leadliaison

How to Run a Webinar

White Paper

HOW TO RUN A WEBINAR

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Introduction

The concepts in this guide apply to any company planning a webinar.

Are You Ready for a Webinar?

You're probably reading this guide with the mindset that you are going to do a webinar. You've thought about the topic, decided your company is going to do it, and thought about the material to use; but - are you really ready for a webinar? Executing a successful webinar can be expensive, and requires a lot of preparation. Here are some things to consider before moving forward:

Expect Higher Attendance with:
1. **Strong audience connection.** If the audience already knows, likes and trusts you or they know, like and trust whoever is promoting the webinar then attendance will be much higher.
2. **Your opt-in database or cold audience.** Participation will be much higher when marketing to your own opt-in list vs. a "cold audience".
Low industry/topic saturation. If your industry or even the topic has been saturated with webinars expect a lower turnout.
3. **Hot topics.** If your subject matter is a hot topic right now that's pushed the audience's emotional hot buttons of pain, desire or curiosity, then you can expect a higher attendance rate.
4. **Big name involvement.** If you're going solo on the webinar, and don't have a lot of people to invite, it's a lot harder to drive attendance than having a co-presenter, as well as invite-support, from a big name company. For example, suppose you were a technology company with Google as your partner. Could you get a Google employee to co-present with you? Could Google help broadcast the event through their marketing channels thereby sending more people to your landing page? Your webinar will benefit from a big brand name, making it more attractive to your audience, with a larger pool of people to invite.
5. **A larger invitation list.** The quality of your invitation list is certainly a factor, but the size of your invite list matters as well. Inviting 50 people to a webinar is a lot different than inviting 50,000.

Let's be honest though. If you're a young company (startup) without much brand recognition, a database that's not quite "there" yet, and no partners to help with the event...you might still be able to pull off a good webinar with a few tricks. Try offering some incentive to get people to attend. Here are some ideas:
- ❏ Offer up a free white paper (worth $X)
- ❏ Provide a discount on your product/service if they attend
- ❏ Offer a giveaway for the first X number of registrants (think iPod, Chromebook, etc.)

Get Your Data Ready

Make sure you have a good database to start.

It's important to know the topic of your webinar and who it relates to. Don't invite people to a webinar when you know the topic would not be of interest to them. To maximize registrations, use your existing database of contacts with a focus on opt-in contacts. This could be customers, partners, or leads you've had any type of engagement with over the past year.

Determine criteria for who you'll invite.

Once you've got your database ready, gather criteria for who you'll invite. If you're sending out invitations to thousands of people you'll want a good marketing automation or email marketing solution to help you. Marketing automation platforms will help you easily segment out people using lists, demographics, behaviors, and other types of criteria. These systems also support dynamic segmentation. Dynamic segmentation helps you create rules for your lists that never have to be updated again. The same audience will be ready for you to send invites to for future webinars.

We suggest staying away from purchased lists if you're using a marketing automation or email marketing system. Most email service providers do not allow purchased lists as part of their email sending policy. There are services available to help you target certain industries and send out communication. Outsourced lists and invites should not be your core invite strategy, but could be used to complement your invite process.

Subscribe to a Webinar Service

We suggest using GoToWebinar from Citrix for running webinars, simply because the user experience is very similar to Citrix' GoToMeeting platform. As of July 2016, a little over 1 out of every 4 companies using webinar solutions in some capacity use GoToWebinar. This means the majority of your audience will be familiar with GoToWebinar, making it easier for them to join and participate in your event.

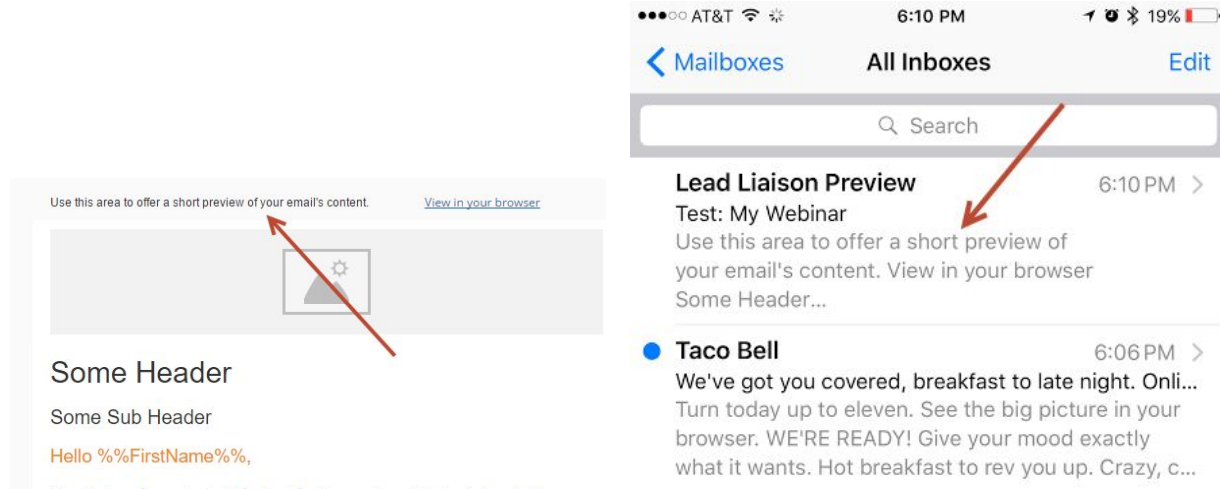| Top competitors	Market Share
GoToWebinar	26.02%
Webex (subdomains only)	13.39%
Adobe Connect	6.61%
ON24	5.4%
Brighttalk	2.44%
Zoom	2.17%

