

How to Create and Run a Winning Webinar Series eGuide

A Quantum Leap Marketing eGuide

Published July 2010

SPONSORED BY

GoToWebinar®



8011 Navajo Street, Philadelphia, PA 19118

Phone 617-901-6886 • Fax 801-991-6886 • bhanson@qlmarketing.com • www.yourcuttingedgemarketingtips.com

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Stepping Up Your Game with a Winning Webinar Series	3
“If I Had to Do it All Over Again, Here’s What I Would Have Done Differently...”	4
A Platform for Webinar Series Success: Seven Must-Haves.	8
“Smooth Runnings” - Your Winning Webinar Series and Events	13
Applying Series Success Strategies to Online Training	16
Your Action Guide: Step-by-Step Instructions to Creating and Delivering a Winning Webinar Series.....	17
Summary	19
Appendix A: Key Steps to Create a Winning Webinar Series	20
Appendix B: Key Steps to Deliver a Winning Webinar Series	21
Appendix C: Sample Webinar Marketing Plan Outline	22
Appendix D: Seven Summaries of Winning Webinar Series That Worked.....	24

Introduction

A successful marketing Webinar series can educate your prospects on your company's uniqueness, create a competitive advantage, dramatically increase lead flow, and drive sales.

Sadly, most Webinar producers who try to create a series for the first time make common mistakes, and the series fails to reach its objectives. Their company misses an opportunity for advantage in the marketplace, and the Webinar producers look bad in front of their peers and managers.

Whether you want to produce a marketing or training Webinar series, there are certain strategies and tactics that work time and again, regardless of your target audience or size of your organization and budget.

This eGuide, *How to Create and Run a Winning Webinar Series*, will help you get things right virtually every time and make sure your Webinar series is a continued success.

Key questions answered in this eGuide include:

- What are best practices for creating and maintaining a successful series of Webinars, and what are the common mistakes to avoid?
- How can you get more interest and increase attendance to your Webinar events by using social media marketing?
- How can you tap into the strategic power of a series to accomplish more?
- What is the easiest way to build better, more engaging content so attendees come back again and again?
- What's working for leading organizations that are doing Webinar series? (Learn from specific examples, tactics, and strategies.)

A note to the reader before we get started: In this eGuide we focus primarily on live Webinars, one-to-many seminars delivered online for marketing and sales purposes.

We recommend recording those Webinars and promoting the on-demand version as well. Recordings can boost the total number of Webinar viewers by 50% or more.

How to Create and Run a Winning Webinar Series

Most of the ideas contained here will also apply to Webinar series with training objectives or to the on-demand versions of Webinars.

Stepping Up Your Game with a Winning Webinar Series

“If you have an important point to make, don’t try to be subtle or clever. Use a pile-driver. Hit the point once. Then come back and hit it again. Then hit it a third time.”

– Sir Winston Churchill

There has been a marketing revolution over the past 10 to 15 years.

In our world of 24/7 media and Web 2.0, the old marketing strategies don’t work, and those that are early adopters or fast-followers of a strategy like a Webinar series will gain more sales leads, clients, and, potentially, even a competitive advantage.

Consider these recent successes with a variety of Webinar series.

A Technology Products Firm Becomes the Leader in Its Niche and Grows Sales 70% per Year over Consecutive Years

A small products company wanted to cost-effectively position itself in a defined marketplace and generate new contacts in its marketing database with opt-in email addresses. So it collaborated with complementary vendors and media firms and created a monthly Webinar series.

The company was able to achieve its objectives with its series, including creating a list of 40,000 email names and also followed up with more product-focused Webinars, which fueled the compound growth of the company for years.

A Small Services Firm Becomes the Market Leader with Quarterly Thought-Leadership Webinars

A small services firm desired to get beyond its lead service and demonstrate its expertise by featuring its full range of services in the marketplace.

It created a quarterly Webinar series targeting decision makers with content on diverse topics that matched its new areas of competence.

The result: it added new clients for all its services. It also broadened the positioning of the company to diversify its portfolio of offerings in the market.

A Mid-Size Global Products and Services Company Repositions Its Firm from a Stagnant Market to a Growth Sector with the Help of a Multi-Faceted Webinar Series

A geographically dispersed communications management firm with clients in Europe and North America had gone to market with the same message for 10 years. Additionally, its core target market stopped growing and even started to shrink, so the company knew it needed to reach new markets.

It decided to reposition the company around a rising global trend in communications and developed a benchmarking study of market use, issues, and management.

To relaunch its products and drive thought-leadership around this new position, the company launched an aggressive Webinars series with as many as three Webinars a day. Fueled in part by the series, the company now has new momentum and greater sales - in short, a whole new life.

As these three success stories suggest, a Webinar series, if done well, can literally be a game-changing strategy for your organization. Consider that others have used Webinar series to:

- Launch a product, service, or company,
- Move a product, service, or company into a new market,
- Reposition a company in the marketplace,
- Generate more sales leads, sales opportunities, and sales,
- Transform the way a company communicates with its clients,
- Turn training into a profit center or company asset,

And many more.

While a single Webinar can offer significant benefits to your company, this eGuide offers an introduction to creating and managing a Webinar series to gain significant advantage in the marketplace and boost your company's profits.

"If I Had to Do it All Over Again, Here's What I Would Have Done Differently..."

Let's say you have produced an individual Webinar and want to turn it into a series.

