

Webinar Best Practices

Know Your Audience

Speak the language of your audience. When preparing your webinar presentation, know who will be watching the webinar – companies, organizations, specialties, etc. This will allow you to tailor your presentation so it is valuable and relatable to your attendees.

Prepare the Presentation

The webinar should address ONE topic. Do not try to cram too much into a webinar, you will lose your learner and will simply run out of time. A best practice is to leave them wanting something, especially if there is a Q&A. Avoid a “death by PowerPoint” presentation. Don’t just read the slides! If you use a PowerPoint, the slides should be prompts on points you need to cover to keep your presentation flowing. With your slides, ensure there is something new to look at every minute or so on the screen. Use powerful images in your presentation that align with your content to keep the audience’s attention.

Write down an outline or create a script

The script is a valuable tool to keep you on track and prevent you from going on tangents that could cost you time. Scripts should include when to ask webinar attendees a question or request that they answer a poll. To go even further, include when to take a breath and/or pause and also when to advance the slides (especially if you have more than one speaker). This visual cue will keep you in check if you start speaking too quickly or when to change presenters or slides.

Highlight sections that are important to add a little extra energy. With a solid webinar script, you will sign into the webinar fully prepared and ready to go without any hesitation on where to begin. Having said this, don’t let the script make you a robot. Even if you are nervous, keep working to channel the verbal and physical qualities that are unique to you. Audiences want personality! Do not be afraid to let yours come through. You need not sound too scripted or robotic to be an effective speaker.

Ask for a practice session

This is the time for mistakes! If your facilitator does not offer a practice session, ask for one. It may be included in the cost of the program. Practice sessions are crucial for a successful webinar. Let us know if you want to get it on the schedule.

It provides an opportunity to train on the platform. Whether it is how to advance your PowerPoint slides, type a question in the chat, or mute yourself. Without proper preparation and training before a webinar, you may be confused if you are not familiar with their webinar platform. For optimal sound quality, use audio through the computer, with a USB headset with a microphone to avoid creating feedback/echoing during your presentation. If you consider yourself “technically-challenged” do not hesitate to ask for multiple training sessions until you have it down.

You and the facilitator will have time to review the agenda and objectives of the webinar content to ensure it aligns with the text on the webinar registration page and that it fulfills the objectives. If there are other speakers, you will have the chance to generate some chemistry.

Expect at least a few hiccups and be prepared for them. Don’t panic if technical difficulties pop up. If you misspeak or accidentally skip one of your points during the live session, don’t make a show of it. Sometimes it’s best to just keep going.

Log in early

Log in to the webinar at least 30 minutes before attendees can log on to the webinar. Use this time to do a last review of the content, ensure your engagement tools are set-up, test the sound quality, and check that the audio is working. Always keep your microphone muted when you are not speaking. Any other presenters, panelists and even the facilitator should do so as well.

Game time!

Before the webinar begins, here are some effective preparations for the best staging:

- If you are doing the webinar from a home office, ensure that your children, pets, neighbors, etc., won’t interfere or make any noise during the live webinar. Alternatively, if you are doing the webinar from a work office, find a quiet room with a door where you won’t be disturbed. I’ve found putting up a sign saying, “Live webinar in the process, please keep your voices down.” to be effective.
- Close all your windows, browsers and tabs, leaving only the webinar browser tab open. Turn off your cell phone, email and IM apps on your computer to eliminate potential disruptions.
- Have a glass of water or other beverage close to you without ice. You may need a quick sip and the microphone will pick up the clinking of the ice.
- Select a nice solid colored shirt to wear the day of the webinar, preferably not black.
- Ensure that whatever is shown behind you on the webcam screen is neat and tidy. Eliminate any pictures on the wall that may be considered unprofessional.
- Ensure there is a light set-up behind you. This makes everyone look better on webcam.
- If you are using a portable webcam, make sure you have the best angle on the camera, so it’s not too low or not too high. Ask your facilitator to provide feedback on your position on the webcam: too close will look strange, and too far away will be hard for the audience to see you.

After the webinar

A best practice is to offer your contact information to webinar registrants to be able to reach out directly to ask questions. If your facilitator is encouraging or mandating participants to submit evaluations of your presentation, ask for a copy of the results. Evaluations, especially if the respondents are anonymous, provide excellent feedback to improve your next presentation!