Learn to:

- Target webinars to your audience
- Use your webinars to expand your market reach
- Choose the right technology platform for your webinar

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ON24

Ryan C. Williams
About ON24 Inc.

ON24, the virtual communications platform for the global enterprise, provides interactive, impactful cloud-based solutions that drive outstanding results. ON24 offers a broad and innovative product portfolio, including webcasting, virtual events, and virtual environments, accessible from any device and supported by robust reporting and analytics. Applications for the ON24 communications platform include demand generation, partner enablement, training, product launches, company town hall meetings, and user conferences. More than 700 organizations, including IBM, CA Technologies, Merck, Unilever, JPMorgan Chase, Deloitte, Credit Suisse, Ernst & Young, Amazon, and New York Life, rely on ON24. The company is headquartered in San Francisco, with offices throughout the world.

For more information, visit www.ON24.com.
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Webinars represent more than just a solution for saving some time and effort in gathering your team together for a meeting or for getting your product some attention. You can use webinars to more effectively target your audience (whether inside or outside your company) and reinforce your message with a host of tools, including recordings and interactive elements.

And, of course, you may even get to be in front of a camera. Isn’t that what you’ve always dreamed of?

About This Book

This book offers you insights into the steps of putting together a webinar, all the way from identifying your audience through critiquing how your webinar went. There’s a lot in between, of course — and I share that with you as well.

With the information in this book, you can plan an effective webinar, promote your event, create compelling webinar content, and evaluate your success using hard statistics. You also find out what kind of technology platform you can use to make your webinar as effective as possible.

With all of this, you can put together a quality webinar that accomplishes the following goals. You can

- Reach precisely the audience you want to reach
- Put together a bulletproof webinar plan
- Promote your webinar effectively
- Rehearse your webinar to know how everything’s going to go
- Execute your webinar script
- Evaluate your webinar and plan for the next one
Does all of this sound good? Time to get to it, then!

Conventions Used in This Book

Keep these nuggets of information in mind as you go through this book:

✓ Every time I talk about an important term for the first time, I call it out using italics.
✓ Any URLs you see in this book will look like this: www.on24.com. Unfortunately, though, you can’t click them. Type them out for yourself.

How to Use This Book

I could recommend sitting down in a nice cozy coffee shop or perhaps your favorite chair, but that’s not really necessary. What is necessary is that you feel free to start wherever you want and attack the information in the way that makes sense to you. Start from the beginning, start in the middle, or just find out how the whole thing ends. Just get to it — you’ve got a webinar to plan!

Foolish Assumptions

I can assume you know what the Internet is, right? And, I’ve seen even the most staid and traditional workplaces offer classes on Facebook, so I’m also going to assume that you know a bit about social media and how it works. Finally, I’m going to hope that you really do want to put on a webinar. Otherwise, why would you even be reading this book?

How This Book Is Organized

Like most books, this one is broken up into chapters. Here’s a brief summary of how those chapters shake out.
Chapter 1: An Introduction to Webinars

This is where the road to a great webinar begins. Discover what goes into making a webinar possible and how you can get the most out of your event.

Chapter 2: Knowing When to Use Webinars

This chapter points out when using webinars makes sense and how to plan for those instances.

Chapter 3: Planning and Promoting the Webinar

Who’s going to show up if you don’t tell your audience when to be there? This chapter looks at the best ways to publicize your webinar and get the largest audience possible.

Chapter 4: Executing the Webinar

It’s showtime! This chapter walks you through how to pull off the perfect webinar.

Chapter 5: Critiquing the Webinar

Once you complete your webinar event, you’ll want to see how everything went, and maybe even get ready for the next one! This chapter shows you how to evaluate all of the information you’ve gathered.
Chapter 6: Product Approaches and Features

This chapter introduces you to what tools are available to produce your webinar, and how you can put them to work for you.

Chapter 7: Ten Great Webinar Use Cases

This chapter moves you into the “real” world and shows you how actual companies make webinars work for them. They don’t mind if you follow their lead — trust me.

Icons Used in This Book

You may notice some spiffy icons sprinkled liberally throughout this book. You don’t necessarily have to pay attention to them, but here’s what you’ll find if you do:

Remember

Sometimes, pieces of information need a little reinforcement. That’s where the Remember icon comes in — reminding you of especially important information.

Tip

The Tip icon shares a little additional information on the subject for you. Think of it as the cherry on top of your webinar sundae.

Where to Go from Here

That pretty much sums it all up, so are you ready to get into the webinar? You can jump around, go from front to back, and you can even keep this mighty tome on your shelf for later review. It’s all up to you!
Chapter 1

An Introduction to Webinars

In This Chapter
▶ Understanding what makes a compelling webinar
▶ Getting the best return on your webinar investment
▶ Choosing the right webcasting solution

Just a few short years ago, online meetings and learning could still be a dicey proposition. If you opted not to host an event in a conference room or other large area, your options were limited. You could use the novelty of an online event to attract attention, but there was no guarantee that the event would go well. The attendees might not have a high-speed Internet connection, and they might not be technologically savvy enough to even understand what was going on. There were tools you could use to communicate your point (doesn’t it feel like we’ve always lived in a world with PowerPoint?), but you weren’t always able to put on a quality production. In short, the tools and the technology just weren’t up-to-speed yet.

Aren’t you glad things have changed since then?

There have always been compelling reasons to look at different methods of putting on meetings, events, and training sessions. Why pay for travel and lodging expenses if you don’t have to? Why lose the time and effort it takes to plan and execute those travel plans when you could put those hours into something more productive?
This chapter introduces you to the concept and practice of the webinar and lets you know why it’s an increasingly popular communications tool and why it’s such a great investment of time and money.

**Webinars Defined**

Note that in the introduction, I didn’t assume that you already know what a webinar is. It’s not that I’m assuming you’ve never heard of a webinar before — I really just wanted the chance to define exactly what a webinar is so that you’re on the right track from the beginning. So, here goes!

A webinar is an event conducted online that makes use of audio, video, and interactive elements to communicate with a large number of people.