How to Create and Run a Winning Webinar Series

Or, suppose you have put together a plan for a Webinar series and want to bring that to life with a series of events.

We will borrow from the experience of others who have been immensely successful and those that failed miserably. We have talked with dozens of Webinar producers, discussing common mistakes, and now we will share their mistakes and tips on how to avoid them.

Here are the things you will want to keep in mind as you build and launch a successful series.

It Starts with Knowing Your Own Objectives...

Be able to answer the question, "When we are done with the series, what will have changed?" Many wish they would have answered this question before the series started.

In other words, when it comes to objectives, make sure you will know if you are successful after a period time or a number of events. If things are not going as desired, either fix the problems or end the series. (After all, no series goes on forever, they naturally have a beginning and an end.)

Target Your Audience Correctly for a Sustainable Series

Before you move forward with your series, double-check that you are clear on your audience and have targeted them well.

While it is more art than science, correctly targeting your market is one of the essential steps to building a successful series of events. Many make the mistake of trying to be all things to all people in their market. Others too narrowly target their series content.

If you have a very narrow target market of, say, 100 decision makers, then you are better off doing one-off events. But target too broadly, and you may have a bunch of stand-alone events where there are few repeat attendees.

In the ideal world, your Webinar series targets the same market that your company already knows and markets to in other ways, so that your Webinar series is but one part of your marketing plan.

A Fundamental Rule of Media Success: Content and Distribution

Success with Webinars, like success with most media, is all about *content and distribution*.

Many Webinar producers fail to grasp both concepts. And, you generally need both to get Webinar attendees in numbers.

How to Create and Run a Winning Webinar Series

If you don't have a marketing plan for your content, don't expect to build a large audience.

If you don't have what we call "must-see" content, don't expect a large audience for your series. Keep in mind that for your initial Webinars, at least, prospects will register without having seen any of your content. So part of the value of the content is to be able to "sell the sizzle," the benefits of attending.

Go Beyond Delivering Webinars Well, Deliver "Must-See" Content

Some think well-run events alone will guarantee they will hit their series objectives.

Yes, you want to have a compelling speaker, you want to run an event well to create a good Webinar experience, and you should be interactive by using the engagement tools built into leading Webinar technologies. (Use such tools as chat, polling, Q&A, etc. At a minimum, you generally want to address the top questions the audience has on a topic.)

But we would argue "must-see" content has the following characteristics:

"Must-see" Webinar content should be important and informative, if not critical, to the target market. It's presented by a specialist or expert and full of specifics and examples, perhaps with case studies. It could be motivating or promoting next steps or action and offer a point-of-view that could be seen as different or somewhat controversial, hopefully cutting (but not "bleeding") edge.

Most of all, it should present a potentially "life-changing or BIG idea" to the marketplace, an idea that answers one of their top questions or helps them solve one of their top problems.

Lists/Media, Invitations, and Execution of the Marketing Do Matter...A Lot

An email invitation to a relevant opt-in email list will generally drive 80%+ of your audience. This is still true today even in the Web 2.0 and social media world we live in.

But we have seen countless events that failed because the Webinar invitations did not follow the rules of good direct marketing:

You reach your audience through a relevant opt-in email list or other media, get their attention, build their interest, create desire, and call them to action, now!

How to Create and Run a Winning Webinar Series

Ideally, your invitational email will prominently feature the Webinar title and its benefits. A recent study with the 1080 Group showed that by far the Webinar topic is the biggest factor that prospects consider when they think of attending. This matches our experience with in-person seminars during the 1980s and 1990s.

So take extra care to pick topics that are important to your audience, use your own and other email lists to reach your market, and articulate your message in an appealing way in the invitation.

Don't Go It Alone for Content AND Marketing

The average Webinar series will require one or both of the following to be a success: outside speakers and/or outside lists and promotional opportunities.

Webinar series producers with small, internal lists need to promote through outside media, opt-in email lists, speaker lists or to social media followers and communities.

Most Webinar series veterans know that lists will tire of the same internal speakers. Registrants want independent expertise, insights, or perspective.

Some promoting a series will try to go it alone for both content and marketing and, then, wish they could do it over again. Avoid this mistake for a better series.

Line Up Your Resources Before You Start Putting Together Events

Many Webinar series are doomed to failure because they don't have the necessary resources.

Resources come in many forms including: time, speakers, marketers, and event coordinators, in addition to written content, marketing lists, and budgets.

We've seen numerous Webinar series fail quickly, or limp along on life-support, because they lacked one or more of these key resource areas.

For example, if you don't have a budget for good, external speakers and are also dependent upon your speakers to promote the event, then your series is likely to suffer. If you have all the big pieces in place but no one coordinates the events to make sure they are well run, you risk fast failure because you will get few repeat attendees and little prospect follow-through.

If you have no audience, only average speakers, or mediocre content, then go back and update your series plans.

Build on Momentum and Successes

One of the exciting, but sometimes frustrating, aspects of Webinars is that you are only as good as your last event. And, past success in any area does not mean you can take success for granted the next time.

Recognize if an event runs smoothly because of good preparation such as a rehearsal and a good moderator, forgetting to do a rehearsal and having a bad moderator at the next event will likely mean it will go poorly.

So when you do achieve successes in the series, leverage them to take the series to the next level.

For example, if you deliver amazing content, repeat the event or heavily promote the recording. If you win a big customer from a Webinar, use that to gain more resources from your company for the series. If you feature a dynamic speaker, use that with all your various constituencies.

