

A photograph of two women sitting at a desk in an office. The woman on the left has dark curly hair and is wearing a blue sleeveless top. She is smiling and looking at a document. The woman on the right has long dark hair and is wearing a black and white patterned cardigan over a white top. She is also smiling and looking at the document. They appear to be in a collaborative meeting.

The modern marketer's online meeting primer

With the overwhelming amount of content bombarding everyone daily, marketers need a way to break through the clutter. This best practices guide looks at three meeting formats that smash through the noise and can help your business find more and better quality leads. The guide explores three formats:

- Webinars
- Product demonstrations
- Video conferences

With this modern marketer's online meeting primer, you'll have the best practices used by top marketers to turn leads into qualified sales opportunities and, ultimately, revenue.

Webinars: The foundation of your online meeting marketing strategy

Implisit, a provider of sales intelligence tools for customer relationship management systems, found that 17.8% of webinar leads converted to sales opportunities. That was better than any other communications channel besides company websites or referrals.ⁱ

Webinars should be the foundation of your online meeting strategy. Use creative webinar formats to present dynamic and engaging events that attract quality attendees.

Interview. In an interview format, assign one person as the interviewer and then one or more subject matter experts to be interviewed. This creates a lively and natural dialogue that grows organically out of the questions rather than from a scripted response. To make it work, keep these rules in mind:

- Have the interviewer and the interviewee meet early in the planning stage to develop the interview questions. They should revolve around pain points that apply to the audience and content that will take the discussion down a logical path.
- Incorporate polls at the beginning and near the end of the interview – and also consider one in the middle. Polls can help the presenters gauge audience subject knowledge and help them adjust the interview accordingly. They can also help assess where attendees are in the customer’s journey – whether they’re just trying to gather information, are evaluating solutions, or are ready to make a purchase.
- Use individual poll results to help qualify the leads and determine where they fit into your overall marketing strategy. For example, someone who is ready to buy should be passed straight to sales. Another attendee who may not be in the market for another 12 months should be placed into your nurture campaign.



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ⁱ eMarketer, [“For B2Bs, Webinars Are a Winning Tactic.”](#) June 5, 2015

Two-person presentation. For this webinar format, find two presenters with complementary subject knowledge. For example, you might pair an industry expert with a technical expert. The industry expert can kick off the webinar by exploring interesting and important industry trends and then hand it over to the technical expert to discuss what these trends mean for the attendees in their own businesses. When preparing for a two-person presentation, be sure to follow these guidelines:

- Have presenters practice their content until it flows logically and smoothly.
- Have presenters choreograph specific points in the presentation where they will trade off speaking. The more there is a back-and-forth in the presentation rather than one speaker taking a major chunk of time, the more engaging the presentation will be.
- As in the interview format, sprinkle polls throughout the presentation to gauge audience subject knowledge and stage in the customer's journey.

Panel discussion. If you have the resources, a panel discussion that includes a moderator, a company presenter, and one or more external experts and/or industry analysts makes for an exciting webinar event. A panel discussion should create a lively – maybe even boisterous – conversation that will keep attendees engaged. Here are some guidelines to help with webinar coordination:

- Seek differing viewpoints among your presenters. Friendly and courteous debate on a topic will make it come alive and engage attendees.
- Have the assigned moderator meet with all the presenters early in the planning stage to develop a series of questions that will loosely guide the discussion.
- Have different presenters field questions based on each person's special area of expertise, or have two or more presenters answer the same question for differing viewpoints.
- As with the other two formats discussed, don't forget to poll attendees for subject knowledge and stage in the purchase process.

Best practices for online meetings

Include a Q&A session. Have a moderator field questions and consider allowing questions throughout the webinar (a bit risky as the discussion can get sidetracked).

Record webinars for no-shows and for future campaign content.

Include a speaker slide with presenter names, titles, and photos.

Product demonstrations: A tour is worth a thousand words (or more)

One of the most powerful tools of online meeting solutions is application or screen sharing. If you're trying to manage travel costs, an online demonstration is the best way to show off what you can do without a trip to the prospect's office.

If you have a software product, then a live product tour is an obvious choice to help prospects understand its capabilities. If your product is tangible, you can take a physical tour using video or photos. If you offer a service, you might "tour" a photo gallery of users, places, your website, or whatever else helps in understanding what you offer.

Whatever your product or service, the demonstration should showcase its features, benefits, and processes. Show how easy it is to use. If possible, demonstrate savings or ROI by sharing a cost or ROI calculator live.

If you have a serious prospect, you can use whiteboarding – if it's an available feature – to brainstorm a custom solution for the prospect that specifically meets the business challenges he or she faces.

