



# Increasing HR Effectiveness with Online Events

*How to reach more employees while maximizing  
budgets and personnel resources*

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## Introduction

The challenges facing today's human resources departments couldn't have been predicted – or even imagined – less than a decade ago. Far from being looked upon as just the “personnel department,” HR is now recognized as an area of strategic importance in the corporate structure, with a secure place at the executive table.

Along with this increased credibility and visibility has come even greater demands ranging from creating and updating benefits programs, ensuring compliance with government regulations, and settling disputes – to setting new policies in performance measurement, compensation and employee training. Moreover, as organizations become even more geographically dispersed, HR finds itself addressing these issues in more and more remote locations all over the world.

In recent years, a growing priority for HR departments has been the development and delivery of comprehensive employee information and education on policies, procedures and regulations which can impact divisions, departments, individuals – and the entire company culture as a whole. This can be a daunting task at a time when HR directors are already burdened with tight budgets and limited personnel. In the days when most businesses operated from a single location, seminars and classes could be planned and executed without a great deal of difficulty or inconvenience. Attendees might have been out of the office for a day, but the disruption to their jobs was minimal and there was virtually no travel expense involved.

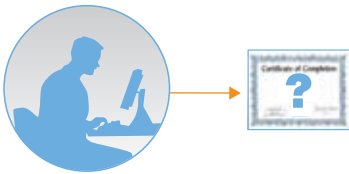
However, in today's evolving business landscape, HR has been forced to come up with more effective and affordable methods of delivering timely information to a workforce that's spread all over the globe. Not only has bringing geographically dispersed people in for education and training become exorbitantly expensive, but sending the experts to remote offices has presented its own set of problems, since they must travel long distances at company expense and attempt to host events that accommodate very different schedules and demands.

Nowhere is this issue more felt than in the area of federal and state regulations, where 100 percent compliance is now mandated. Given the pace of business today, it is virtually impossible to ensure that all employees will be able to attend live seminars and classes. Consequently, event leaders find themselves investing additional time and money to conduct one-on-one sessions with individuals in order to meet stringent government requirements.



## A Need for Traditional Classroom Alternatives

HR directors and managers today need viable alternatives to traditional information delivery and education. The challenge is to develop and deliver programs that are as effective as in-person events, but do not come with the cost and disruption those events have traditionally entailed. They must be scaled to keep pace with demand, as the rate of new company process updates and policy changes often outstrip the HR department's capacity and budget. They must be delivered in a timely fashion in order to meet mandates, but do so without negatively impacting individual productivity. And, they must grab and keep participants' attention in order to ensure that they retain the materials and messages presented to them. That's a tall order to fill.



*Just clicking through training modules answering questions is inadequate for certification in many areas.*

To meet these demands, many organizations over the past 10 years have turned to e-learning programs as an alternative to live presentations. However, these programs have proven themselves to be less than adequate substitutes. Because participants miss out on the live interaction that is necessary to engage their attention, they often fail to retain the material presented in the programs. In critical compliance issues such as sexual harassment, receiving a certificate stating that the participant has successfully completed a program after spending two hours clicking through questions and answers is not only inadequate, but it can cost the company in future claims.

“Certification by an e-learning program is not compliance,” says Doug Frazier, CEO of Parachute, a California company providing workforce management tools and resources for individuals, small businesses and corporations. “More importantly, these programs do nothing to effect real change in the workplace. Companies that use them check the box for compliance because they can legitimately say that they’ve made their managers and other employees aware of the issue. They buy liability coverage from a low-cost provider and think the problem has been addressed. But they aren’t changing the way people behave, so next year they could easily see claims increasing by 20 or 30 percent.”

Parachute is among an increasing number of companies turning to online seminars (“web seminars”) to educate their employees. Unlike e-learning programs, these technologically advanced alternatives deliver the critical factors of live presentations— getting and holding attendee’s attention, engaging participants, encouraging them to take action and increasing their retention – with the additional benefit of consistent information delivery in a convenient, cost-effective vehicle. Accomplishing the same goals as traditional in-person presentations, web seminars allow companies to reach more employees more quickly, thereby maximizing budgets and personnel resources while minimizing loss of time and individual productivity.