Finally, when it comes time to launch a Webinar series, keep in mind that...

Building and launching a Webinar series can be a lot like doing a product marketing launch, except the “product” is your live and recorded Webinar events. And with a Webinar series your next event can be the one that takes your series to the next level.

Now that you have discovered how to avoid many of the most common mistakes, in the next section you will learn the foundational elements of a Webinars series. These are key elements that will support the success of virtually any Webinar series.

A Platform for Webinar Series Success: Seven “Must-Haves”

We have been observing successful Webinar series for almost a decade and have participated in producing certain series for almost that entire length of time.

Many organizations and Webinar producers can create one great or blockbuster Webinar, but it requires a different set of tactics and skills to ensure a winning Webinar series over time.

So we have distilled the best practices of Webinar series into Seven “Must-Haves.” These crucial elements and strategies are present again and again in top performing series. Missing one could sabotage all of your otherwise good work on the rest of the series.

Seven “Must-Haves” of a Successful Webinar Series for Any Organization

1. A Reachable, Defined Audience with Common Issues and Problems

Start with the list or audience that will be most interested in your Webinar series. They ideally will have common characteristics, frustrations, objectives, problems, and habits.

For example, a Webinar series could simply target your own customer list. It could be geared towards one profession like “Independent Financial Advisors.” It could target “time-starved entrepreneurs looking to grow their business through marketing.” It could also be buyers of a specific product such as all Apple iPad users or purchasers of “Product X.”

Remember, the more you are able to reach a definable audience with Webinars that are geared to their specific needs and appeal to their desires, the more successful your series will be.

2. Content and Speakers to Deliver Valuable Information and Education to This Audience over Time

If you have only one topic, you generally do not have a Webinar series.

Similarly, if you are not able to deliver valuable content and education to your audience through different events over time, you are likely not to have a sustainable series. (See our definition of “Must-See” Webinar content above.)

Just as the movie-going public is the ultimate judge of movies for the studios (sorry critics and industry insiders), your target audience is the ultimate judge of the worth of your Webinar speakers and content.

Many Webinar series producers will review their own and other market surveys, as well as attend other popular Webinars in their market, to see the types of topics and content that resonate with the target audience.

After all, if you produced action movies for a living, wouldn't you attend the summer blockbusters as well as watch past hits to get direction on what your target audience responds to?

Many Webinar producers pick their speakers first, then try to come up with a topic that will interest the audience. While it is always helpful to use proven, popular speakers, more important will be the topic of the Webinar. If the topic is not on the list of top 5 “pain points” of your target audience, they will likely neither register nor attend.

3. An Overarching Theme for Your Webinar Series to Tie the Webinars Together

How to Create and Run a Winning Webinar Series

To create a sustainable Webinar series, there needs to be an overarching, unifying theme among your events. Many times this is similar to the “Big Benefit” your company offers to the target market.

Your series theme does not necessarily need to be heavily promoted with your audience when advertising an individual event since prospects will generally evaluate each event on its own merit, but the overarching theme will help you create and market compelling events over time.

For example, one training firm ran a series for its subscribers with the theme of “Educating Marketers on Top Direct and Web Marketing Strategies.” A technology vendor ran a series for years on “How to Take Control of ____ (Your Specific IT Environment).” A financial services firm repeated a simple theme, “Quarterly Market and Economic Outlook.”

If your events can dazzle, then the good feelings from the value and excitement generated by the Webinar can be transferred to good feelings about you, the host organization of the series. Your overarching theme will help you define those feelings or create mind-share in the prospects’ minds.

4. A Marketing Plan to Reach a Large Group of Prospective Registrants over Time, Ideally through Email

Most Webinar producers and marketers tend to underestimate the level of effort needed to gain a registrant and an attendee.

Obviously, it will be harder and generally more expensive to get a first-time registrant for your Webinar, especially if they are not already on your in-house email list.

Social media marketing offers a great opportunity to expand your general list as well as drive Webinar registrants. “Tweeting” the event and promoting it through your own and other target social media sites is an emerging way to market.

And, many Webinar series promoters make the mistake of thinking that the majority of registrants to one event in the series will come to all the events. Especially if you are doing a series with marketing or selling objectives, expect less than 15% of past registrants to register for an upcoming event.

It is critical to have a marketing plan for each Webinar that reaches beyond past Webinar attendees. Each event in the series requires its own thought-out plan to get the results you desire.

(See Appendix C for a sample Webinar marketing plan.)

5. A Cost-Effective, Scalable, and Robust Webinar Technology Solution

A good Webinar series technology platform will help ensure your success and save you time and money. In the early days of Webinars, getting 1,000 attendees on a platform could be incredibly expensive and you would risk crashing the event. No longer.

The various features Webinar series producers look for in the technology include:

- A management process that makes it easy to set-up, modify, and run with multiple organizers and presenters,
- The ability to record and have on-demand Webinars easily hosted and available within 24 hours of the live event,
- The capability to do a private pre-call for presenters and mute all attendees and also open up the phone lines for audio questions as desired by the presenters, along with the ability to allow attendees to raise hands, ask questions, and participate in chat,
- A cost and technology model that makes it easy to present to 10 attendees, or scale to 1,000 attendees,
- An ability to see who is present and attentive on the Webinars,
- The capability for robust interaction, including online chat, text questions, pre-planned and ad hoc polling questions, and post-Webinar surveys, and
- The capacity for the speakers to share their desktop, slides, and different files, applications, or Web pages.

