



4 Reasons Webinars Help Content Marketers Win

Ready to begin using webinars for lead gen? Let's do this. In this eBook we'll walk you through a plan to get started. You'll learn tips to get you started on these topics:

- 1** *Attract your audience*
- 2** *Engage your audience*
- 3** *Create your webinar content*
- 4** *Interact authentically with your attendees*

Sound interesting? Let's get started.

Today's content marketers are equivalent to triathletes, competing for mind share across a wide array of content formats.

But as a content marketer, why bother spreading yourself over a number of platforms when you can just focus on excelling at one? Because content marketing targets the desired audience in every phase of their interaction with a brand. From the first time they hear your brand name, to the moment they hand over their credit card, to every subsequent referral they pass along, customers respond to a brand that engages them as a human being, not a bank account.

The real questions are: What platforms to leverage, how to use them for maximum effectiveness and when to use each one. Enter webinars. Research on webinars' effectiveness in engaging customers, building thought leadership and selling products has created compelling statistics about what this platform can do.

Making the Case for Webinars



79% of organizations use webinars/webcasts to generate leads

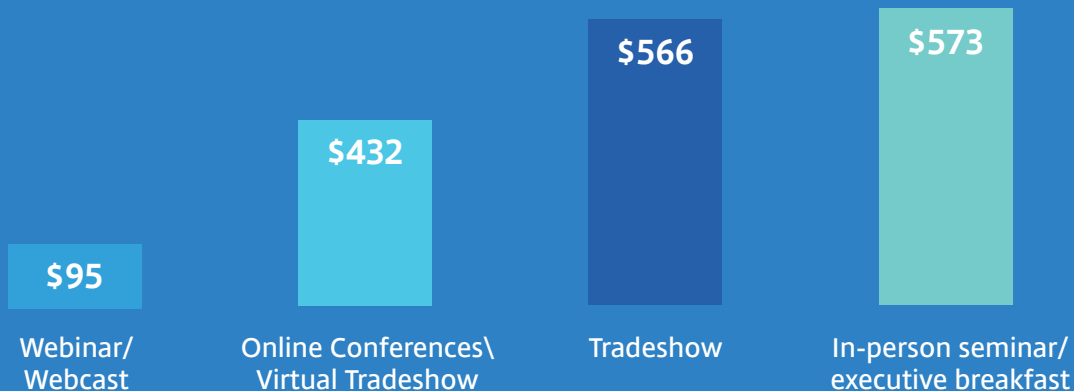


70% of marketing professionals rated webinars as effective/very effective



Webinars can help eliminate as much as 80% of the budget required for a live event

Webinars can dramatically reduce cost per lead



Marketers who use webinars to compete in multiple phases of the marketing process are seeing huge gains in both customer acquisition and thought-leadership status. Webinars are an excellent fit for content marketing because webinars are built for live engagement, education, multiple media types and authenticity. This is where content marketing is thriving.

1. Engage your audience.

While the end goal of marketing remains to bring in revenue for a company, the process is much more subtle and complex than a sales pitch. Your audience wants thought leadership. In simple terms, thought leaders know their industry's biggest questions and the answers to them; they are recognizable authorities on a subject and share that insight. Everyone wants to be considered a thought leader because the status brings to mind leaders like Richard Branson, Oprah and Elon Musk. We can all dream, right?

Thought leadership is the most powerful way to lead your industry. This is what your customers are going to appreciate about you — not features that can be replicated by competitors.

A webinar is a perfect forum to share knowledge because you can change the pace and focus of a webinar at the click of a button. You're no longer hoping the audience keeps reading your article or watching your video. You are able to lead them through a thought process in real time.

Show and tell.

Because you can cover a lot of material with webinars — visually and verbally — you are better able to articulate a solution to your target customer's problems. You are not bound by 140 characters or a single photo to make your point. At the same time, you have

the advantage of being able to check in with the audience as you go, keeping them engaged. Live interaction with your audience is invaluable. This feedback allows you to hone your presentation as you deliver it.

Leverage your influencers.

Co-hosting webinars is a great way to build a growing business's email subscription list. Working with one of your influencers (someone who's a fan of yours) will extend your reach into the influencer's audience as well as your own. After their introduction to your brand's expertise, the attendees will be warmed for any additional correspondence from you. This follow-up opportunity is why it is so important to recruit the strongest speakers possible. The audience needs to be wowed by the information and presentation. The impact of a great presentation far surpasses the cost of an hour of someone's time. Plus, this kind of quality strengthens your relationship with your influencer, leading to more partnership opportunities in the future.