Did you catch that I didn’t call it a live event? That’s because you can conduct webinars in real time, but you should always record your webinars so that more members of your targeted audience can view, and utilize, them later when it’s more convenient for them. If you’re willing to use a DVR to record late-night television, doesn’t your valuable information deserve the same consideration?

The definition may sound like a simple one, but the effectiveness of your webinar depends on what you put into your webinar and how you execute the project itself.

**Producing a Successful Webinar**

You can hold webinars about a great many topics, but successful webinars share a similar structure and make great use of a few common traits.

**Plan ahead!**

It might be a little obvious, but webinars aren’t something you should just try to wing on the day of the event. For maximum effectiveness, you should create a comprehensive plan that includes all of the following elements:
Chapter 1: An Introduction to Webinars

✓ Prep time — how much time will it take to get all of your resources together?
✓ Participants — who will present (and support behind the scenes) during your webinar?
✓ Resources — where are you going to get your information, and how long will it take to get everything together?
✓ Schedule — find out when your webinar will reach the most people and do the most good.

Chapter 3 takes a closer look at planning your webinar, but these concepts should lay a good foundation to get you started.

**Use the right technology**

You can use a variety of tools to create a webinar, and it isn’t my job to tell you what software tool is better than the other. I’m still scarred from the great Mac versus PC battle of the late 90s, and I won’t fight that battle again. What I can tell you is that the Internet can support transmission of high-quality audio and video with reliability, and you should take this into account when you plan your webinar. You want to put the best face on your webinar, and that means using professional tools to create your presentation. It may even mean looking for some outside help, but that’s what the professionals are for, isn’t it?

**Create compelling content**

It’s easier said than done, I know. And a lot of people are telling you to do it (even if they don’t always know how). But the best webinars feature content that clearly and expertly communicates your message and provides a defined goal. Whether it’s a training program or a marketing effort, each webinar participant should leave with a clear message that you’ve communicated with your well-designed content. Again, Chapter 3 goes more into what to do to plan and promote your webinar. See how much emphasis you need to put on planning!
Interact with your audience

The best presentations don’t just push information down a one-way pipe (the Internet being a series of tubes and all). Webinar participants gain more when they’re allowed to ask questions and actively participate with the webinar materials. You can allow a typed chat, or you could provide participants with audio and video connections to directly interact with the proceedings (at well-defined intervals in the presentation, of course). You can also create interactive training materials that allow participants to answer questions and receive results on their training efforts. The point is that you don’t want the audience to remain passive during the webinar — you want to get them out of their chairs (not literally, but you know what I mean) and allow them to take part in the webinar.

Ask for feedback (and actually take it seriously)

Webinars are only as good as what the audience takes away from them, and even the best-laid plans need evaluation and maybe a little tweaking. Use your webinar to open a conversation between your audience and yourself and find out how the information was observed and used. You can learn a lot from this feedback, and you can use it to create even better webinars in the future.

Plan on opening multiple avenues for feedback:

- E-mail
- Forums
- SMS and mobile messaging
- Direct audio or visual conversation
- Social media

No matter how you get the message, be sure to listen to what your audience is telling you.
What Shouldn’t Go into a Webinar

Webinars can make use of all sorts of media, but a few things still shouldn’t be part of your webinar plan. You probably wouldn’t intentionally consider putting these things in your webinar, but you should still be on the lookout to make sure they don’t creep into your finished product.

Time wasters

Part of the benefit of the webinar is saving as much time as possible. You don’t have to travel, you don’t have to outfit a strange convention hall or arena — you may not even have to leave your office, depending on your arrangement. That’s why you shouldn’t offset your savings by wasting that time on activities that don’t serve a purpose. Once you’ve completed your plan, analyze it and make sure that every part of that plan accomplishes something important. If it doesn’t do what you want to do, lose it. This includes cutesy graphics and pictures. As funny as that picture you got in an e-mail forward might be, it probably doesn’t break the ice as much as you think it does. Either it works, or it’s out.

Boring materials

This might be where one of my older relatives would start bemoaning the attention spans of today’s youth, but there is something to be said for attention-grabbing material. If the entirety of your webinars consists of a two-hour lecture with a single camera, you’re probably going to lose the attention of your audience at some point. Take a look at your materials and make sure they can hold the interest of your webinar’s participants. You don’t need to include strobe lights and loud music every fifteen seconds, but you should ensure that your audience is drawn to your presentation and willing to participate in the process.
Materials not meant for your audience

One reason webinars are effective is that they help you reach the audience you want to reach clearly and effectively. More than anything else, webinars help you target a specific audience and communicate directly to that audience with a concise, effective message. With this in mind, don’t include materials that don’t apply to that audience.

Why Webinars Work

Webinars are popular with corporate communicators, trainers, and marketers for one simple reason: they work! Again, different organizations may use webinars to accomplish entirely different goals, but the reasons that these webinars work remain the same across the board. Here are some of the reasons why webinars make effective communication tools, no matter what you’re trying to communicate.

Direct contact with your audience

Large gatherings can lose a lot of communication potential. It’s hard for one person to speak up and ask a question, and more often than not, you just end up being a passive listener. The webinar allows you to establish a direct connection to webinar participants, giving them a conduit in which to ask questions and provide commentary. Even with numerous participants, each participant gets a more personal connection with better access.

Access your audience across time and space

Regular in-person or live meetings can provide information to those who can actually attend the session, but nothing remains available to those who couldn’t attend. Webinars both educate those in attendance for the live session and provide access to information for later viewing.
Webinar content remains available online for all participants, and you can include as many people as you need to. It may sound like a bad sci-fi movie, but your webinar doesn’t have to follow the same space-and-time rules live sessions have to follow. And if you’re trying to reach fans of bad sci-fi, so much the better!

**Make use of some great tools**

I’ve already talked about PowerPoint, haven’t I? Good, we can move on from that. But seriously. You can use slide presentations in your webinar, but you don’t have to feel limited to static text and images. You can include audio and video presentations in your webinar to communicate your information, and those materials can fuel interactive learning tasks that reinforce the information you communicate.