Different Webinar series and organizations will have different technology requirements, but we have found that generally video for Webinars is not a high value-add for most presentations, especially if you just want to show “talking heads.” (A recent QLM survey with the 1080 Group of Webinar attendees confirmed this last, sometimes controversial point.)

Most Webinar series solutions provide their own registration management functionality. You will want one that provides “one-click” access to the registration form and helps convert about 50% of invitation “click-throughs” to registrants for a free Webinar.

6. A Follow-Up Plan to Monetize the Series for Your Organization

How to Create and Run a Winning Webinar Series

Even if your monetization model (that is, the way your organization will make money from the Webinar series) is to sell sponsorships or to charge for viewing a Webinar, you will generally still want to sell something else to the Webinar registrants and attendees.

As you probably guessed, the best prospects to attend the next Webinar in your series are the folks who have registered or attended your past events. So you will be sure to include invitations to future events in your marketing back to this audience.

However, many Webinar series marketers stop there. Consider an (automated) follow-up sequence of marketing and sales contacts to convert “registrants to revenue” for your organization by promoting your own offerings back to this audience.

7. How to Grow and Evolve the Series Over Time

No Webinar series is ever “done.” This is both a source of excitement and frustration for many.

Just as humans never stop learning and changing, a Webinar series is always in a state of evolution. So rather than fight this, look for opportunities to improve your Webinar topics over time.

For example, you can ask the following questions after each event:

- **What is another “hot topic” for your target audience that was not covered in your series?**
- **What topic or theme can be repeated or done in a slightly different way for great results?**
- **Who can co-sponsor a series and give us the resources to take this to the next level?**
- **What lists and social media marketing opportunities have we not tested for our Webinars?**
- **How can we get more people to each event?**
- **How can we convert a higher percentage of “registrants to revenue?”**
- **What can we do to leverage a library of recordings and re-purpose the content?**

When it comes to Webinar series, the 80/20 principle applies. There will be a minority of individuals and companies who are doing Webinar series at a very high level and creating amazing results. So if you are not in the

How to Create and Run a Winning Webinar Series

“top quartile” of Webinar series or not quite achieving the results you want, finding answers to the key questions above will help “take you to the top.”

Next, let’s examine a topic which is fundamental to the success of every Webinar series, but does not get the headlines it deserves. You want to flawlessly manage your series and individual events so you get repeat attendees and more results from both.

“Smooth Runnings” – Your Winning Webinar Series and Events

As Roger Courville of the 1080 Group and author of *The Virtual Presenters Handbook* says, “Good Webinar management is really about good project management!” So keep in mind the best practices of project management in managing resources like time, people, and money effectively to create a great series of events.

Above all, remember that a winning Webinar series is the sum of many very successful events. A “blockbuster” event can take your series to the next level, while a weak and poorly managed Webinar can set back your entire series.

That said, what are proven strategies to manage a successful series?

Overall Planning and Management Strategies to Guide a Series to Success

For the series, these 6 guidelines will help keep you on track for success.

1. **Create and Manage a Webinar Calendar** – This calendar shows date, time, topic, and speakers for the upcoming Webinars. Generally, the more time you have before an event, the easier it is to execute your plan.
2. **Improve Your Marketing Plan for Each Webinar** – Find ways to expand your marketing plan for each Webinar. For example, one Webinar series manager made it a goal to have the key event marketing plans in place for the next quarter before the end of the current quarter.
3. **Yes, Lists and Invitations Do Matter** – One Webinar series goal should be to access outside, responsive email lists full of your target market. Then, build a great list of Webinar registrants and viewers for your series. Improve your ROI from your marketing with better topics and more benefits in your invitations.
4. **Strive for Multiple Speakers and Some Unique Content for Each Event** – Two to four speakers is usually ideal for a 60-minute Webinar. For example, consider a panel Webinar where your organization

How to Create and Run a Winning Webinar Series

moderates and 2 to 3 outside experts present different perspectives on a single issue. This is the type of content prospects can't get anywhere else.

5. **Record and Promote Your Webinar Recordings** – Record Webinars for both registrants and your own series improvement. Promote recordings of on-demand content to gain access to new registrants who may want the content but missed the event.
6. **Integrate Your Webinar List with Your CRM System** – Unless you have a process to capture and load Webinar registrant and attendee data into your CRM system, you are likely to get little value from the series and follow-up communications. Remember that your CRM system must have email capabilities so that you can grow and manage your opt-in email list, which then becomes a rich asset created and nurtured by your series.

And, of course, Webinars are a “green” event. In that spirit, think...

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle – Repeat events that work, marketing lists that pull, speakers that captivate, topics that fill the room. Record and promote recordings, and reuse all the tactics and processes that make a successful series and Webinar for your organization.

Simple, Yet Often Forgotten Tactics That Make All the Difference in Each and Every One of Your Webinars

I had the recent experience of attending a Webinar that was part of a long-lasting weekly Webinar series by Web collaboration and Webinar “experts.” While the lead speaker and his content were fantastic, the Webinar producers tripped up on 4 big items in the list below, which would cause anyone to hesitate to register for their future events.

Here are some simple, tactical, yet critical things you must do for each event. For those who have read other Quantum Leap Marketing reports on Webinars, these may be familiar to you.