Always record your demonstrations. You can then offer them on-demand for your attendees or for other prospects.

If your online conferencing solution includes both application and screen sharing, make sure your presenters understand the difference. With application sharing, attendees won't be able to see those pesky pop-up notifications that appear on user screens, other open applications or websites, or incoming text messages. With screen sharing, attendees will see everything that happens on the presenter's screen.

In addition to taking prospects through product demonstrations, you can use this format to introduce existing customers and channel partners to new products or existing product enhancements.



With screen sharing, attendees will see everything that happens on the presenter's screen.

Video conferences: Make your events come alive

It's our human nature to desire interaction with others. And that's what a video conference delivers. Video conferences allow presenters to use voice, facial expression, and body language to convey messages powerfully and personally. While video conferencing may be incorporated into any online meeting, it works best when the video adds to the content. Here are some situations in which video conferencing works best by giving your meeting extra excitement:

- Press conferences where you want to invite journalists, bloggers, and other media reporters to make a major product or company announcement.
- Industry analyst meetings are similar to press conferences. Invite analysts to let them know about major announcements before you make a general announcement to the public.
- Customer events where you want to present information using an exclusive, invitation-only format to create buzz around your topic. Use these for your most loyal customers.

In all these events, video conferencing works especially well when you have your company executives or other well-known experts presenting. This allows your attendees to make a personal connection with these high-level people. It makes your attendees feel valued and special. Here, the messenger becomes as important as the message.

With video conferencing, the messenger becomes as important as the message.

For online meetings where video is a focal point, a town hall format can make your event more interactive. Following the presentation, the speaker can open up the meeting for attendee questions using chat or audio.

When using video, incorporate these top five best practices:

- 1 With multiple presenters, try using full-screen video to show everyone at once. For speakers in different locations, make sure they all have video turned on.
- 2 Have respected company executives present. Senior-level titles can increase registrations.
- 3 When sending email invitations, put “By Invitation Only” in the subject line to let attendees know they’re attending an exclusive event.
- 4 Enlist stakeholders throughout your organization to promote your event. Use all channels of traditional and social media to create buzz. During your event, encourage attendees to live tweet by providing a hashtag.
- 5 Record your event for those who can’t attend live. This is always a great way to extend the reach of your event to new audiences.

No matter what type of event you’re presenting, if your online meeting service provider offers it, consider production assistance if your event is complex, you’re new to this medium, or absolute polished perfectionism is essential.



A format for every stage of the customer's journey

Don't limit online events to one-off tactics. Develop a strategy that tracks your prospects through the awareness, evaluation, and preference stages of the customer's journey. Here's a sample path you can take using webinars, demonstrations, and video conferencing:

Stage 1: Thought leadership

In this stage, present webinars that create awareness. Don't talk about your own solutions. Instead, help prospects understand industry trends, challenges that they will face, or new developments they need to be aware of. In this stage, you're educating. Stay objective.

Stage 2: Available options

You're still not talking about your own products and services at this stage. Instead, you're presenting solutions in general terms. What categories do the solutions fall in? What are the pros and cons of each category? At this stage, you are implicitly introducing the value of your solution, but you're not being explicit yet.

Stage 3: Solutions

Now you're ready to talk specifics with your prospects. Help them learn what to look for in their solution options. You can begin to introduce your products and services and why they should be considered. Use webinars or video conferences at this stage.

Stage 4: Demonstrations

When prospects raise their hands and say they are now actively "in the market" for a solution, host product demonstration webinars. Limit attendance to these serious prospects.



Develop a strategy that tracks your prospects through the awareness, evaluation, and preference stages of the buyer's journey.

Conclusion

Live events generate buzz and help your marketing messages break through the clutter. Whether you use webinars, demonstrations, or video conferencing (or all three), take advantage of these best practices to create interactive, engaging online events that help you find not just more leads but better leads.

How WebEx can help

For successful online meetings, WebEx has all the tools you need. With a wide range of options for every business, you can have access to tools used by the best-in-class marketers, tools such as application sharing, high-quality video, whiteboarding, polling, recording, integrated broadcast-quality audio, a mobile app, and more. WebEx also offers the option of expert help from a WebEx producer before, during, and after your event. Perhaps even more important, WebEx offers you and your attendees an accessible and secure environment delivered over the Cisco WebEx Cloud.

If you're a fast-growing business, WebEx services scale to your needs, reach wherever you work, and deliver what's next for your business.

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WebEx services scale to your needs, reach wherever you work, and deliver what's next for your business. For more information on how WebEx services can increase productivity, reduce costs, and enhance engagement across your organization, visit webex.com or contact sales at **1.877.509.3239**.



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