



Online Marketing Events:

*Best Practices for Optimizing ROI
With WebEx Event Center™*

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Introduction

The webinar has proven indispensable to business, bringing widely-dispersed audiences together economically, while providing a rich medium for communication. According to research performed by Wainhouse Research, the leading business uses of webinar technology are generating sales leads, followed by training. Wainhouse also found remarkably high satisfaction among webinar users:

- Over 99% of their respondents indicated that the overall results achieved from webinars met their expectations; a full 55% said that results exceeded their expectations.
- Nine out of ten of respondents likewise indicated that their results met or exceeded their ROI expectations.
- Those who could estimate a number indicated on average that they were generating a third more leads using WebEx webinars than they had been using traditional methods.

These results are no fluke. They reflect the ongoing commitment WebEx has made to develop WebEx Event Center as a strategic marketing tool. The leading webinar management solution, WebEx Event Center offers comprehensive capabilities, ranging from planning and generating attendance, through event design and on-air production, to post-event follow-up and integration with marketing automation systems. In addition, the WebEx webinar technology is supported by an organization that has developed unmatched expertise over thousands of online events.

This document has been created to help marketers gain the greatest value possible from WebEx online seminars. While it may be most beneficial to those who have never previously used WebEx Event Center, even experienced customers may find additional sources of value and best practices that will help them accelerate their results.



Event Strategy

Setting your event strategy is the first step toward reaching your goal. Strategy begins with deciding what you want to achieve. Consider what tangible response you want from attendees at the end of the event, and what the dollar value to your company will be. This information becomes the basis of your breakeven and ROI analysis. Based on experience – either your own, or WebEx’ – you can get a good sense of what your costs will be in advance, and the likely profitability of your webinar. If you are ever unsure how to proceed, you can always rely on experts from WebEx to help you put all the pieces together.

Once you have a handle on your costs and performance goals, you need to think about how to “fill the seats.” Who do you want to reach? What topic is relevant and interesting to your target audience? It is always wise to develop your event with a call-to-action in mind – the next step you want them to take down the path towards making a purchase.

One proven best practice is to design your event theme as a question, for which the logical answer will be your call-to-action. Make sure that your call-to-action is a logical first step for your audience to take, and not simply a “wouldn’t it be great if they...” notion that doesn’t square with reality. If in doubt, revisit your webinar topic, which inherently spells out what your audience will expect from your event. Sample calls-to-action include:

- Request a one-to-one consultation with one of our experts today!
- Contact an account rep to see how others in your industry have succeeded with WebEx Event Center.
- Use our online cost-savings calculator to see how much you can save!
- Order by the end of the month and save 30%!
- Call today for a free trial/demo/sample!

Once you have determined your target audience, the theme that will appeal to them, and the tangible steps you want them to take, you’re ready to set a date for your event.



WebEx Event Center Overview

- WebEx Event Center extends the reach of businesses, letting them get in front of more customers at less cost, and with less use of resources
- WebEx Event Center lets you wow your audience with any combination of presentations, rich media, or audio
- Built on the WebEx MediaTone® network, the company's proprietary backbone for secure communications, WebEx webinars are a reliable platform for your message
- Optimized for marketing and lead generation, WebEx webinars offer tools to help with every stage of the process, from audience acquisition and qualification, to maximizing attendance, following-through after the event, and integrating with marketing automation systems
- WebEx Event Assist offers expert consultation and production assistance, giving you confidence that your event will meet or exceed your goals
- WebEx Event Assist provides expert services to help you maximize the ROI on your WebEx online seminar event
- Execute successful webinars seamlessly, capturing and captivating your target audience with the help of Event Assist consultants
- Event Assist consultants have knowledge of proven techniques and best practices, gained over countless online sessions
- Services include both advance planning, and real-time assistance and support during your event

Select a Date and Time

Scheduling the time for your webinar is easy: in North America 1 pm Eastern/10 am Pacific is ideal. As far as selecting a date, there are a number of factors to consider:

- It is best to avoid holidays, and the days immediately preceding them.
- Avoid Mondays and Fridays, which deliver lower attendance on average.
- Avoid times your target audience is generally unavailable (e.g., end of month for Finance, August for education professionals, etc.).
- Events held early in the quarter have a better chance to raise sales in that quarter, while events held in the last two weeks of your quarter typically receive less Sales support.