1. **Create a Marketing Plan and Project Schedule with Responsibilities for Each Webinar** – There are those who say, “Failing to plan, is planning to fail.” Generally, good planning helps you avoid problems: good project management helps you correct them before anyone notices them. (See Appendix C for a sample Webinar marketing plan.)
2. **Increase Attendance with Proven Email Lists and Invitation Copy** – As stated above, opt-in email lists that match your target audience could account for as much as 80% of your registrations. Following the rules of copy will help you get more attendees from the same lists, number of invites, and ads.

How to Create and Run a Winning Webinar Series

3. **Make the Registration Process Easy** – Don't make it hard for prospects to register. For online forms, that means one-click to a landing page, and a simple registration form with one-click to register. Make offline registrations easy as well.
4. **Automate the Reminder Sequence** – The last thing you should be worrying about is a good reminder sequence, which will convert say 40% to 50% of registrants to attendees for a free Webinar. A simple sequence of auto-reminders — providing Webinar details and a reminder upon registration and a reminder at 24 and 3 hours before the event — will generally create the conversion to attendees you desire.
5. **Run a Rehearsal to Prepare Speakers** – While many speakers will know their material, and Webinar producers should use ones who do, little Webinar things like transitions, questions, and tailoring the examples to the specific audience for that event can be covered in a 30-minute rehearsal.
6. **Have an Experienced Moderator or Webinar Manager on the Pre-call and/or Event** – Your moderator or Webinar manager can manage the rehearsal, pre-call, and the Webinar itself. While a good moderator may only slightly enhance your Webinar, a bad one can get in the way and sour an otherwise solid experience for the attendee. And, when a good moderator “saves” an event in danger of disaster for what could be a variety of causes, they can be worth their weight in gold!
7. **Make Sure Interactions Are Built into the Webinar** – Much of the value from a live Webinar comes from examples and tailoring of content for the audience and also answering the audience's top questions.
8. **Record the Webinar and Increase Views by Making the Recording Available within 24 Hours** – One marketing Webinar series rule to consider is that recording a Webinar and promoting it can *increase viewers by up to 150%*. Meaning if 40 of 100 registrants attend the live Webinar, 30 may watch the recording, especially if it is promoted within 24 hours of the Webinar. And additional promotion could bring another 30 new registrants who watch the Webinar. That means over time a series could have the same number of Webinar viewers as registrants for the live event.
9. **Consider Companion Materials Like Success Checklists** – This strategy is often overlooked but extremely effective. People love little checklists, articles, and white papers related to a topic important to them. These checklists in writing can increase registration for both live Webinars and recordings and encourage “next steps” from readers and attendees.

10. **Have Webinar Follow-up Marketing Ready Ahead of the Event** – Many who produce a Webinar series put so much energy into the events that they have little time to create a simple marketing follow-up, write a sales letter, or make sure a sales team properly nurtures Webinar leads. If you avoid this mistake, your series will be vastly more effective.
11. **Review Webinar Performance After the Webinar** – Make it a habit to debrief with speakers and key attendees after a Webinar and to look at your key Webinar numbers and comments after the event. A simple way to judge a marketing Webinar is to review registration numbers, response percentages from promotions to different lists/media, attendance, cost-per-registrant, information requests from the Webinar, number of sales or sales opportunities per Webinar, and feedback from post-event surveys, as well as ROI numbers like Webinar sales/Webinar costs.

Thus, while Webinar operational excellence is not exciting for many, some Webinar series will fail because the tactics and evaluation process are poorly managed.

Next, let's touch on the issue of producing an online training series.

Applying Series Success Strategies to Online Training

Many in online training want to know, "How can we create a winning online training series?" Asked another way, "What are the key lessons that those in online training can apply to their own series?"

Above all, an online training series may start with different objectives from a marketing series. These objectives can include certification or helping ensure employees or groups are trained on issues important to a professional designation or a company.

But virtually all of the tips contained in this eGuide will apply to online training events.

For example, those who are doing HR or "required training" to employees or professional groups will want to also focus on promoting the benefits of attending events and be able to deliver on those benefits so they can achieve their training objectives.

Also, any producer of online training will want to ensure that each of their events provides quality content and is well-run. A single bad event can harm your reputation and hurt attendance and attention at your future events.

Each series of online training events can take many of the lessons shared here and apply them to the unique training situation.

Your Action Guide: Step-by-Step Instructions for Creating and Delivering a Winning Webinar Series

What are the key steps to creating and delivering a winning Webinar series? Here are the top ones.

Note: Knowing these steps or information will not be good enough to improve your series or make it successful. You must apply them on an ongoing basis.

Refine Your Webinar Series Summaries

Start by understanding the summary of your Webinar series to help promote it (those few words or sentences that describe the theme, benefits, and overview of your events).

By summaries, we mean a version for internal audiences in your company, as well as a version of what a prospect would learn by attending all of your events as part of the series.

For external audiences, this is sometimes referred to as a marketing abstract. (See Appendix D for samples of Successful Series Summaries.)

Expand Your Webinar Marketing Plan

Generally, the wider your reach and marketing plan, the more registrants you will get for an event or series. And remember, people usually sign up for individual events first and foremost, so having a wide marketing plan and big Webinar early in the series will lead to more attendees for the entire series.