Source: Datanyze (www.datanyze.com), 2016

Define Your Webinar Invite Process

Once you've got your data ready and your target audience defined, it's time to start putting together a process for inviting people. We propose the invitation process below. The process sends out three invitation emails to your database. The second and third emails are sent out to people that did not open or click previous invite emails.
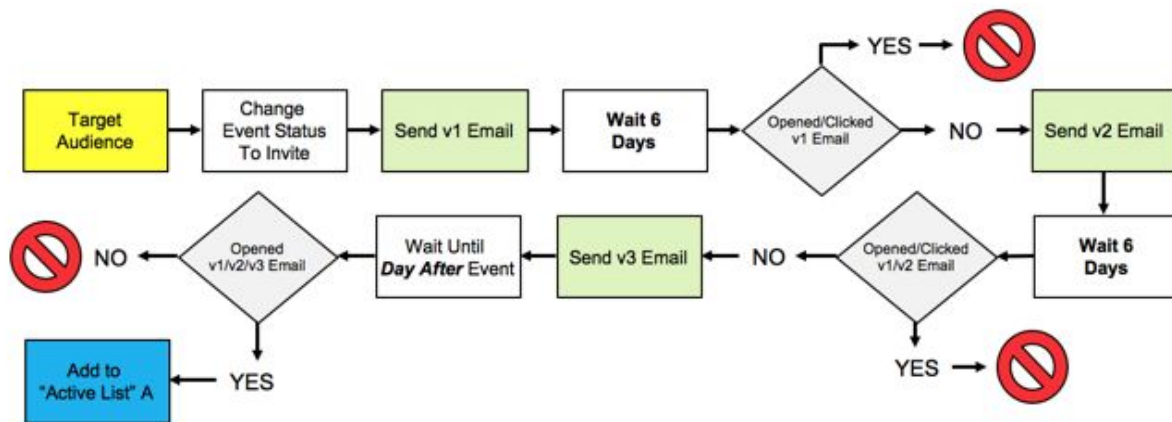
Make sure to vary your "preview text" for each invitation email. In your marketing automation software, you should have an option to enter in some preview text in the email builder. The preview text is usually at the upper left side of the email in small text. It's what shows up in the preview pane of the recipient's email inbox. They'll usually see anywhere from 1 to 3 lines of text in their preview depending on their settings. With more than half of all emails getting opened and read on mobile devices, it's critical to have a compelling preview text. Use different preview text verbiage for each of your three invite emails. The screenshots below show how the preview text should look in your email builder (left) and in the preview pane on an iPhone (right).

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After the event is over, we add recipients who opened the email into an "Active List".

As an optional step, you could email everyone that opened any of your three invite emails but did not register for the event. We suggest sending this email the day before the event.