How Many Invitations Should You Send?

Email campaigns are frequently used to promote web seminars. And while individual results will always vary, experience suggests some planning guidelines.

In general you get a better response rate from lists of people who already know your organization than from "cold" lists you buy or rent from 3rd parties. Here's how the numbers work, assuming a cold list:

- You will likely generate one enrollee for every 100 invitations you send.
- Typically, 40-60% of those who enroll will actually attend.
- Of your attendees, 5-15% will typically qualify as "A" caliber leads (likely to buy soon). A similar percent will also qualify as "B" leads (interested, but with a less urgent need).
- Many of those who enroll but do not attend will likely qualify as "A" and "B" leads, as well.
- Your ultimate sales conversion rate depends on your product offering, marketplace and sales team. That said, converting 15% of your leads is a common rate.
- These metrics suggest that you'll close 1-5 sales per 10,000 e-mail invitations.



Again, these numbers are guidelines, based on WebEx experience in a variety of market categories, and your exact results will vary. There are many steps you can take to optimize these ratios for your unique situation – for example, you are likely to gain value from attendance by prospects that are already in your sales pipeline. And, remember that the response rate to your e-mail campaign can be optimized by following these best practices:

- Verify the quality of any purchased or owned e-mail list; using lists of unsolicited leads will underperform lists of known leads.
- Create the event title and description to appeal to your target audience's imagination.
- Pay attention to the quality of your invitation copy; after catching your target's attention, you want to generate a sense of expectation about what they will learn from you.
- Avoid words that get blocked by spam filters.
- Use appealing guest speakers, and name brand companies whenever possible.
- Provide 2 weeks advance notice for your invitees.
- Ask only "must have" questions on the enrollment form, so as not to put off your registrants.

If you need help estimating the cost and likely ROI for your event, your WebEx account rep will be happy to consult with you.

Now you can begin making tactical decisions about how to achieve those results.



Event Design and Setup

First, think about your enrollment page questions. In addition to name, address, and e-mail, your questions will be used to determine the quality of each lead. When you create your page, you can assign a score to each answer which will be automatically tallied, to help you identify the hottest leads. What information will help identify the truly hot prospects? Remember that any information you gather should be actionable. If a question doesn't help prioritize enrollees or add value for your sales or marketing efforts, it probably doesn't belong.

Furthermore, think about how you will describe the webinar. From a marketing perspective, it is important that the reader is intrigued with the content. It is also beneficial to include either a company logo or a picture of the presenter, so that the registrant can associate the description to the event sponsor. You can use HTML e-mail templates provided in WebEx Event Center, or customize your own. You will also want to create a destination page which launches post-enrollment, reinforcing your message and brand.

You have the option of setting your enrollment page for either automatic approval, or "pre-approval" review. WebEx Event Center lets you establish criteria for automatic approval (e.g., plan to buy = "In the next 30 days") or automatic rejection (e.g., e-mail address contains "competitor.com"), saving you time and effort. Event Center lets you to manage the process, and ensure that only the right prospects and attendees are enrolled.

The audio component of your event is just as important as the event content. WebEx Event Center offers three options for audio:

- Audio Broadcast – This is one-way broadcast, integrated into the WebEx presentation using the Internet (VoIP). Event host, presenter and panelists join via traditional telephony-based audio conference, while your audience receives a one-way audio stream directly to their computers. This is the most cost-effective choice when broadcasting to a large number of attendees. However, it is only one-way audio communication.
- Two-way VoIP – Similar to the Audio Broadcast option, but supports two-way communication. Great to use when you want to communicate with the attendees via VoIP.
- WebEx audio conferencing – Attendees login to the webinar using their browser, and moments later receive a telephone call from the Event Center, which provides their audio connection to the event. This delivers fully-integrated video and audio for all attendees. Integration is also available with 3rd party teleconference vendors.
- In addition, live operator-assisted "concierge-style" teleconferencing services are available.