Reaching more potential attendees is, however, just one part of your marketing. Drive up email opens and click-throughs on your invitations with hot topics for your audience, winning subjects and headlines, and copy which calls your target audience to action by getting them to REGISTER NOW!

Create Better, Unique Content at Your Next Webinar

A simple way of making your marketing better is to increase the conversion rate – when your target audience sees your marketing ad or invitation and decides to sign up. Think of your content as your draw. In individual sports like golf, boxing, and tennis, if the top stars are playing that day, it is easier to get those who see your invitation and advertising to come to the event.

How to Create and Run a Winning Webinar Series

So remember, as discussed above, the Webinar topic and the supporting content are the biggest factors in driving attendance once a prospect sees the invitation. Ideally, you should offer timely, valuable, and interesting “must-see” content as judged by your audience and make sure to promote that in your marketing.

Manage Each Webinar to Be Successful on Its Own

Many Webinar series producers think if a series of weak events are strung together they can be a success by wrapping a theme around them and calling them a series. Readers of this eGuide will avoid this mistake.

Simply manage each Webinar event to be successful on its own, and after a series of successful events, you will have a smashingly successful series.

Build on Success by Recombining Successful Components

With a Webinar series, there are a lot of critical parts, like the marketing plan, invitation copy, speakers, topics, content, and follow-up plan. A series offers you the opportunity to eliminate risk in future events through re-using proven elements.

For example, many producers will think a very successful marketing list or speaker cannot be repeated within a series. We find, however, the opposite is true, and those who use their creativity to find ways of re-using parts for upcoming Webinars will see their series thrive.

Leveraging effective elements and recombining the mixture of successful components will put you on a path to a successful series.

Convert Registrants to Results

Just hitting your goals of garnering large registration numbers is not enough to make a Webinar series successful. Remember to turn registrants into attendees and attendees into customers. And to do so, these numbers should be managed and measured.

In addition, a Webinar series is never created in a vacuum. Leverage the attention and interest you have among your attendees and viewers and convert them to sales opportunities or customers with a multi-step (automated) follow-up program.

The best Webinar series are judged by the business results they achieve outside of just number of registrants and attendees. Have one or more ways of measuring Webinar success, (such as qualified leads, sales opportunities, sales, satisfied customers, trained users, etc.), and use your post-Webinar follow-up to help ensure

these business results.

Creating a Learning Loop for Continuous Improvement

Webinars by their very nature allow for monitoring, collecting data and feedback, iteration, and improvement. Whether you have just completed your pilot Webinar or your 25th, recognize you can learn from what went right and wrong from each event.

Once you complete each Webinar, evaluate what worked, what did not, and why. And take this valuable learning into your next Webinar or promotion. It is in this way that you will “climb the learning curve” and begin to tap the massive potential power of a Webinar series for your organization.

After all, especially with a Webinar series, “It is not where you start, but where you finish that counts.”

Summary

Yes, a simple Webinar series can be a strategic weapon in your marketing arsenal and can even create competitive advantage.

Those who take advantage of the potential power of a Webinar series will position their organizations ahead of the competition, generate many more sales leads, and increase their customer profit and lifetime value.

Use the Webinar series tips, strategies, and techniques shared here to help accomplish your marketing and business objectives, and don't forget to “take the credit” for your outstanding results.

Appendix A: Key Steps to Create a Winning Webinar Series

Here are five simple steps to create a winning Webinar series and get it off to a successful start.

1. **Specify Your Series Objectives** – knowing your objectives and being able to measure the success of your individual Webinars will help you get business results for each event and help you make mid-course corrections if you recognize there is a gap between current results and your goals.

2. **Identify Your Target Audience** – a Webinar series is most successful if it is geared towards a defined, ideally homogeneous target audience that has known problems and issues that you can help solve with your events. Locking in on your target audience also makes creating your event topics and marketing plan much easier.

3. **Identify Hot Topics and Speakers** – you are better off with “A” topics and “B” speakers, rather than the other way around. Select from potential topic ideas to match top audience problems and what has worked in your marketplace as the first step. Then, find the speakers who can successfully deliver that content to your audience. No one has unlimited time or budget, so prioritization is key.

4. **Create Your Pilot Webinar** – create a pilot Webinar which ideally includes a hot topic, good speaker, and aggressive marketing plan. As with a TV series pilot, the success of the first Webinar could determine the viability of a series. Consider investing more resources in this pilot event than you will allocate to future Webinars. And remember, those who register for the pilot Webinar will be good prospects for future Webinars in the series.

5. **Run Your Pilot Webinar, Judge Results against Objectives** – the specific objectives and success metrics you established at the outset of the series should be measured against the results of the first Webinar. While you will likely not be able to measure long-term impact in the short-run, have intermediate checks in place to drive decisions about future strategies and tactics for the series. Especially for marketers in larger organizations, it is better if you are more critical of your own work than the other employees and managers.

The Power of Collaborating with Other Organizations

For virtually every Webinar series situation, there are numerous opportunities to collaborate with outside organizations and individuals to help make your series more successful. You can uncover hot topics, recruit outside speakers and experts, access lists and promotional channels, get

How to Create and Run a Winning Webinar Series

promoted via Twitter and other social media outlets, and gain valuable, trusted content for your audience.

Those organizations that follow the tips above and leverage resources outside their organization are more likely to position their new and existing Webinar series for success.

Appendix B: Key Steps to Deliver a Winning Webinar Series

Here's a sample Webinar series management process that will apply in many situations.