Ultimately, you want to use whatever tool best expresses your content, and you’re the expert on your content. Make sure that you present your content in the best light possible using the best possible tools.

**Getting a Return on Your Webinar Investment**

You can put a lot of time and effort into your webinar, and in return, you want to get the most you can out of that time and effort. You can do so by paying attention to the following scoop.

**Identify and target your goals**

By knowing precisely what you want to accomplish with your webinar, you can better accomplish that goal. It’s not enough just to say that you want to train your new company on the new software product. Instead, you want to introduce your company to the new product, identify common tasks, have the company interact with the software, and set up a training checklist with feedback. That kind of roadmap not only helps you get to your destination, but it also better serves all involved with your webinar.
Cover the largest reasonable audience

This isn’t a reminder to try to be all things to all people — which often dilutes your message and doesn’t give you the best return. The operative word here is reasonable. Clearly identify your audience and then get as many people as you can within that audience to attend. You’ll get the crowd that you want with that effort, and you can reap the maximum benefits from that webinar.

Carefully craft your presentation

I can’t emphasize this enough. Careful planning and execution means that you’re prepared to handle any eventuality that occurs during your webinar. Practice your webinar to make sure that you make the most of everything you put into your webinar.

Understanding the Webcasting Continuum

Webinars fall in the middle of the webcasting continuum, between web conferences (online meetings for small groups) at the lower end and larger, high-end webcasts (huge, splashy events). Webinars do have interactive elements, and they deliver robust analytics. Platforms like ON24 provide those tools and scale up or down depending on your needs and budget. Your job is to plan the process and make sure that all your needs are met. Platforms that provide the necessary tools ensure your webinar success.
Chapter 2

Knowing When to Use Webinars

In This Chapter
▶ Using the webinar to enhance your marketing efforts
▶ Empowering your sales team with training and knowledge
▶ Communicating your internal corporate message

Chapter 1 talks about what goes into making a compelling and informative webinar. Once you know that, you’re ready to look at the best times to use this web-based seminar tool.

This chapter takes a look at when you might want to plan a webinar and the reasons why the webinar is an effective tool for addressing your needs.

Taking Your Webinars to Market

Reaching a large audience tailored to your needs is always a challenge, but because webinars can bring in just that audience, they can be a marketer’s best friend. You can put together a target group (even one that’s displaced over great distances and time) and deliver your message in style and comfort. Pick your segment audience, then design the webinar for that segment and fire away.

The following sections take a look at some of the more common marketing uses for the webinar.

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Demand generation

Research from MarketingProfs shows that the number one marketing application for webinars is demand generation. And it’s easy to see why. Webinars generate leads because you can

utive activities for greater engagement of your prospects.
✓ Capture information on prospects and follow up with the leads as appropriate.

The best part about using webinars for demand generation is that you have hard analytical information about your webinar attendees. Because you can capture information on those attendees and gather additional data during the interactive portions of the webinar, you know what your attendees want to learn about and how best to reach them with your message. Knowledge really is power, and webinars allow you to take in as much information as possible.

With the analytics provided on your webinar attendees, you’ll know all about them and their interests.

New product launches

When your new product comes out, you want to make the biggest splash possible. It’s not the time to just make an introduction — you want to generate all possible leads for your product and increase the awareness of both your product and your brand. In short, you want to meet as many new clients as possible.

Unless you’re a huge company with an obscenely large budget, you’re not going to be able to fly all of your potential buyers to one central location and make a proper presentation. And, of course, that’s counting on everybody’s flight making it on time and hotel rooms being acceptable. Sounds like a lot of trouble, doesn’t it?

Instead, you can put together a quality webinar presentation that everybody can access from the comfort of their office,
home, or other chosen environment and make it easy for your attendees to get the information they need. Your product gets the exposure it needs, and audience members attend in style and ease and can get right to publicizing your amazing new product. I’d have to say, it works out great for everybody.

**Campaign kickoffs**

Every company wants to kick off campaigns and make a major impact, and the webinar can accomplish that task. The same benefits that extend to product launches extend to campaign kickoffs as well.

Even as your company grows, webinars remain a viable option for kicking off new campaigns. The key here is scalability — the ability to expand the reach of your webinar with ease. It’s much easier to add more bandwidth and reach more people using a webinar than it is to, say, add a thousand more seats to a convention hall.

Finally, as global as you can make your campaigns, webinars allow you to localize your presentation. You can translate materials and presentations, making the right materials available to the right locales. That’s easier than trying to set up a real-time translation at a live event.

Part of the webinar’s appeal is the ability to target your audience specifically, and localization fits right into that plan.

**Talking Tactics: Sales Enablement and Training**

Product needs and specifications can change radically, and your company may need to change its strategy on selling those products quickly to react to changing markets. Webinars make all of this possible without having to make travel plans. You can also quickly update materials and get them to all of the right hands without issue.

**Quarterly updates**

The financial structure of most companies demands quarterly profit updates and the establishment of new goals and quotas.
Although these updates take place only four times a year, you can spend a lot of money if you try to bring your entire sales staff together. If you’re a national company, you must account for all your regional offices. If you’re an international company, that scope expands dramatically.

Use the webinar to bring everybody together virtually and let your sales staff know the road map for the next three months. Not only can everybody get started on the right page, but they’ll also be able to refer to the recorded webinar and use the associated materials to keep themselves on track for the entire quarter. And new sales reps can get up to speed quickly by viewing the webinar(s) on demand.

**New products and services**

You want your sales staff to know exactly what they’re selling and why they’re selling it — making them the experts in your product or service. After all, these employees present the public face of your company.

Webinars ensure that your sales staff always has access to the latest information on your newest material, and they give your salespeople the information they need across the entire sales spectrum:

- The initial introduction
- Continued reference during the life of the product and service
- Transition from your old product to the newest alternatives

Webinars let you support your sales staff no matter where (or when) they need information.