Go in with a strategy.

Strategizing about what topics to cover in educational webinars is as important as choosing whom to have on as the presenters. A structured plan of topics to cover will pay off greatly in the overall marketing plan.

Creating a series of webinars instead of one-off events is helpful when it comes to building a strategy but has limited appeal to attendees. Designing webinars as a series will make you think about the bigger picture of what you're trying to accomplish through your educational webinars, and it will hold you accountable to hosting them.

The research does show, however, that advertising your webinars as a series is ineffective. Essentially, procrastination takes over as prospective customers see a series being offered and know they can always catch the next presentation. A good way to get the benefits of a series without risking low attendance is to plan your webinars as a series but advertise them as one-time events.

Press record. And then promote!

For those who miss your webinars, record and offer a replay. An Adobe study on webinars found that 55 percent of webinar registrants view the recording after the event. A ClickZ study found that of the 400 B2B consumers they surveyed, 84 percent didn't care if the webinar was a live event or actually preferred to watch the recording. Some webinar attendees will review the content again when the recording is released, but many viewers are people who missed the live event. Use follow-up emails and landing pages with a replay video to make it easy for those who couldn't make the live event to still take advantage of the material and capture the lead. Your target customers will appreciate the gesture of working with their schedule. You can also provide a link to share with prospects and influencers who didn't hear about the webinar but would be interested. Once you've got the recording

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it's evergreen content that can be promoted everywhere: your website, blog, social channels, etc. all help to amplify your reach.

2. Webinars offer incomparable engagement potential.

Webinars are amazing tools for educating your target customers at the beginning of the sales funnel and for building your brand's thought-leader profile. But you may be nervous about stepping into a teacher's shoes and keeping the class entertained while teaching the material. Fear not; webinars are built to encourage and support engagement from the beginning to the end.

Put on your teacher glasses.

Since you really are a teacher on educational webinars, it's helpful to look to teachers' tactics to learn how to drive your material into your audience's memory. Engagement is the biggest factor in retaining information. Asking your audience to answer questions, surveys and polls during the presentation gets them interacting with you and thinking about your content. People love sharing their perspectives. When you share some of the comments being submitted, the audience feels like valued participants.

Run the reports.

Good webinar software excels at capturing the right data at the time of registration and at tracking audience engagement.

Capturing the right data.

Your webinar registration form should capture the information you need to categorize your leads and create customized responses. Your response effectiveness will increase in direct proportion to how specifically you can create messaging that speaks to your audience.

Measuring engagement.

Webinar programs can save all comments and poll answers tracking for you to analyze after the presentation. If you aren't using these reports to hone your next presentation and follow up, you're missing out on a very valuable resource and helps your evolve your webinars over time.

With the right software, you have immediate access.

Once you review all the comments, you can identify trends in the responses and tailor your follow-up emails to address recurring questions, concerns or points that generate enthusiasm. If you are repeatedly asked for a certain resource, you can include the link to that resource in your follow up. Also, the comments log is

also a great place to find testimonials. A killer email subject line on your follow-up can be a testimonial one-liner from an enthused attendee, such as, “This info is golden — taking tons of notes!”

Share, share, share.

Another perk of webinars is the ability to post live links to sources you are referencing during the webinar in the chat box. If you’re introducing new functionality on your site (or a site you promote), you can include the links for attendees to visit as you guide them through the site. These links can also be included in your follow emails and recorded webinar promotional materials.

Tell stories.

Make storytelling a focus of every webinar you host. If you can tell a compelling story – such as a client experience or founder’s story – with pictures, simple lines of text and funny illustrations, your audience’s entertainment level will propel engagement that isn’t possible in a product brief or blog post.

Build a reputation.

The real magic of webinars is their ability to create energy from a live event without requiring physical presence. There’s no replacing what happens when a group of people get together to interact and learn. Since physically bringing all your prospective customers together would be expensive and basically impossible, webinars are the next best thing. If you’ve ever been on a

live webinar done right, you know this is true. As you build a reputation for offering great informational webinars, the buzz around these live events will grow. And creating buzz around events is what marketers live for.

3. There's no need to start from scratch.

Don't be overwhelmed by the thought of having to create all the content for a series of webinars. You already have much more content ready to be dropped onto webinar slides than you think. You can repurpose any of your current marketing material into webinars easily, but you can also leverage guest experts to speak to your audience.

Reach out to established experts.