Remember, even if your audience is an internal or captive audience, such as employees, many of these marketing strategies can be applied to get their attention and attendance at your training series.

1. Design the Webinar Series on Paper – the more thought put into the design of the Webinar series on paper, before you start, the greater the likelihood you will identify success criteria, winning elements, and key risks. This extra planning should pay off many times over as your series becomes a reality.

2. Promote and Run Your Pilot Webinar – create and execute your first, pilot Webinar and ideally you will have a smashing success. A Webinar series that works will typically have a blockbuster event early on, so put your best foot forward early.

3. Use Results of the Pilot Webinar to Refine Programs – if you consider your first Webinar to be the pilot in your series, it can fall short of expectations in many areas but still launch a series that can achieve your objectives. The key is to identify and begin fixing key weaknesses for your next Webinar.

4. Create the Rest of Your Webinar Calendar – create a list of Webinar topics and dates, also known as your Webinar calendar, for the initial 3 or 6 months of your series. While many of the details of the events may change, this gives you a roadmap to help manage and promote your Webinars.

5. Market Your Events – the specific marketing plan you use for both promotion and conversion of registrants can have up to a 500% greater impact on attendance. And, yes, the actual invitation words do matter, including your course titles and a compelling list of 3 or more benefits of attending.

6. Execute Events on the Series – take pains, whether it is you or someone else, that the Webinars are well-managed and what is outlined on paper is executed. The best Webinar producers know they are “only as good as their last event.” Remember to record the Webinars and market them as

How to Create and Run a Winning Webinar Series

part of your series plan. Track the combined number of attendees and recording viewers, which should trend toward your total number of total registrations for the live Webinar.

7. Adjust Major Series Elements after Each Webinar – watch how the Webinars are trending and start to compare events in the series against each other. Analyze key inputs into the Webinars like lists and media used, popularity of speakers and topics with a given audience, open rates of email invitations, the number of registrants and attendees, and follow-up actions taken by registrants.

8. Execute Follow Up and Monitor Metrics – as you get further away from a Webinar, usually a few weeks or months, the true picture comes into focus. Many average Webinar series just lack a basic attendee follow-up plan to make them above average.

9. Periodically Check In with Series Objectives, Adjust if Needed – don't forget that many Webinar producers will check periodically, often either monthly or quarterly, on how the series is doing against both public and internal objectives. Make any adjustments to ensure overall success for the series with both of these objectives.

Appendix C: Sample Webinar Marketing Plan Outline

Here's a sample Webinar marketing plan. Every organization and Webinar will have a slightly different plan template and plan. We use as our example a Webinar that details how to use Webinars as a marketing tool. The expert speakers will include me, Bob Hanson, and some associates. Our catchy sample Webinar title is: *How to Increase Sales Now through Online Events with the Ultimate Webinar Marketing Plan*.

Sample Webinar Marketing Plan

The sample plan for the Webinar *The Ultimate Webinar Marketing Plan* includes:

Webinar Summary and Goals:

The Ultimate Webinar Marketing Plan Webinar will reveal key strategies discussed in a companion eGuide with the objective of educating Webinar marketers and those responsible for marketing events on how to get more registrants, attendees, and sales at each and every event. The eGuide's author, Bob Hanson, and one of his clients, Jim Smith of XYZ Corporation, will present the strategies and a case study of two winning Webinars Jim has promoted for his company. The Webinar is co-sponsored by one of Jim's suppliers, ABC Corporation, who will invite its other distributors to the event with the goal of having their other 2,000

How to Create and Run a Winning Webinar Series

distributors adopt these winning strategies to help increase their sales 10% this year.

Target Audience:

Business heads, marketers, and sales professionals at the 2,000 distributors for ABC Corporation throughout North America. Two of their key challenges this year are to generate more qualified sales leads and get more sales from a shrinking marketing budget.

Webinar Topic:

How to Increase Sales Now through Online Events with the Ultimate Webinar Marketing Plan on February 17, 201X at 2 pm ET, 11 am PT.

Webinar Outline:

1. Introduction by the moderator (Head of Accounts at ABC Corporation)
2. Presentation of Webinars and Webinar marketing plans – Bob Hanson
3. Case studies of success with an effective Webinar marketing plan by Jim Smith, Director of Marketing at XYZ Corporation
4. Live questions from the audience
5. Closing remarks by the moderator

Webinar Abstract:

How to Increase Sales Now through Online Events with the Ultimate Webinar Marketing Plan, sponsored by ABC Corporation, will take place on Wednesday, February 17, 201X at 2 pm ET, 11am PT. It will feature Webinar expert Bob Hanson and successful distributor Jim Smith of XYZ Corporation. Attendees will learn tips, techniques, and strategies to get more attendees to their online and marketing events and hear how XYZ Corporation increased sales 33% last year despite the recession. A Question and Answer session will be included to get your top marketing and Webinar questions answered.

Webinar Marketing Tactics:

Two email invitations to its sales/marketing/business contacts at its distributors sent 7 and 2 days before the event, a small ad in the distributor's newsletter the month of the event, a postcard to these same contacts that reaches them 7 days before the event, and an email and sales script given to the distributor's account team.

Social Media Marketing Tactics:

How to Create and Run a Winning Webinar Series

In addition to the above tactics, the Webinar is previewed on both the sponsor and speaker blogs, and multiple Tweets are posted by both the moderator and distributor. A Tweet also announces the availability of a Webinar recording.

