

Using Webinars as a Business Development Tool

You can use webinars to demonstrate your expertise to your existing network of contacts and to reach new contacts. Professional service firms are doing webinars (Deloitte shows on its website 27 webinars it has done in the last month), and you can consider them in your business development mix.

This month's edition is a very brief introduction to this increasingly popular approach.

By webinar, we mean an online presentation, ideally with some interactive elements, that lasts 30-60 minutes. You recruit the audience with an email and social media campaign. In business development, the goal is usually many simultaneous touchpoints with existing contacts (that are valuable to the contact) and/or lead generation.

Why do a webinar?

Webinars let you demonstrate your knowledge, and be somewhat responsive to the needs of the audience. Webinars also provide leads that you can follow up on. You can talk to (and to some degree with) many people at the same time, and do it all from one location. While potential benefits are many, it's important to know exactly why you are doing a particular webinar -- who is the audience, how they will benefit, and how you will benefit.

It's a big and challenging task to recruit an audience, so you need a good topic...

Good topics will help you get the most from your outreach efforts. Good topics:

- Address pressing needs for audience members
- Provide practical knowledge. Case studies, presented in partnership with a successful client are a good way to show that your approach is practical
- Lend themselves to stories, not lectures (because people love stories and remember stories, and you want to be remembered)

... and an excellent recruitment strategy and process

Who to invite

Your recruiting strategy is critical. You can recruit people from lists you have, lists you can access, and social media.

You/ your firm have a list of contacts. You can invite them. If you've been doing [marketing automation](#) then you've been growing your list, and webinars can both build on and contribute to that list building.

You can also consider partnering to do the webinar, and use your partner's lists as well. Perhaps an industry association would co-promote the webinar to its members. Or a practitioner in a related field would send to his/her contacts. You can also buy email addresses of target attendees (with some care required about how you use those names to avoid legal and technical challenges). And there are even firms to whom you can outsource audience recruitment.

You can promote on social media via LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook, as well as any other online groups where potential audience members participate. In these places, you need to honor the relevant customs about how much promotion you can do vs. contributing to a discussion, but you can do some promotion.

How to invite people

The offer, via email or a landing page for social media, needs to be clear and explain how the participant will benefit. With email, plan multiple emails to each name, because people won't say "yes" the first time.

When people register for the webinar, you have a chance to get some information about them, which can help you shape your presentation.

And when people do say "yes," you need to have planned follow-ups to remind them, or they'll forget to come (despite their best intentions)

Follow up after the webinar

It's critical to be ready (and have a plan and the resources) to follow up after the webinar. People have spent a lot of time with you; you have a golden (and fleeting) opportunity to engage with them about their experience. If you can qualify the attendees, e.g., by industry or title, then you can perhaps focus who you talk with. Have a plan to talk with the qualified attendees and to get some mileage out of talking to the less qualified (e.g., a referral to a better contact at their organization) if you cannot easily separate them out without talking with them.

What we haven't talked about

Among other topics we haven't touched on:

- Deciding on the presentation, e.g., number of presenters, style, content, interaction
- The team to support you
- Technological issues, e.g., what platform to use
- Rehearsing for and managing your performance (and it is a performance)

These may be a suitable topics for future editions.

To learn more

If you want to learn more, two good sources are:

- [Managing the Webinar Life Cycle from Start to Finish](#)
- [3 Tips for Great Law Firm Webinars](#)

What to do this week

To see if webinars might be for for you, start by checking out what some professionals and firms in your field are doing. See what you like and don't like.

The following week, think about what you know, and the material you already have, and imagine whether you could see a webinar emerging. What are you thinking about audience attraction approaches? What else would you like to know?