*Strict new laws require companies to provide certain training. Delivering live training online makes it easier and more affordable to comply.*

## Complying with Stricter Government Standards

The solution is bringing relief to a growing number of HR directors and managers who are tasked with attaining compliance certification. Today, virtually all companies with 50 or more employees are held to strict mandatory federal and state compliance standards. In the sensitive and potentially damaging area of sexual harassment, legislation has been passed in three states – California, Maine and Connecticut – requiring corporate supervisors in companies with more than 50 employees to undergo two hours of sexual harassment prevention training every two years.

Consider, for example, a company with only two staff trainers charged with developing and delivering compliance instruction for supervisors in 68 offices across the U.S. In a situation like this, live, in-person training would require several months and a high price tag to deliver. However, this company could utilize a comprehensive web seminar and accomplish the same goal in three to four weeks. Instead of leaving the office and job responsibilities, supervisors can get the education they need without ever leaving their computers. Because sessions can be offered to accommodate their schedules – at their own computers – disruption of day-to-day work is minimized. And, online registration and reporting allows for more accurate attendance record keeping. Since no travel is required, budgets don't have to be stretched to meet additional expense.

## Event Center from WebEx Communications

While a number of technology leaders (including Microsoft) have developed and are currently marketing web seminars, companies like Dow Corning, Uniprise and Brach's Confections have found that one service that offers all the components they need to deliver critical employee information over the Internet: Event Center from WebEx Communications.

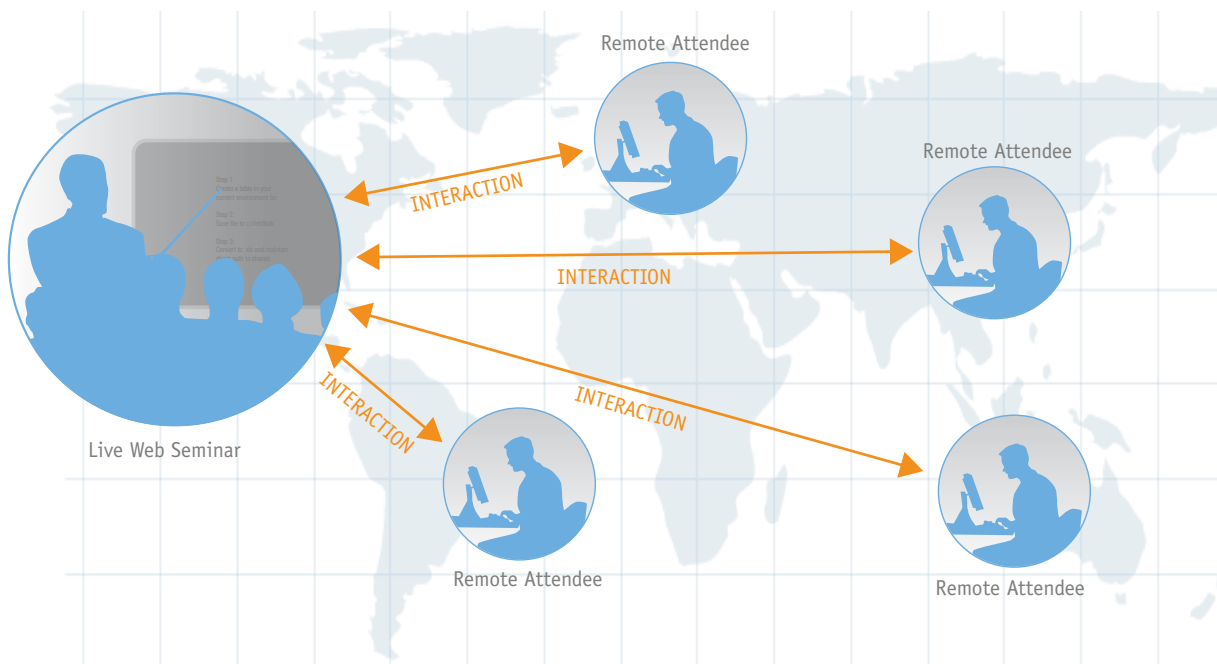
"WebEx Event Center is the only system out there that allows us to provide live, online productions using the advanced areas of film, radio and print," said Parachute's Frazier. "It fully addresses the three primary ways that people learn: seeing, listening and reading."



Of equal importance to Parachute is the consistency the Event Center programs bring to information delivery. With live, in-person presentations, each trainer has his or her own style and teaching method, so the same audience gets a different take on material depending upon the presenter. With Event Center, each participant is presented material in a clear, concise and identical way, leaving no room for individual interpretation.