Inviting thought leaders from your industry on as guests not only saves you from creating an entire set of slides, but also shows that you can play nice with others and value perspectives beyond your own. It also strengthens your brand's relationship with those thought leaders and may allow you to market to their regular audiences.

Repurpose the content you already have.

Using your current marketing material for webinar content is a huge time saver. This doesn't mean you will just drag and drop white papers onto slides and call it good. Rather, think about how it makes sense to cut up, rearrange and re-order content

What insight can I share with my customers about this topic via a webinar that they can't get just reading the content on my site?

from several sources to speak to a specific topic. A graph from here, a statistic from there and a quality photo from your site will all look great together when presented around a cohesive topic. Remember, webinars are visual as well as aural experiences, so the less text on a slide, the better. You want your audience to listen to you much more than read off the screen. When determining what content to repurpose, ask yourself, “What insight can I share with my customers about this topic via a webinar that they can't get from just reading the content on my site?”

Switch up the format.

A third option for lightening the workload of creating a brand-new webinar is to host a Q&A-only webinar. This is an ideal format for presenting to customers who are already savvy about your brand and offerings but would appreciate a more detailed dive into the nuts and bolts. This is especially applicable for expensive items and services that an ideal client will research thoroughly before buying.

There's no replacing what happens when a group of people get together to interact and learn.

By offering a Q&A event, you show your target customer your interest in winning their business and availability to attend to their concerns. This opportunity to connect with them in an open forum builds a lot of authenticity into the buying process, which is always a good thing.

4. Webinars Facilitate Authentic Interaction.

Speaking of authenticity, webinars are a great place to demonstrate yours. In today's oversaturated market of edited images, perfect copy and flashy site design, customers are driven to find an authentic connection with a brand. Webinars are by nature more authentic than any pre-recorded video because of the live delivery. Customers respond well to companies open to questions, glitches or contradicting viewpoints that may arise. This takes courage on the part of the brand and shows belief in its products and offerings.

Say hello.

One of the best practices to create authenticity and a human element at the beginning of your webinar is to verbally welcome attendees as they join. Read out the names of people signing in and thank them for attending. You can also ask them to post where they are signing in from and how they're doing. This goes a long way to show attendees that you are grateful for their presence and that the webinar isn't a recording masquerading as a live event.

Take questions.

Answering questions during the webinar is useful for many reasons, but in creating an authentic connection with your customers it is huge. For an attendee to ask a question during a

live event and have it answered in the same forum is rare. This is doubly effective since not only the person asking feels validated, but everyone else on the webinar sees the interaction as well (and many of them may have the same question).

Consider building in Q&A checkpoints throughout the presentation.

Always be sure to include Q&A time at the end of a webinar, but also consider building in Q&A checkpoints throughout the presentation to catch pertinent questions as they arise. This also breaks up the pace of the presentation and creates engagement opportunities. Earn bonus points by posting links to resources that pertain to your answer, adding an exclusive feel to the presentation.

Remember, it's a conversation.

Finally, the conversational quality of a webinar can't be beat by any other forum available to marketers. When more than one speaker participates, the audience feels privy to an exclusive interview with the added bonuses of visuals and the ability to ask questions. When you present solo, interacting with the audience via the chat box and polls creates a genuine connection. Calling attendees by name, answering their questions and acknowledging feedback builds a conversation that your audience will appreciate. In a world of social media interaction, this conversational quality is key.

Webinars: a marketer's dream.

There is no comparison to the engagement potential, authenticity, energy and depth of content you can achieve while reaching an Internet-wide audience via webinar. Marketers can capitalize on

webinars' potential by treating them as tools that are effective throughout the marketing and sales funnel. From the first thought leader presentation to the final sales pitch and close, this medium takes home the medal in effective content marketing.

With the capacity to reach your potential customers so early in their relationship with your company and products, there also comes a need to strategize exactly how you are going to present your brand to your audience.

Using a documented strategy, high-caliber presenters, engagement tools and great follow up, you'll notice upward trends in the loyalty of your fans, the reach of your brand and the ease of closing sales once customers are ready to buy. Since most decision makers consume only 2-5 assets before they are ready to make a purchase, a high-quality, high-impact webinar should be in that mix for the content marketing win.

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About the Author



Lewis Howes is the New York Times bestselling author of *The School of Greatness*. A former professional football player, Lewis is a nationally recognized entrepreneur, business coach and motivational speaker. He is a contributing writer for Entrepreneur and Yahoo Health and has been featured in several major publications.

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