**Training for new products and services**

Not only does your sales staff need to know what your new products and services are, but they also need to know how to best use and present them in the field. Again, this is where the webinar becomes an extremely valuable resource.
Chapter 2: Knowing When to Use Webinars

The interactive training aspects of the webinar allow you to present the necessary information and get the necessary feedback to ensure that your sales staff has what they need to support what they sell. You can use the test results to know who is ready to sell and who may need a little more training.

You can use repeated viewing to ensure that your sales staff stays on message and learns the best way to present and use your products. You can modify your materials as well, as understanding and knowledge of your products grow.

Communicating to the Entire Corporation

Up to this point, you’ve looked at webinars and how you can use them to reach people outside of your company. However, you need to tend to your own house as well. This can be extremely difficult if your company is spread out over a large area, or if you’re running your operations 24 hours a day and can’t gather all of your staff in one location at the same time.

The benefits of the webinar allow you to make sure everybody gets the same information from the same source in the same context. That makes the webinar a powerful tool for keeping your company on the same page.

Employee meetings

When you’re just starting out, it’s easy to have an all-hands meeting for a staff of ten or so people. Put some donuts in the office, lure everybody in, and make the meeting happen. Grow the company more, and the donut budget continues to grow as well. Pretty soon, you’re forced to expand into the bakery industry just to keep enough donuts around. Let webinars save you from this pastry-related nightmare.

The webinar allows you to reach your staff no matter where they’re located, and you can communicate to them as necessary. The webinar also allows them to review the information whenever needed.
Training

The reinforcement aspect of webinars makes them especially suited for training purposes and continuing education. You can use the interactive aspects of the webinar to test and evaluate your employees' progress through the training materials and ensure that they can effectively execute whatever your company needs to survive (and thrive).

Don’t think of a training evaluation as a one-way street, though. If you notice that certain sections of your training programs continually show poor results, you can re-evaluate your training materials and make sure that your efforts are up to par as well. Learning can help the teacher as much as the student, and the webinar offers hard numbers and focused attention on what your virtual training program needs.

Motivational and HR uses

Every so often, your company needs a little motivation to keep it moving along. You might also have to communicate important HR information, such as a change in insurance policies. The webinar permits you to communicate these changes effectively and keeps a record of what was communicated.

Just don’t use funny dances as a motivational tool. Instead, organize a webinar featuring your CEO giving a pep talk to all employees. Everybody prefers a good pep talk to funny dances, trust me.
Chapter 3
Planning and Promoting the Webinar

In This Chapter
▶ Reaching the right audience in the right way
▶ Preparing your resources efficiently and effectively
▶ Scheduling your webinar for the maximum impact

Now that you’ve decided to hold a webinar, it’s time to get to the planning. And make no mistake — these kinds of events do take a lot of planning. But the return on the investment (ROI) of this time and energy is striking, and you’ll get more out of it than you put in. This chapter lays the framework for your planning and makes sure that you take everything into account.

Analyze Your Audience

This section doesn’t delve into psychoanalyzing those attending your webinar (unless you’re conducting the world’s largest group therapy session, in which case, have at it). Just like any other presentation, you have to know to whom you’re presenting, why you’re presenting to them, and what they need to get out of your presentation.

What do you need?

You’re gathering together a sizable amount of people (albeit virtually) and using their time and attention to accomplish . . . what?
Every webinar needs a clear and established goal that you can achieve for all of your participants. For example, a human resources webinar goal might be to present all applicable information regarding the new insurance policy and have all attendees pass a simple quiz about the new policy’s features. A sales training webinar might have a goal involving the sales staff passing a certification for a new product line. And a marketing webinar goal might include getting all applicable tech critics and reviewers to attend and write about the newest gadget.

You can identify all of these goals easily, and you can demonstrate numerically how well your webinar achieved them. Focus on what your audience needs from the webinar, express your goal clearly, and identify how you’ll know when that goal is achieved. Knowing exactly what you want when you’re going in makes it easier to know how you want to proceed at every step of the planning process.

**Choosing the best tools**

Once you know what you want to accomplish with your webinar, the next step involves choosing the right tools. While it’s a little more complicated than going to the junk drawer for that screwdriver you keep around, you can choose from a wide variety of options to deliver your webinar. And because you have so many options, you may want to consider hiring a professional service to package up those options and make them available to you and your audience. Remember, depending on where you’re located and how many people are involved, you need to at least consider the following:

- Delivering your presenters’ audio and video
- Delivering the materials those presenters will use
- Delivering any interactive quizzes or tests
- Retrieving the results of those quizzes or tests
- Making sure that your entire presentation doesn’t collapse when more than three people in your office log in

Add any other interactive elements and a larger crowd, and you’re going to need some experts on your side. Decide that you want to store the webinar somewhere online for future use, and your need for experts just increased some more. Make sure that you have the proper tools and infrastructure.
in place to handle these needs before you get started; you’ll rest easier as the time for the actual webinar draws near.

I know that you have a wonderful and talented IT staff, but you’ve probably already put too much on their plate as it is. Make sure that this gets done right and avoid overworking your already-busy tech folks. Hey, buy them some good coffee while you’re at it.

**Getting social and spreading the word**

First, take a look at your webinar promotion strategy. Start off with e-mail blasts to your customer and prospect mailing lists, and include the option for those recipients to share the messages with others. Create banners for your site that link to the registration site, and let your users share that registration. And don’t forget more traditional news releases as well.

If you don’t have your own database yet, you can evaluate options for partnering with a publisher or industry organization that has the audience you’re targeting. Also, make sure that your sales team members are promoting the event to their prospects and clients.

Depending on the audience you’re targeting, you need to account for their use of social media. Yes, this whole “social” thing has moved beyond your teenagers burying their faces in their phones and ignoring the scenery on your family vacation. Social media expands your webinar presence in a couple of big ways.

Social media can help you identify those interested in your webinar through networks of friends and professionals. Promotion via social media may sound rather common and cliché, but there’s a reason for that — it works. Judicious and sensible use of social media can really bring in a great audience. What does “judicious and sensible” mean? Post your event on LinkedIn and on your Facebook page. Add to registration confirmation e-mails an option for attendees to post about attending your webinar on Twitter and their own Facebook pages. And, of course, set up a Twitter hashtag to focus the conversation.