Define Your Webinar Registration Process

This is the process people will go through once they register for your event. As shown in yellow below, there are two ways to register participants. Through the event provider, such as GoToWebinar, or via your marketing automation system. If using the marketing automation system, create a web form and landing page in the platform. There are a number of advantages for creating the form and landing page in a marketing automation system. Some of those advantages include the ability to build a smart form with
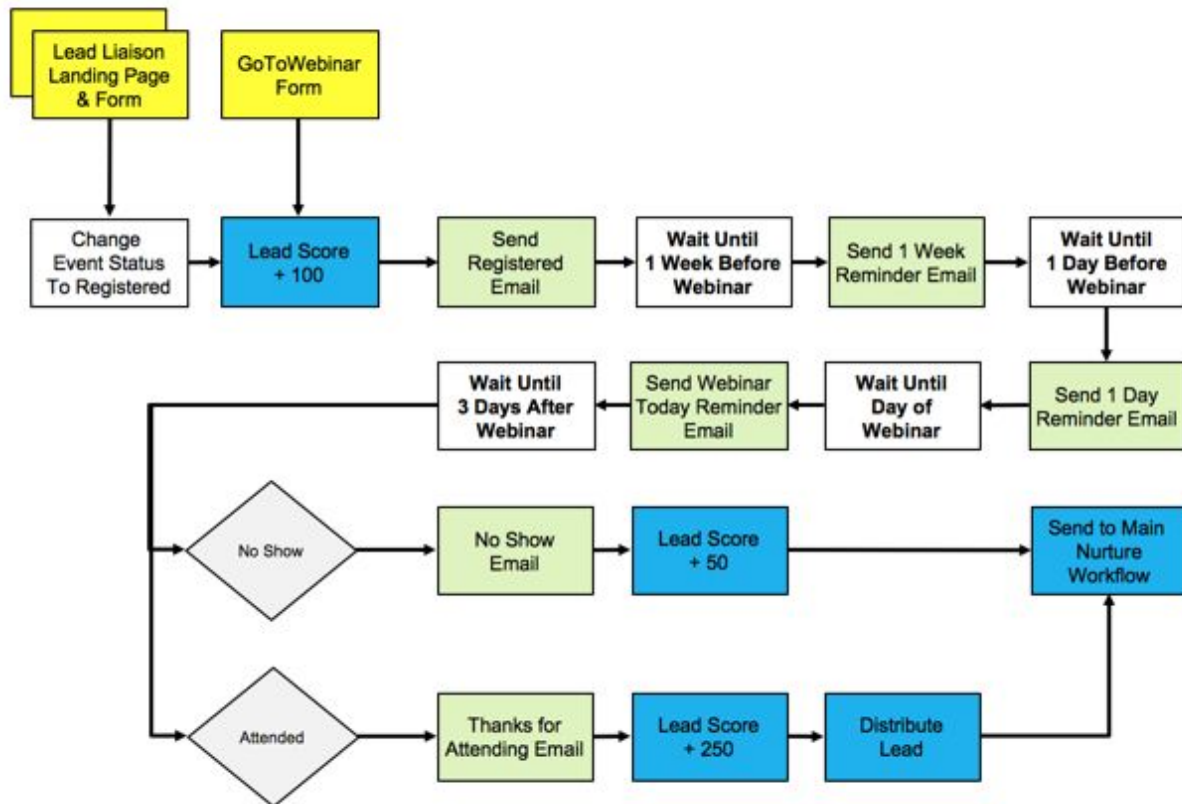
progressive profiling, deeply customize your landing page, style your web form to your liking, and control all of the branding. Data also gets injected directly into the marketing automation system, which can be used for future marketing purposes.

In the diagram below, the steps in green require your company to create email content for each step. With the invite process, there are nine (9) emails in total. All emails should use your standard template though, which will be recognizable to recipients and prevent them from marking your email as spam.

Leading up to the event, most of the messages are reminders. Don't forgot to include a shortcut for the user to add the event to their calendar of choice (Outlook, Google, etc.) in your thank you for registering and reminder emails. We like using AddToCalendar for this. Once the event is over wait a few days for data to be collected and send a follow up to people that registered and showed up, with a separate follow up for people that didn't show up.

Your marketing automation system will help you capture this data and configure the process from start to finish - ahead of time. This can be a relief to most companies. The stress of running a webinar increases around the time of the event. If your processes are setup and scheduled ahead of time you'll have more peace of mind, more time to get things done, and more time to focus on your webinar content and execution. All administrative and marketing tasks will be handled by the system!

Have a Marketing Automation System in Place

A marketing automation system can help you automate your webinar and create a repeatable model to use for future webinars. Marketing automation is used to manage the Invite, Registration, and Follow Up Processes. It can also help:

- Qualify prospects based on their participation in the event
- Log their status (no show, registered, etc.) with the event to use for future targeting
- Automatically create a Prospect in your database
- Nurture Prospects that attend or do not show up for the event
- Automatically sync leads into your CRM system, such as Salesforce.com
- Track landing page conversion rates and email statistics
- Keep everything in one place (folders)
- Measure ROI of the webinar, including cost per lead
- Ensure a repeatable process (cloning) that can be fine-tuned over time

Promote the Webinar

Don't rely solely on emails as the gateway to webinar success! Your target database is just one of the ways you can get people to attend your webinar. Think out of the box, get help from companies in your network, and promote the event through other channels. Here are some suggestions to maximize promotion of your event:

- ❏ Issue a Press Release at least two (2) weeks prior to the webinar. Make sure to include a link to your webinar registration landing page in the Press Release. The Press Release will also give you a little SEO boost on the topic. Here are some tips from a 3rd party on how to write your press release. Here's an example of a company doing a press release on their webinar.
- ❏ Consider getting help from your partners to announce the webinar to their database and send prospects to the same registration page.
- ❏ Don't forget to invite your customers!
- ❏ What about your partners? Don't forget them either!
- ❏ Hire a list broker who can send out email (through their resources) to drive contacts to the same registration page.
- ❏ Post the webinar on social media. Your marketing automation system should offer a way to schedule posts. Spread out your posts leading up to the event.
- ❏ Create a handful of blog posts on the topic leading up to the event.