Here are some of the WebEx Event Center pre-event tools you should consider:

- Create and manage multiple events in one program.
- Select or create your own HTML email templates.
- Customize enrollment with host-defined fields.
- Assign weighted numeric values to specific answers to enable automatic lead scoring of qualified leads.
- Automate e-mail management – Send out invitations, confirmations and reminders automatically.
- Approve or reject enrollees automatically based on criteria you set, or review and approve enrollment personally.
- Direct enrollees to a destination URL after registration to reinforce your marketing message.
- Attach promotional event material on the event information page.
- Manage rehearsals – particularly valuable in events with multiple presenters in different locations.



Preparing an Engaging Online Presentation

The most important job of your presentation is to capture the audience's attention, and hold it through to completion. At the beginning of the presentation have an agenda slide that outlines the compelling benefits to the audience of sitting through the entire seminar. Including the presenter's picture on the agenda slide will help the audience visualize the speaker if no video is used. Also be sure to include some tempting nuggets at the outset, and some strong examples of the valuable information they will gain to establish that your seminar is worthwhile.

Conduct polls early and intermittently. A popular technique is to poll the audience after the 2nd or 3rd slide to find out their area of greatest interest. In addition to informing the presenter, it helps engage the audience, assuring them that you will tailor your comments, and prompting them to interact. Including additional polls throughout continues to reaffirm their engagement, and adds value by making the live audience part of the event. Also, decide how you would like to handle Q & A: attendee questions can be addressed at the end, or interspersed throughout the presentation.

It is better to have large number of simple slides, than to have just a few slides that are very dense with content. Remember that for your audience, the experience will be like watching television – and any slide that lasts longer than a minute will start looking like a test pattern. Take advantage of rich multimedia functions in your presentation to stimulate the audience. Use slide transitions and animations. Offer statistics, illustrations and quotes to add substance. Real-world examples are particularly valuable for helping audience members absorb and assimilate abstract concepts. Illustrate data in graphics rather than tables whenever possible, making sure that the slide communicates the point quickly. Expecting your audience to figure out subtleties on a slide will distract them from your talk, and initiate attrition.

In general, a 35-45 minute presentation is optimal, with at least 15 minutes for Q&A after the presentation concludes and you've made your initial call to action. When in doubt, shorter is better. Your presentation should stick to truly compelling matter, and save those "probably should have this" slides for Q&A. Remember: you cannot bore someone into buying your product!

WebEx can offer suggestions on making your presentation dynamic and engaging. Scripting the presentation is also a good practice to ensure a tight webinar that keeps the attention of the audience. And rehearsals should be a priority, to assure a smooth and successful event.



Event Promotion

Promotion is crucial to your overall success. These vehicles are most commonly used to promote webinar events:

- Home page placements
- E-mail invitations
- Newsletters
- Banner ads
- Direct mail
- Personal sales rep invitations
- Public relations/press releases
- Advertising tie-ins
- Viral marketing

You may be able to leverage some of your other promotional programs synergistically. If you have an ad campaign under way, request a mention, a bullet, an extra insert, or anything else that provides exposure to your event at little or no incremental cost. If you are conducting PR activities, add this event to your list of “news” to tout. If you are co-presenting with a partner or industry expert, consider what promotional activities and mailing lists they can contribute. Are there public interest groups, online forums, or professional associations that might be amenable to publishing an announcement about the “training” or “discussion” on a topic their membership finds interesting?

When you are promoting via e-mail, include an easy mechanism for the reader to enroll in the Web seminar, preferably an active “Register” link within the body as the main call to action. If you are emailing using unsolicited lists, you should be aware of new liability laws. List brokers are adding restrictions, which may also affect your terms and conditions. Before broad emailing, test your invitation through several spam filters to see that they generally get through. Spam filters increasingly block e-mails with too much HTML, too much text, and key words such as: Free, Promotion, Special Offer, and Sale. On the bright side, some lists are coming down in cost and may offer more value.

Whenever possible, make sure that the event is part of your company’s overall marketing message as you prepare for the event. Letters, direct mail, brochures and other related marketing communication pieces should all make note of the event – if even by a sticker affixed to the materials being sent out. Add an active link to the home page of your web site that brings the viewer directly to the event information page. Needless to say, your sales force should be promoting the session and making sure that as many of their



relevant prospects as possible enroll for (and attend!) the event. The bottom line: the more you can do, the better.