“Especially with an issue like compliance, you must have consistent delivery of information,” Frazier points out. “If you’re ever questioned as to possible inaccuracies in the material or whether participants actually retained the information, the validation is right there.”

Frazier, whose previous company dealt with risk management in relation to natural disasters, sees enterprise risk management as the most compelling issue HR departments deal with today. He believes that a program which allows them to fully address that issue, with the ultimate goal of effecting change in the workplace, is one of the most valuable tools they have.



*During WebEx Event Center presentations people get information three ways: by seeing, listening, and reading.*



## Maximizing Budgets and Personnel Resources

Whether HR is hosting all-hands meetings, training employees on new policies and procedures, delivering compliance instruction or conducting open enrollment and employee benefit plan rollouts, WebEx Event Center can help them to maximize budgets and personnel resources. The robust product offers web seminar planners a full array of tools to develop both pre-and post-event details. These organizers can send automated notices and follow-up reminders of the event, register attendees online with customized forms and receive online confirmations.

*Using WebEx helps companies share complex information with geographically-dispersed employees quickly and conveniently.*

Uniprise, a division of the United Health Group, and the only company in the health care benefits industry organized solely around large employers, has taken advantage of online open enrollment and benefit plan rollouts via Event Center since 2003. According to Lisa Bukowski, Uniprise's director of consumer sales, it has enhanced her team's ability to effectively – and cost-effectively – deliver complex information on medical coverage options.

“In the past, we took our live presentations to customer locations to educate employees on their options,” states Bukowski, who works with customer HR departments in overseeing employee open enrollment meetings. “It was a very costly approach to informing people and in some cases, it wasn't always effective. We reviewed attendance at some of our benefit fairs and the cost to staff those events. We realized that perhaps there was a better way to reach these people than handing out literature and asking them to read it on their own time.”

Event Center proved to be as effective in reaching customers as it was for reaching participants in internal Uniprise meetings. As Bukowski explained, today's consumer-directed health care products are significantly more complex than traditional managed care offerings: consequently, the task of explaining benefits to employees in multiple sites around the country is a more difficult challenge. Event Center allows Bukowski's group to connect with and engage a broader audience than it could through onsite events, giving participants the information they need to make more informed decisions without requiring that they ever leave their desks.

WebEx developed Event Center with both that convenience and customer ease-of-use in mind – delivering the solution 'on demand' over its proprietary global MediaTone Network. Since no new hardware or software is required for use, planners can develop, implement and scale for small groups or large to participate in a wide variety of events. Boasting proven security via the combination of 128-bit SSL and AES encryption, Event Center ensures that events are both private and secure.



During a given event, participants are able to share documents, presentations and applications in real time through Flash 3D graphics and streaming video. Changes in the program and annotations can be made in seconds and the entire program can be recorded for future playback or company archives. The record feature is especially valuable in Brukowski's efforts.

"We can reach employees, their spouses and other family members who are involved in making decisions regarding health care coverage," she points out. "They can get the presentation online or listen to a recording later. It's logistically much harder to reach so many people in an onsite meeting."

## Presenting Timely Information in Real Time

*You can make presentations for small groups or groups of thousands via WebEx Event Center.*

WebEx Event Center offers a virtual auditorium that can accommodate a handful of supervisors for a small company or thousands for a Fortune 500 organization. Power panels can be employed to deliver full-screen view for participants and multiple expert panelists can take part from any location. And there's no need for bulky handouts, as document and application sharing allows data creation and annotation in real time. Finally, participants can take part in Q&A and chat sessions to increase individual interaction and retention.

WebEx Event Center can be a win-win from all perspectives. Companies can satisfy stringent compliance mandates without investing heavily in planning and resources to get supervisors to the seminars. Supervisors can receive their required instruction every two years without disrupting their jobs – and they have access to updated regulations online – which they can then pass along to their staffs. And employees can be educated on complex issues more effectively than they can be in live presentations. As a senior analyst with Wainhouse Research LLC put it, "These web-based presentations can reach many, many people at far lower costs than traditional methods. The benefits of online knowledge transfer include the ease with which companies can update, modify and distribute content out to the mass of employees."

WebEx Event Center was developed to ensure that users deliver issue-specific content in an online vehicle that offers all the advantages of a live, in-person event. While traditional education has long extolled the virtues of the three Rs – reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic – corporate education and training through Event Center achieves what Parachute's Frazier calls the five Cs: compliant, convenient, cost-effective, consistent and company-wide.