Webinar Reminder Sequence:

The sponsor uses the Citrix® GoToWebinar® platform and its auto-reminder functionality. It selects an auto-responder on registration, a reminder 24 hours ahead of the event, and 3 hours before the event.

Post-Webinar Marketing:

The sponsor emails an announcement of the recording of the event as well as the follow-up offer 24 hours after the Webinar. It has two follow-up emails with the offer made at the Webinar repeated 48 and 72 hours after the Webinar. It has each of its Account Managers call all of the attendees within a week of the event to mention the offer and see other ways the distributor can help grow its channel's business.

Webinar Marketing Budget and Metrics:

The budget for the Webinar is \$5,000, including speaker, promotional fees, and Webinar delivery costs. The sponsor is hoping 10% of its distributors register for the Webinar and 50 total try a Webinar selling their products within 6 months of the event to help reach its goal of a 10% sales increase within 12 months through this channel.

Appendix D: Seven Summaries of Winning Webinar Series That Worked

Here are seven different types of Webinar series summaries from actual companies that were successful at achieving their objectives.

Note: These summaries have been edited for length and to maintain company confidentiality.

Marketing

Small Products Company Positions in Marketplace – A small products company wanted to cost-effectively position itself in a defined marketplace and generate new names in its database with opt-in email addresses. So it collaborated with complementary vendors and media firms and created an ongoing Webinar series. The company was able to achieve its objectives, including creating a list of 40,000 email names and also followed up with more product-focused Webinars, which fueled the growth of the company.

How to Create and Run a Winning Webinar Series

Quarterly Thought-Leadership Webinars for a Services Firm – A small services firm wanted to get beyond its leading service offering and demonstrate its expertise by featuring the full range of its services offerings in the marketplace. It created a quarterly Webinar series targeting decision makers and was able to add new clients and broaden the positioning of the company to successfully diversify its portfolio of offerings in the market.

Sales

Monthly Product Webinars Help Create 10 Sales Opportunities Per Month - A technology products firm desired to drive sales opportunities for its various products so it started a Webinar series, rotating a different product every month. It held educational events with a light product introduction. The Webinars were marketed to its own in-house file and select external lists, and they successfully created an average of over 10 sales opportunities for the company per Webinar in a series that went on successfully for years.

Affiliate Webinars Leverage Limited Budget – A company in a competitive space did not have a large marketing budget but was able to create an affiliate program and pay generous commissions to those affiliates who helped promote the company's offerings back to the affiliate's list. It created one Webinar that it repeated to the lists of different affiliates and built a company of over 6,000 clients who pay a monthly fee.

Customer Loyalty and Education Programs

Quarterly Update Webinars for Financial Services Firm – A financial services firm wanted to keep its clients up-to-date during the market turbulence of 2008-2009 so it created a quarterly Webinar series exclusively for its customers. The result was a retention rate of over 99% of clients and a savings of an estimated 10 hours per client in individual account management time. The firm reports, in part due to its ability to provide timely, rich information to all its clients in an effective manner, that client loyalty is at an all time high in an industry where distrust and dissatisfaction are rampant.

Products Firm Helps Clients Get More from New and Existing Features – A growing technology firm with expanding products with a small customer service department wanted to limit the number of individual service calls and also increase usage of its primary product. It started a weekly "tech-talk" Webinar series held every Thursday and simply covered the most pressing topic each week. Years later, the firm has an incredible library of training recordings and continues to educate its clients on how to get more out of its products.

How to Create and Run a Winning Webinar Series

About Citrix Online

Citrix Online, a division of Citrix Systems, Inc., is a leading provider of easy-to-use, on-demand applications for Web conferencing and collaboration. Its award-winning services include GoToWebinar®, a complete collaboration solution that satisfies all Web conferencing needs from large Webinars to small online meetings.

With GoToWebinar, organizations of all sizes can increase market reach, generate more leads and enhance customer contact by conducting easy, do-it-yourself Webinars.

For a free evaluation of GoToWebinar, please visit www.gotomeeting.com/fec/webinar.

About the Author

Bob Hanson is the president of lead generation and conversion consultancy Quantum Leap Marketing and creator of the Must-See Webinars™ success system. He has also published a recent guide to online lead generation, the "What's Working Now in B-to-B Lead Generation Guide: Success with New Media: Webinars and Google Ads."

To get a free chapter of the guide "How to Create an On-Demand Webinar Program" or to request a no-obligation consultation on creating successful Webinars, email Bob at bhanson@qlmarketing.com, call 617-901-6886, or go to www.yourcuttingedgemarketingtips.com.

© 2010 Quantum Leap Marketing, Inc. All rights reserved.

No part of this document may be reproduced in any form by any means, nor may it be distributed without the permission of Quantum Leap Marketing, Inc., nor may it be resold by any entity other than Quantum Leap Marketing, Inc., without the prior written authorization of Quantum Leap Marketing, Inc.

THIS DOCUMENT IS PROVIDED "AS IS". ALL EXPRESS OR IMPLIED REPRESENTATIONS, CONDITIONS AND WARRANTIES, INCLUDING ANY IMPLIED WARRANTY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE, ARE DISCLAIMED, EXCEPT TO THE EXTENT THAT SUCH DISCLAIMERS ARE DETERMINED TO BE ILLEGAL.