Whichever promotional vehicles you use, each should include a unique tracking ID as part of its HTML link to the event enrollment page, allowing you to measure which ones are getting the greatest response. Repeat your winning promotions to boost attendance above your goal. As you continue to market to this target audience over time, this information can help you get more leads, more efficiently.

Reminders for registrants are an important part of delivering the largest audience to your web seminar. Statistically, reminders e-mailed 24 hours and 1 hour in advance of the event seem to have the greatest benefit. For some event topics and audiences, it may make financial sense for you to leave telephone reminders a day or two in advance of the event, which can drive a noticeable increase in attendance rates. If you're short on cycles, there are some firms to whom you can outsource this task.



During the Event

You and your team are now prepared to execute a successful event. Start by greeting the attendees and providing a quick tutorial on how to submit questions and use the webinar Q&A feature. Start your network-based recording, and you are ready to begin the presentation.

Some of the WebEx in-event tools include:

- Present with multiple panelists in any location.
- Panelists entrance and prep room let multiple presenters interact or rehearse “off stage” during the event.
- Auto play rich media presentations when the attendee joins the event.
- Present rich media (PowerPoint with animations, transitions, Flash and streaming video) during the event.
- Demonstrate software and sketch ideas.
- Communicate with the audience using Q&A, displaying answers privately and to all attendees.
- Chat with panelists or attendees during the event.
- Use Annotation Tools and Polling to keep the audience engaged.



Post-Event Follow-Up

To optimize lead to conversion rate, schedule a calling campaign for 1-7 days following the event and provide your salesforce the hottest leads from the event. If you have set up numeric values to the qualifying enrollment questions, you can quickly score and rank leads using those values. Event Center has the capability to export the data to your CRM system to quickly distribute to your sales team. In some cases you may need to do this manually. Make sure to identify the right team members to make this run as smoothly as possible.

In addition to the leads, we recommend providing your sales team with supporting communications. One should make them aware of the webinar with specific information on the event and how to attract the buyer. A separate communication piece should be created that sales can use to initiate the relationship. You may want to address your sales force as a whole, speak personally with their managers, book time on their schedules for calling these particular leads, arrange spiffs for the first or most successful follow-up, send them an explanation e-mail, and a reminder after the event.

It is valuable to promote the recorded session, as a no-expense means of generating additional leads. You also have the discretion to edit the recording prior to posting, whether to shorten its length, or to feature key points of interest to different segments of your target audience.

Once your event is “in the can,” there are a number of ways you can gain additional value from your initial investment. If your event was successful, you will likely want to repeat it, using new lists. You will be able to reuse or repurpose most of the work you have done, improving your ROI. If the original campaign did not yield your expected results, return to your event strategy to see what new factors you can implement. You can often leverage your initial investment to generate a positive return.

WebEx Event Center makes it easy to save the details of your event for repurposing later. This will give you a starting template of your best practices and customized look and feel, letting you more quickly set up your next event. Event Center’s “Copy From” feature further leverages your investment in conducting high-powered online marketing events.



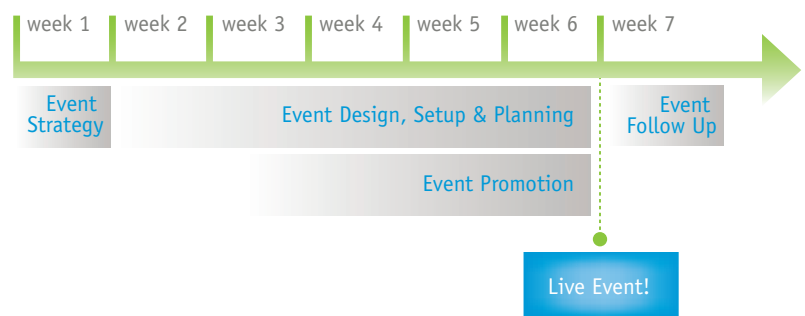
Some of the WebEx post-event tools include:

- Direct attendees to a destination URL after an event.
- Send post event surveys .
- Automate email follow up: Send “Thank you for attending” email and “sorry we missed you” emails.
- Promote recorded event and continue the “life” of the webinar: Choose from multiple options such as requiring registration, destination URL and/or post even surveys.
- Customized event reports via a wizard (enrollment, attendance, etc.): Reporting wizard allows limitless views of data; can be integrated into marketing automation software.
- Export to your CRM application.
- Measure lead sources with track IDs.