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Once you’ve moved beyond the promotion stage, you can use social media to reinforce what you’ve presented, and you can also provide a channel for webinar participants to continue their conversation with you and others about what they’ve learned. Remember, you want to keep people talking about what you’ve presented, and you want people to keep talking about you.

**Making it available**

Even after the webinar is finished, you want to make sure that people can still access it. It’s quite likely that they may want to review the material again to reinforce what they’ve learned (and even buy a product). Plan now to make sure that your content remains available online, and you’ll get great benefits as time goes on. A good webinar platform ensures that the webinar content can be accessed on demand — audiences love the convenience. They can view the webinar at any time. And, with mobile device access, webinar content can also be viewed anywhere. Webinars work best when you don’t have to worry about technological walls between your attendees and your content.

On-demand viewing of webinar content extends reach and increases your ROI.

**It’s Content Time**

How well your webinar achieves its goal depends largely on what you present. Because you’ve already identified your audience, you know who you’re trying to reach, but you also know how you might best reach them. You don’t have to use all of the content types mentioned here in your webinar, but you should know them all and when might be the best time to use them.

**Keep it compelling**

No matter how you choose to present your webinar, remember that the information should always mean something — and perhaps even compel your audience to do something. You don’t have to frame your webinar as a late-night motivational infomercial, but you do need to make your content interesting and worth the time your audience invests. Make
sure that you use up-to-date information, keep it lively and informational, and don’t be afraid to be a little entertaining. Above all, make your content worth something.

Seriously, don’t frame your webinar as a late-night motivational infomercial. You have better things to do.

**Write the book (or at least the handouts)**

Thankfully, webinars don’t require you to run down to the laser printer or the local print shop to put together text files for use as part of your presentation. You can use PDFs or text documents to present summary notes or an overview of your presentation, and you don’t have to print multiple copies for those who arrive late. Put the presentation up for repeated downloads if necessary, and feel confident that you no longer have to worry about what kind of computer and browser your audience uses — common file formats work across all platforms and programs now.

That said, you might have to account for mobile use versus laptop or desktop use, but simply taking into account design factors like font and image size for mobile and computer use will help alleviate those concerns.

**Our next speaker is . . .**

Having more than one presenter involved in your webinar allows you to tap into a broader range of experience, and it also lends your production more credibility. It also means that you free your audience from having to listen to one person for a long period of time (and frees one person from having to take on all of the presentation duties). Consider having one person act as the host for the entire webinar, then have that host pass the presentation off to other speakers for each major section of the webinar.

When choosing speakers, make sure that they’re comfortable talking about and presenting their subject matter. Webinars can actually ease stage fright because the people speaking can’t see the audience and don’t have to imagine them in their underwear to calm themselves down. If that actually ever...
worked — I have my doubts. But you want to make sure that your speakers know what they need to talk about and how they’re going to talk about it. Their delivery should be clear and concise, and they should provide the best content in the time allotted.

**The A/V club**

Thankfully, you don’t have to worry about filmstrips or audio cassettes in your webinars (I’m really dating myself with these references, aren’t I?), but you should look to include compelling audio and video content in your webinar. This does mean a little more pre-production effort on your part, but the results of well-crafted A/V pieces make the effort worth it. Why bother talking about your great new product when they can see and hear it in action? After all, you want to hear a great band rather than read a description of the show, right?

Use well-crafted audio and video content to demonstrate exactly what you’re talking about and show the audience how you want them to perceive your product. Or show your trainees the best way to use a tool or implement a policy. Once you reinforce that learning with text materials, you’ve set up a great way for your webinar to market, train, and educate.

**Multimedia**

Animations and other computer-generated media may be a little bit more resource-intensive than straight audio or video, but they can be worth the time and effort to put together. You can use multimedia to dive deeply into a complex product and show individual parts in action (as opposed to trying to cut open a running motor and show the working pistons — that’s just not going to happen). You can use animation to make abstract concepts more concrete and easy to understand as well. Ensure that your animations and transitions run smoothly, and you’ll add a whole new element to your webinars.

**Interactive elements**

Webinars allow you to draw the audience in further to your presentation by using interactive elements like votes, surveys, chat...
feedback, or other elements that allow the audience to provide feedback on the webinar. Take a look at the following use cases:

- Use surveys to ascertain the audience’s level of knowledge on a topic
- Allow your audience to vote on matters before a group (just not where to go to lunch — you’ll never reach a consensus)
- Ask your audience to provide feedback and see whether they have to go back and review material from the webinar
- End your training session with a quiz (pop or otherwise)

This kind of interaction isn’t available with large gatherings that don’t use technology, so take advantage of these resources and make them work for your webinar.

Look Long and Hard at Your Schedule

Deciding when to hold your webinar goes far beyond picking the right time to deliver your presentation. Scheduling involves making sure that you have the time to prep your materials, get your presentation rehearsed, properly promote what you have to present, and more.

When are you available?

Availability takes into account a lot of things. You have to make sure that the following groups are ready and able to participate:

- Your speakers
- Your support staff
- Your audience
- You (of course)

You’re not going to be able to get everybody you need in one setting, but you can pick the best available date and give others enough time to make plans to participate (or get somebody to participate in their place).
Schedule your webinars for the middle of the week (Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday) and at a time when most participants can join in (like 1:00 p.m. EST, to maximize participation for both coasts of the United States).

**Give yourself enough lead time**

And just what does lead time entail? *Lead time* means that you have enough time to get everything in this list in place:

- Proper promotion of your webinar
- Completion of all your content needs
- Getting all of the presentation channels ready (and again, this may require hiring professionals to ensure that your webinar goes smoothly)
- Preparation of all of your speakers
- Rehearsing your webinar
- Rehearsing it again, just to be sure

Rome wasn’t built in a day. Sure, building grand edifices out of pristine marble can be slightly more complicated than putting together an hour-long presentation on your new product, but the metaphor should let you know how important it is to give yourself enough time to get everything together. And this isn’t something that you can compress into a few days of frantic scrambling. Take into account everything else you have to do, and make sure that you have enough time to properly present your content.