In addition to the benefits described above, Event Center also provides the following features:

**In-Session Alerts**—allows for quick response to participant needs even in full-screen mode

**Document and Application Sharing**—gives participants the ability to sketch on a white board in real time and both create and annotate data on the fly

**Multiple Panelists**—offers web seminar hosts the flexibility to bring in speakers from a variety of locations

**Polls and Surveys**—gives web seminar hosts a tool for measuring event effectiveness and gathering feedback for future events

**Record Edit and Playback**—provides web seminar hosts a tool to record events for reuse and review

**Cross-Platform Support**—makes the service available to attendees on Windows, Mac, Linux and Solaris operating systems

**Optional Production Services**—offers web seminar hosts help in supporting and managing events

These powerful capabilities can help HR departments develop equally powerful online seminars. As Frazier points out, Event Center makes it possible for users to accomplish online what in-person seminars were originally designed for: presenting critical information that participants take away with them and remember. Parachute uses Event Center's streaming video to create docu-dramas that engage participants emotionally, showing them how people can be hurt by sexual harassment. The radio format is utilized to produce interactive online web seminars that offer the opportunity to ask questions and get answers – which is the goal of compliance training. And, print information is presented online, which reinforces the message and increases retention.

Uniprise's Bukowski agrees with Frazier's assessment, adding that Event Center also gives its users the flexibility to handle large groups or smaller ones with equal effectiveness. While some of her events draw upwards of 250 participants, others are geared to groups of 20 or 30 – and both receive the same valuable information in a consistent format. Before implementing the WebEx technology, Bukowski states the costs of accommodating the smaller groups would have made a presentation to them prohibitive.



## Event Center—the Educating Method of Choice for GMAC

Online Seminars are now the cornerstone of GMAC Commercial Mortgage Corporation's (GMACCMC) employee education program. The organization started reaping the benefits of WebEx in 2000 when its Learning and Employee Development department utilized web seminars to educate employees in a company-wide rollout of a new time card system. Since that time, WebEx has become an integral part of the organization's culture.

"It took about six months before our employees knew about the advantages of web seminars," said Sandra Morris, VP of Learning and Employee Development. "Once we gave them the option of in-person training or online sessions via WebEx, the majority asked for online classes. They didn't want in-person training anymore."

Today, GMACCMC relies on WebEx for ongoing employee development efforts. It has been utilized to educate more than 1200 employees on a performance appraisal process over a four-week period and is the learning method of choice for remote employees in Asia and Europe. Morris pointed to the performance appraisal success with pride. "In the past, we actually had entire groups that never completed the appraisal process," she said. "WebEx allowed us to ensure performance levels company-wide and track those appraisals within our LMS."

Morris pointed out that her team is saving approximately \$3500 per trained employee annually by replacing traditional training seminars with online presentations through WebEx – more than \$12 million in savings per year – and she estimates that company-wide, the figure is double that amount. Qualitative benefits are equally impressive. According to Morris, virtually every GMACCMC employee now relies on WebEx to help them educate rapidly, communicate with team members quickly and perform their jobs more efficiently and productively. "We are slashing travel costs throughout organization," she reports. "There is no way we could have done all we've done without WebEx."

*GMAC Commercial Mortgage Corporation estimates that it is saving \$12 million a year by training via WebEx rather than in person.*



## Effecting Real Change in the Workplace

Web seminars like those offered by WebEx's Event Center are proving themselves to be effective – and preferred – alternatives to in-person education and learning. For human resources departments responsible for keeping company employees informed on key issues, they offer a timely, efficient, convenient and cost-effective approach that is not constrained by individual schedules or physical locations. With an eye to new government regulations and updates of existing mandates, web seminars offer organizations of all sizes a proven approach to education and training that has neither the budgetary limitations of in-person seminars nor the limitations of e-learning programs.

Delivering timely information and education to employees has become perhaps the most critical responsibility facing today's human resources departments. Whether a company has 50 employees or 50,000, a tool that allows its HR department to achieve the ultimate goal of changing workplace behavior for the better, through the information it presents to employees, can be the most powerful tool it has.

Parachute's Frazier sums it up best when he says, "HR departments in all industries are going to follow the lead of those companies already addressing the issue of enterprise risk management. This requires organizations to have a real understanding of risks, not only to facilities and brands and products, but to people. WebEx Event Center allows HR departments to effect real change in the workplace by getting people's attention, getting managers engaged, getting them to take action and increasing their retention."

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