Event Checklist: Making it Work for You!

The steps to planning your WebEx Event Center event require thoughtful preparation and enthusiastic execution. The goal will be to drive a dynamic marketing campaign resulting in significant attendance, and ultimately, new-found awareness and business opportunities created for your company. A typical first-event timeline follows. As you conduct additional events, you will be able to reuse your forms, make faster decisions and complete setup more quickly.



In general terms, your course of action should include:

(Use the following checklist to ensure your event has been thoroughly planned and prepared.)

Event Strategy

- ✓ Determine the target audience, desired response from attendees, and goal number of attendees to reach.
- ✓ Decide the interesting and relevant topic and speaker(s) that attract enrollment and draw attendees towards the desired response.
- ✓ Design event promotion campaign to reach ideal target audience.
- ✓ Determine amount of time necessary to define, promote, design and prepare event (6 weeks is a good start).
- ✓ Calculate required budget for promotion, content, web seminar & telephony costs, inducements and follow up.
- ✓ Optional: Calculate estimated Return On Investment to justify managing budget level up or down.
- ✓ Optional: Revise spending plan to match revised budget.
- ✓ Commit to event and proceed to next stage.



Event Design, Setup & Planning

- ✓ Designate an event Host to emcee the event, and a Producer to manage the technical aspects of the event.
- ✓ Establish elements for your Event Center site to include graphics, text and enrollment criteria.
- ✓ Select event time: 10:00 AM Pacific/1:00PM Eastern generally gets the best attendance in North America.
- ✓ Write compelling event title and description.
- ✓ Design enrollment questions, reflecting lead qualifying criteria.
- ✓ Option: Assign numeric weightings to each possible answer for enrollment qualifying questions to allow automatic scoring and ranking of leads.
- ✓ Option: Consider creating a program of related events to promote at once, for additional perceived value, mindshare and cost savings.
- ✓ Define user/attendee experience: drop-off webpage to leave attendees at after event and other touch points.
- ✓ Select and orient host, speaker(s), and any support panelists.
- ✓ Approve and confirm enrollees if applicable.
- ✓ Develop and hone the content for the presentation itself.
- ✓ Review reports leading up to the session to be prepared for volume of attendees; remember, usually 50% of enrollees attend.
- ✓ Review event details again to ensure all preparations have been completed.
- ✓ Rehearse for the event itself and practice the sequence of steps; typically 24 hours before event is best.
- ✓ Schedule and draft automated “Thank you for attending” and “Sorry we missed you” e-mails.
- ✓ Optional: Schedule calling campaign by sales force for 1-3 days after the event to qualified attendees and enrollees.
- ✓ Optional: Create PDF version of final presentation for making available to attendees.
- ✓ Assemble event-specific backgrounder and sales collateral to assist sales reps converting attendees to purchasers.
- ✓ Optional: Schedule marketing offer e-mail one week after event.
- ✓ Plan how leads will be parsed and quickly distributed to appropriate salespersons (CRM – integration, batch import, manual process, etc.).



Event Promotion

- ✓ Design event promotion campaign to reach ideal target audience.
- ✓ Promotion usually begins 3-4 weeks prior to event.
- ✓ Select combination of e-mail, home-page placements, Web ads, banner ads, newsletters, direct mail, sales invitations, PR, ad tie-ins, and viral marketing you will use to promote event.
- ✓ Specify lead-source tracking ID's to measure which sources are most effective and efficient.
- ✓ Execute the campaign and drive enrollment traffic.
- ✓ Send reminders to your enrollees 24 hours and 1 hour in advance of the event.
- ✓ Optional: Call enrollees the day before to personally remind them of event.

Preparing an Engaging Event

- ✓ Design your theme so attendees' logical next step is your call to action.
- ✓ Keep slide delivery to under 45 minutes to retain audience and allow time for Q&A.
- ✓ Create opening marketing/theme slides to prep and engage audience before presentation begins.
- ✓ Begin with clear outline of what they will gain from attending.
- ✓ Conduct polls early and every 10 minutes or so to engage and retain audience.
- ✓ Use slide transitions, animations and video clips to keep audience stimulated.
- ✓ Offer statistics, illustrations, real-world examples and quotes to add substance.
- ✓ Use more than one speaker if possible; using both a male and a female speaker tends to attract extra attention.