**Make it on demand**

You should always plan on making your content appropriate for later recorded viewing, but you also need to take into account how “fresh” your content remains. Plan to give yourself the maximum amount of time for that content to remain relevant and interesting, and use on-demand delivery to ensure that the content reaches the largest possible audience.
It’s showtime! You and your team have prepared your webinar thoroughly, your technical tools are in place, and you’ve managed to attract the largest possible audience. The stage is set — now you just have to put on your production.

This chapter shows you how to present your webinar in a smooth, professional manner. That way, you can focus on the message you’re presenting and not the technical glitches surrounding it. Trust me, you’d much rather focus on the message.

Practice Makes Perfect

In Chapter 3, I talk about giving yourself enough lead time to make sure that everything is ready and in place. That lead time must include at least one complete rehearsal. A complete rehearsal involves all speakers and all creative content presented in the same order as the planned webinar. In other words, you must run through the entire webinar just as if you were presenting it for real.

This isn’t wasted time and effort — the rehearsal makes sure that all of the speakers and elements can be counted on to perform as expected. It also demonstrates that your webinar can handle all of the planned transitions and changes without issue. Finally, it ensures that you can include all of your speakers and content in the time allotted.
Have everybody there

Having a stand-in for a speaker or reading through the script yourself doesn’t really aid the rehearsal. You need the speaker to run through the entire presentation to demonstrate exactly how long the presentation will last and how the speaker will perform as part of the webinar. It might be difficult to get everybody’s schedule aligned for a rehearsal, but I cannot emphasize the importance of this too much. You are putting the reputation of your organization behind this presentation, whether it’s an HR briefing or a new marketing presentation. Make sure that it looks good by keeping everybody involved.

Yes, you need a script

You can’t just “wing” a webinar. You’ve already seen the amount of planning that goes into a webinar, and you can’t pull that off without having a detailed plan of where all of your content goes and what your speakers are going to say.

Your script should outline the time at which each event takes place, where that content is located or stored, and who will present it. You should also detail the amount of time each section will take.

Some speakers may choose to write every word they plan on saying, and some may just put together an outline of what they plan to talk about. As long as the speakers can comfortably present their content in the time allotted, they should use whatever makes them feel comfortable. The ultimate focus should remain on the webinar, however, and you should make changes wherever necessary to make sure the presentations go smoothly.

Yes, you need to run through the whole thing

You don’t know exactly how a webinar will perform until you run through the entire thing, just as you don’t know how a car will drive until you take it for a spin. Run through everything at least once to see how it will behave, and it won’t hurt to try another rehearsal or two.
You don’t have to run it into the ground, but you do have to make sure how everything will perform. You should rehearse enough to make sure the webinar runs smoothly, but not enough that it makes everybody sick of their part.

**Yes, you need to have a backup plan**

Nobody likes to think about when things could go wrong. Yes, you could have everything run amazingly well and not have to deal with any problems. But you need to be prepared in case something does go wrong. Whatever happens might not be your fault, but you still need to be prepared.

**Backing it up**

Make sure that you have your content stored in a safe location, and keep a backup copy ready in case that safe location doesn’t turn out to be so safe. That backup copy could save your webinar.

**Spare hardware**

Computers can be amazingly fickle when the pressure is on. Having a spare laptop just in case the unthinkable happens could keep a speaker in the loop instead of offline.

**Mic check**

Make sure that you’re using a decent-quality microphone for your invited speakers — and have an identical mic for use in case the first one dies. It wouldn’t be the first time, and it won’t be the last.

**Stick to the Script**

You’ve taken the time to rehearse and put together an amazing, compelling webinar. Now may not be the time to junk the whole thing and improvise. If something goes wrong, just keep going and follow your plan. That way, everybody knows what’s going on and what you have planned next.

A clear and concise script makes sure that everybody is on the same page.
Are They Engaged?

We’re not talking about proposals and diamond rings here. Your audience is the reason you’re presenting your webinar so it makes sense to keep them engaged with what you’re presenting. The speakers should address the audience directly and make each listener think they’re talking directly to every individual. This goes a long way in making the audience pay attention to the material.

You can also use interactive material to keep the audience engaged, as long as it fits well within the webinar’s plan. Encourage attendees to submit questions and tweet during the webinar. Also, use the group chat function and let attendees communicate with each other during the webinar.

The best way to keep your audience engaged is to make sure that your content is relevant to the audience and is presented in a clear, concise matter. Present the right information to the right audience, and you’ll be fine.
Even when a webinar is over, there’s still more to be done. After all, you still have more to learn:

- How many people actually joined your webinar?
- How did the audience react to what you presented?
- How did the actual presentation go, and what could you have done better?
- What are you going to do for the next one?

This chapter shows you how to gather all of the applicable information and make use of it. This piece actually loops back to the first part of planning your next webinar — there’s always something to be done, isn’t there?

**Reviewing the Analytics**

With the comprehensive reporting provided by platform providers, you can pull some basic information on how many hits your webinar gathered and where those hits came from. If it’s an internal corporate presentation, the analytics serve a different purpose. However, if you’re making a new sales pitch, these analytics can show you which prospects responded well (the ones you should contact immediately) and which ones seemed a little light in participation (the ones that need a little more nurturing).
Companies such as ON24 offer analytics that include the following information.

**Demographics**

Learn as much as you can about your attendees, such as where they work and what they do. You’ll have information about who your audience members actually are. When you know who takes part in your webinar, your understanding of participants and their priorities will increase exponentially.

**Interest in your content**

Webinar platforms can illustrate the level of interest in your content as the webinar goes on. With that information, you face an easy decision — either include more interesting content or revise your less-interesting content to catch a few more eyeballs.

**Audience activity**

Did your audience click on one link more than another, or did they shy away from certain sections of your content? Clicks show interest, and you can use this information to review and revise your webinar. You should pay attention to any questions asked during the webinar as well.

**Lead scoring**

Ah, the all-important scoring of leads. This is where you actually make your money — find out who’s ready to buy your product or service and speak directly to them.