Build a Compelling Landing Page

Your marketing automation system should have some great tools in place to help you build a landing page and web form that's styled and customized to fit the look and feel of your brand. Here are a few ways you can make a compelling landing page:

- Keep your communication succinct and list out the three benefits to joining the webinar (what you'll learn).
- If the presenters are well known, consider putting a picture of the presenter on the page to personalize the event.
- If you're offering an incentive, make it clear to the user what that incentive is.
- Keep the focus on the page, and converting the visitor. Don't put other things like your website navigation menu or other links that could divert the user's attention.

Build a Great "Thank You" Page

Similar to the landing page, you want the Thank You Page to be simple, with an easy way for the user to add the event to their calendar. Add a "add to calendar" button with instructions on how to add the event straight to their calendar. AddToCalendar has some neat tools to create buttons and links for this purpose. After the registration form is

submitted, make sure to send a thank you email. All of this will increase your attendance rate.

Pre-Webinar Bonding

If possible, create further short pieces of content that cover any possible objections and start building more trust with registrants. This can be drip fed via email before the webinar. This content could be short videos or articles or just a nice webinar cheat sheet to download and print off before the webinar. Your marketing automation software can help you build a simple drip track for new registrants prepping them for the event.

You could also elicit feedback from people who have registered. Ask for input on what attendees would like for you to take extra time on, so that you're prepared to give an insightful and relevant presentation. This can also be managed in your marketing automation platform in the form of a landing page hosting a form or questionnaire.

Engage with Participants During the Webinar

In the Webinar Itself

It's even more important to engage with your webinar attendees once they join. GoToWebinar, for example, allows for polls, handouts, live chatting, and questions. Prepare a few polls ahead of time, and upload them to your webinar settings. These polls could range from "getting to know your audience" topics (ex: "How many of you are familiar with today's webinar topic?") to polls that set your audience up for understanding why they need to know the information that you will present (ex: "Are you able to nurture your leads?").

Upload handouts to help drive your points home, or allow for participants to have something to take back to their colleagues. Q & A sessions are extremely helpful in making sure no one leaves with any unanswered questions.

On Social Media

It's always a great idea to come up with a hashtag for your webinar, so that attendees can engage with you on social media before, during, and after the live event. Make sure you have someone monitoring that hashtag so that posts are addressed promptly.

In addition to live-posting, prepare a few posts ahead of time. Those posts can further drive home important points that you plan to make during the webinar. Just make sure to include your hashtag and mention any partners in your response to increase visibility.

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Follow Up

Make sure to follow up with attendees and no shows once the event is over. We suggest doing so three (3) days after the event. In your follow up, include a video recording of the webinar. Put it into an email, but only include an image of the video. When clicked, the recipient should be taken to a landing page, separate from your registration page, where they can play the video. Separating your follow up page from your registration page will help you isolate statistics and get better tracking from your marketing automation system. This is especially handy for people that couldn't attend the event as they can watch the video later at their convenience.

Here are a few other post-webinar items you might want to consider:
- ❏ Issue a press release highlighting the success of your webinar, disclosing valuable data that you collected via polls (ex: 86% of attendees were familiar with marketing automation), and even providing a quote from a happy attendee.
- ❏ Place follow-up phone calls to those that attended. Ask what they liked or disliked.
- ❏ Place those that registered into a nurture campaign specific to the webinar topic.

Syndicate Webinar Content

You've invested a ton of time planning and preparing for your event. Make sure you get the most out of your investment by syndicating your content. Syndication means taking the content and reformatting it to fit other mediums or marketing channels. For example, take your webinar recording and:

- ❏ Have the video transcribed. We suggest using Upwork to hire someone to transcribe your video. It's super affordable and worth the money!
- ❏ Format the transcription into a white paper. Place the white paper on your website as Trackable Content in your marketing automation system and gate the content.
- ❏ Put your video on an internet video hosting and analytics company like Wistia, embed it in your website, and gate the video.
- ❏ Break down the white paper into smaller blog posts. Schedule the blog posts using your CMS.
- ❏ Include the video, whitepaper, and any other related tools or documents in a downloadable "kit", which is a fantastic lead generation strategy. Prospects are more inclined to give you their email address in exchange for lots of value.
- ❏ Put the webinar recording in a "Resources" section on your website.

What to Expect

Attendance depends on the factors described in the beginning of this document. About 40-60% of registrants will show up for live viewings, but you can expect more registrants to trickle in and watch on demand over the next few days following your webinar.