Day of the Web Seminar

- ✓ Review event details and your follow-up campaign.
- ✓ Open event 30 minutes early to streamline attendees' joining.
- ✓ Control and minimize last-minute changes to presentations.
- ✓ Have your record and playback file, polls and seed questions prepared.
- ✓ Use Annotation Tools to "draw" attention.



- ✓ Have attendees submit text questions via Q&A which you can choose from.
- ✓ Acknowledge questions submitted by attendees by immediately responding, even if with a deferral.
- ✓ Save Q&A file.
- ✓ Save Polling answers for marketing data.

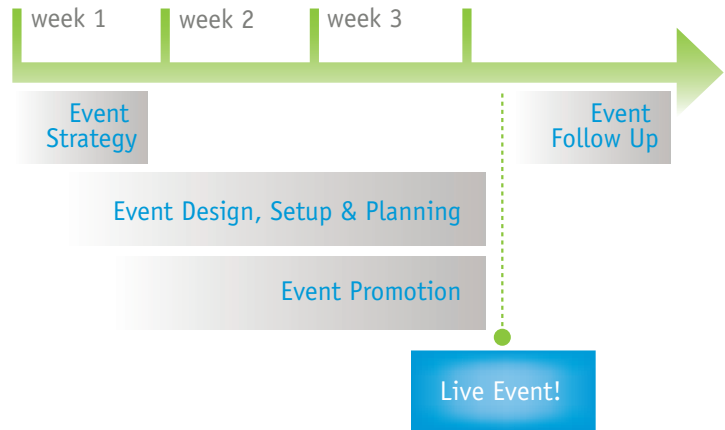
Post-Event Follow Up

- ✓ Optional: Convert Q&A into edited FAQ.
- ✓ Send automatic event follow-up e-mails to both attendees and non-attendees.
- ✓ Export your customized event report data, prioritizing leads for your sales force.
- ✓ Optional: Edit your event recording to remove “live” foibles and remove extraneous information that is not pertinent to on-demand format.
- ✓ Post the event recording file with its own enrollment questions to gather more leads going forward.
- ✓ Draw on your post event reports to continue to communicate, and convert, attendees to customers.
- ✓ Measure which lead sources yielded highest enrollment, attendance, and requests for 1:1 consultation or sales.
- ✓ Hold more events, further amortizing startup costs, and adding experience-based refinements for even better ROI.



Tips for When You're in a Hurry

Depending on your circumstances, you may need to conduct an event on less than the six weeks notice suggested in the previous section. In general, the more experienced you are at conducting online marketing events, the faster you can determine your strategy, setup your event, and initiate promotion, cutting your lead time.



Situations Where Fast-tracking Makes Sense:

- If you are repeating an event you have conducted before, you can go straight to designing your promotion and initiating your promotional campaign. This can reduce lead-time to about 3 weeks.
- If you are promoting an event to a “friendly” audience (e.g., customers, partners, association members who know you, etc.) you may get by on less than 3 weeks promotion time. Bear in mind though, most people book their calendar 1+ weeks ahead, so the less lead-time you give, the less likely it is that they will be available.
- You can shorten the design & setup phase if you repurpose the setup details of a previous event.
- If you are planning a series of related events as a single program, they can share a single strategy phase, design & setup phase, and event promotion phase. The events themselves can be days or even hours apart.



Short Lead-Time Tips

- Choose promotional vehicles where your message is delivered fast, to give your invitees suitable advance notice.
- Be realistic about your resources. If you don't have the cycles to optimize every part of the event process, focus on your areas of greatest strength and where you get the highest yield of attendees.
- Divide and conquer. If you can recruit creative or logistical talent from any group in your organization that stands to gain from a successful event, you may be able to race through the strategy and setup phases more quickly.
- Bring in a hired gun. WebEx Production Services may be able to help you achieve your goals on a short lead-time and ensure a smooth experience for your speakers and attendees.

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