Lead scoring remains one of the webinar’s most powerful tools.

**Event and campaign effectiveness**

By gathering information about how attendees found out about your webinar and feedback from your attendees, you can determine exactly what campaign tactics worked best,
how effective your webinar was, and how you need to proceed from here. Use this information as a kind of post-mortem report and improve your next event.

**Report on ROI**

Once you’ve totaled up all your costs, you can determine the overall ROI (return on investment) of the webinar and, if appropriate, the cost per lead. If you’re attracting the right people and successfully converting registrants to attendees, you’re on the right track! If not, it’s time to see what you can do to improve your situation.

**Who Attended, and What Did They Do?**

Once you know the raw numbers, it’s time to get into the details. Check into all of the information collected from your webinar attendees — this can include information they submitted through the registration process or information they shared during the webinar.

The information can go beyond full names and e-mail addresses — you can learn what companies your attendees represented and why they chose to tune in. A few basic questions can turn into a wealth of information.

**Listening to comments and questions**

Every webinar should include a feedback mechanism at the end of the presentation to ascertain what your audience thought of your presentation and what they might want to see or avoid. This gives you a few paths to plan for:

- What should we emphasize in webinars?
- What should we leave out of webinars?
- What topics could we address in new, different webinars?
Scoring the tests

Training webinars should include any applicable quizzes and tests to evaluate your audience. However, these scores can say as much about the webinar as they do about your audience.

Evaluate the scores both as a measure of the audience success and how well you communicated your message through the webinar. Too many high scores may indicate that you did a wonderful job, but they may also indicate that you made the quizzes too easy. You might need to revise the questions to be a little more challenging. Conversely, too many low scores could signal your test was too hard or didn’t address the material learned correctly.

Use polls throughout your webinar — they provide useful information and keep your participants engaged.

Scoring the leads

Webinars are great tools for bringing in leads for your new product, and it’s important to act quickly on any new leads that come your way. Evaluate the information you get on your leads as soon as you can, and prepare your strategy with that same quickness.

The lead scoring helps you qualify leads for more efficient and appropriate follow-up. Some leads may require more nurturing. A high-quality lead (someone from a large company who’s ready to buy) can go directly to sales for more follow-up, for example. With webinar lead scoring, no one wastes time on a low-quality lead unlikely to result in near-term sales.

You don’t want to be overbearing, but you should at least send an e-mail the next day thanking attendees for their participation in your webinar and inviting them to evaluate your product or service. You can tailor the presentation from there — consider a “drip” campaign where you get in touch at regular intervals with additional information.

It’s important to act on your leads as soon as you can.
What’s my ROI?

Take stock of all the information from your webinar:

- Who are the participants in your webinar?
- What did they take from their participation?
- What would they like to see in future presentations?
- What actions did they take based on the webinar?
- How much time, effort, and money did you put into the webinar?

Now that you have all of the relevant information, you can evaluate what you’ve gotten out of your webinar and whether putting on the same presentation again makes sense. You may have to make a few changes here and there, especially if you notice that some of the information didn’t contribute much to the webinar.

Take into account all factors of your webinar when calculating your ROI. Your investment goes beyond money spent, and your return includes more than just sales generated. Even if you put in a lot of money, what you get out could be more than worth it.

Looking Ahead to the Next Time

More than likely, you’d like to present this information again, either for a new audience or for reinforcement of the information for the same audience. You know more now than you did before you executed the webinar, so now’s the time to make it better.

Fine-tuning the process

You may just need to tweak the webinar a little bit. Maybe the script was good overall, but you could save a little time by editing out material the audience grasped easily the first time around. Or, you could add more reinforcement for complex subjects. Your rehearsal should have brought this kind of information to light in rough form, but actual execution teases out the little details.
Review, revise, reuse

Undoubtedly, you have sections that went well in your first webinar, and you undoubtedly recorded that webinar. If it worked fine the first time, feel free to use it again (especially if there was no direct interaction). As long as the content remains relevant, you should keep it in the setlist.

If a little revision is necessary, go in and take care of it for the next time. Work with the speakers and content providers to make sure that everything is in the best possible shape it could be.

You’re not trying to reinvent the wheel here — these are minor tweaks on what was hopefully an overall success.
Chapter 6

Product Approaches and Features

In This Chapter
▶ Evaluating available technology
▶ Using the right webinar platform
▶ Dissecting platform features
▶ Discovering the essentials of webinar success

You may notice that your original webinar could be punched up a little with better production values. These values go beyond your compelling content — they make your presentation look more professional and intriguing.

This chapter takes a look at what you’ll use to produce your webinar and how to deliver it in the best possible way.

Let’s Talk Technology

Technology doesn’t necessarily make your presentation good, but it does allow a good presentation to be delivered more quickly and professionally. A faster computer, better cameras and microphones, and reliable high-speed Internet connections make a huge difference in webinar production.

Evaluate how well your current assets performed in the webinar and where you could stand to make improvements. Good equipment pays for itself both in what it presents and in how long it stands up to being used. A good initial investment makes a huge difference as your webinar production continues.

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Stepping Up to the Right Platform

Companies like ON24 provide full-spectrum platforms for your webinar production needs, from smaller productions to full-blown virtual environments used to create an all-encompassing presentation for your audience. You can rely on these companies to provide the tools you need to create a quality webinar and get back all the analytical data you need. Your critiquing should include what you’ve learned about your webinar platform and what you need to consider in the future.

You need to be able to perform these five essential features with your platform:

- Promote your own brand identity
- Use social media and group collaboration
- Retrieve detailed analytics in real time
- Scale your webinar solution as your corporation grows
- Access the webinar on mobile devices

Matching your solution to your objectives

Detail what you hope to achieve in your webinar and how the webinar platform tools can help you accomplish those objectives. You may want to expand your webinar into full video production, virtual environments, and other tools. You don’t need to use every tool in the toolbox for your webinar, but you should evaluate each tool and see how it might benefit you.

