.com.

Ready to go to the next level?

Check out the rest of this ebook series for pro tips to engage and influence your audience!

BOOK #2

Engaging Your Webinar Audience: Why Interaction is the Key

<http://bit.ly/2eODQwD>

BOOK #3

Influencing Your Audience: The Secret to High-Converting Webinars

<http://bit.ly/2dIRkxN>



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