Professionals can be of assistance here in helping you evaluate all available tools and drawing on their wealth of experience to help you put together the most compelling webinar possible.
Matching your solution to your audience

You probably know your audience pretty well, but you should also consult professionals on how you can best reach that audience. You may discover that certain tools may reach audiences better than others. For example, marketing webinar audiences may want more social media. Companies like ON24 can show you how to best implement these tools in your webinars to connect with your audience in the best possible way.

Those Platform Features!

When you’re considering your webinar platform features, you should know what you’re looking for and what tools are available. The following list shows what’s available as part of a webinar platform solution:

✓ An event page featuring registration, communication tools, and a webinar user console
✓ Completely customizable user interface
✓ User-controlled experience and access to tools
✓ High-quality multimedia presentations
✓ Webcam support
✓ Integration with social media
✓ Interactive polls, surveys, chats, and Q&A (question-and-answer) sessions
✓ Collaboration tools
✓ Analytics, including event and interactivity summaries and more granular data
✓ Easy-to-use software requiring no additional downloads or plug-ins
Support for multicasts
✓ The ability to handle firewalls and other network restrictions
✓ Localized content for global viewing
✓ On-demand viewing

Webinar “Success Essentials”

Throughout your critiquing phase, keep the following concepts in mind:

✓ Make the webinar simple to access
✓ Support access at any given time
✓ Support scalability from small audiences to larger groups
✓ Keep your corporate identity present at all times
✓ Include compelling content and speakers

When you keep this information at the center of your planning, you’ll be well on your way to creating the best webinar you can.
Chapter 7

Ten Great Webinar Use Cases

In This Chapter
▶ Understanding how webinars work in the real world
▶ Evaluating common webinar uses cases
▶ Turning an eye toward best practices
▶ Discovering how webinars improve your message, backed with real statistics

In this chapter, you get a look at ten real-life use cases where webinars improved the corporate communications, training, and marketing programs of ON24 clients. The company names have been omitted due to client confidentiality, but the stories should be enough to convince you that webinars improve your efforts to communicate your message.

Marketing Multiple Products

This global provider of business hardware and software systems markets more than 5,000 individual products to organizations of all sizes worldwide. To help introduce its products to the Asia-Pacific region, the company hosted a series of webcasts targeting a diverse audience of IT and business executives in more than 40 countries. These webcasts attracted more than 14,000 live attendees, resulting in close to 4,000 qualified leads.
Creating a Community

To facilitate interaction in a large enterprise’s community network, this company produced a series of webinars to serve as a communication vehicle for thought leadership topics. The interactivity of the webinar enables ongoing conversations while also capturing leads. The series contributes to increased adoption of the company’s solutions while also satisfying a primary business challenge — the need for robust, comprehensive reporting.

Enabling a Sales Staff

This organization uses webinars to keep their sales staff in the loop. Sales teams need up-to-date information, and expensive travel isn’t an option. The webinar platform provides on-demand training for the sales staff without the cost of pricey tickets and lodging. The sales staff can stay current with all offerings at a minimum of cost and logistical planning.

Training Executives

This institute provides executive training services to companies across the world via its weekly webinar series. The webcasting platform provides metrics that show how the webcasts were consumed. That platform also provides technical support to make sure all participants enjoy the full experience. In fact, this webcasting solution provides a full range of support, from registration to the final numbers.

Combining Virtual and Real Worlds

Seeking a virtual solution that could integrate with a physical product launch, a global technology leader used webinars to bring a “hybrid” product launch to life. The company launched its product at a conference and to remote audiences simultaneously via a webinar (streamed live to attendees from over 90 countries). The webinars reached more than 3,200 viewers.
Delivering Information to Students

A publisher held a free webinar dedicated to simplifying the college admissions process. That webinar featured a panel of experts, including financial aid, college admissions and testing experts, and the publisher promoted the webinar to high school guidance counselors and students in a variety of media. Finally, the publisher provided a unique component to the webinar by using a Q&A page for responding to all submitted questions.

The webinar subsequently lived on as an on-demand event with new Q&A content.

Sharing Insights and Automating Marketing

This company developed a webinar series to help recruiters in the retail sector get needed HR (human resources) insights. A marketing automation solution supported the program promotional campaign, allowing producers to track event registration and update contact fields directly in their database. The webinar platform provided real-time registration and attendance metrics into the marketing automation system for a consolidated reporting dashboard.

Getting the Sales Pipeline Flowing Again

Facing challenges resulting from a bankruptcy and acquisition, a telecommunications giant sponsored a webinar to provide information about the acquisition. Their goal was to own the conversation and reassure prospects to move them from a
wait-and-see approach to closing deals. Close to 4,700 people registered for the webinar, including 2,350 live attendees and another 1,000-plus registrants for the on-demand version of the webinar.

**Delivering Localized Content around the World**

This tech leader created a virtual product launch featuring live webcast keynotes from the CEO and CTO, followed by online breakout sessions. With tactics designed to reach specific global markets, participants received engaging and localized content. This webcasting program drew 38,000 registrants across multiple continents, making it one of the largest online launches ever held. More than 17,000 attendees took in the keynotes and downloaded thousands of documents.

**Sharing Your Message across Borders**

An international association held a webinar to address an issue of global importance to its membership. The webinar combined mock live video interviews with interactive audience polls, live audio discussion, and an audience Q&A session. The webinar reinforced the branding of the sponsor’s website as the go-to place for critical application information. Attendees praised the content and quality of the learning opportunity, provided within an efficient virtual environment.
Use webinars to communicate your message and save time and travel!

Webinars don’t just save you time and travel expenses. You can also use webinars to better reach your audience and reinforce your message long after your event is over. From the initial concept to rehearsal and execution of your event, with this book you discover what it takes to put together a quality webinar and how to make the most of your efforts.

- **Understand what webinars are — and how you can better reach your audience with them**
- **Find out how to plan your webinar — and how to make those plans as efficient and effective as possible**
- **Recognize how to choose a reputable webinar vendor — and get the resources you need to make a spectacular webinar a reality**
- **See how to engage your audience with webinars — by creating compelling content and engaging your audience every step of the way**
- **Discover the power of webinars — and use that power to get your message to the audience in the most effective way possible**

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