

Top 10 Webinar Best Practices

An Osterman Research White Paper



Introduction

This document presents the results of two surveys that were conducted by Osterman Research for Citrix Systems. The first survey, conducted with organizations that conduct Webinars, was completed with 60 respondents; the second survey, conducted with individuals in small, mid-sized and large organizations, was completed with 170 respondents.

The goals of this research were:

- To understand current practices among organizations that conduct Webinars.
- To understand the needs and desires of Webinar attendees so that Webinar organizers can adjust their current practices to better meet the needs of prospective customers and others who attend these events.

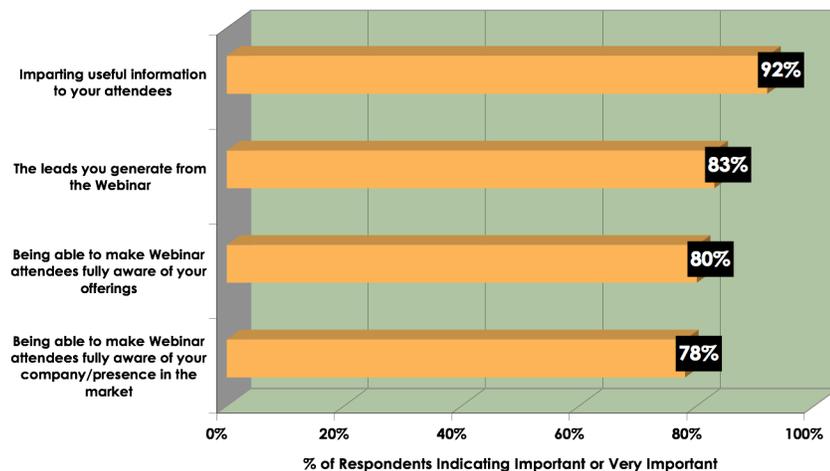
The surveys were conducted with members of the Osterman Research survey panel. Only respondents in North America were chosen for this research.

Webinar Demand Drivers

There are a variety of reasons for organizations to conduct Webinars. As shown below, among the important or very important reasons for companies to conduct Webinars are providing useful information to attendees of the events, generating leads and making attendees aware of their products or services.

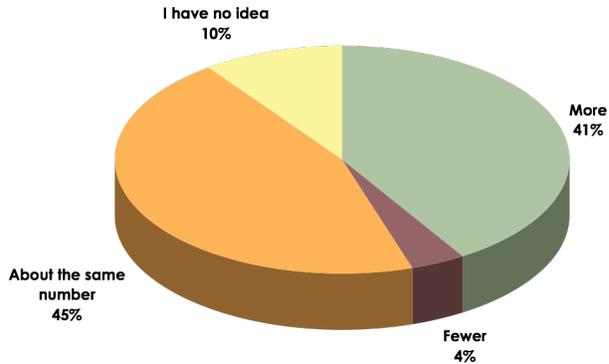
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Importance of Various Aspects in Hosting Webinars



The vast majority of individuals plan to attend at least as many or more Webinars in the year following when this survey was conducted – as shown in the following figure, two out of five individuals plan to attend more Webinars, while only 4% plan to attend fewer such events.

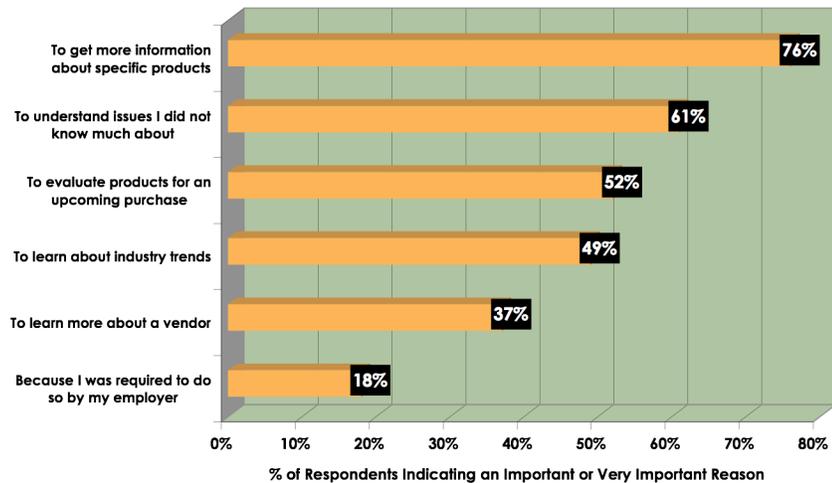
Individuals' Plans for Attending Webinars During the Next 12 Months



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Reasons That Individuals Attend Webinars



Top 10 Webinar Best Practices

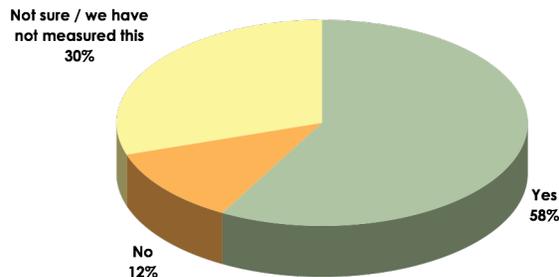
Osterman Research has identified 12 best practices for hosting Webinars. While these practices will not apply to every organization or all types of Webinars, they provide some useful guidelines that all current or prospective Webinar providers should consider.

1. Use Guest Speakers

Having guest speakers at a Webinar is clearly one of the leading best practices when it comes to improving attendance rates. The following figure shows that about three out five Webinar sponsors find that having guest speakers improves attendance rates, while only about one-fifth as many find that guest speakers do not improve Webinar attendance. Most Webinars do not have more than one featured speaker despite the effectiveness of this approach in generating interest and attendance at Webinar events.

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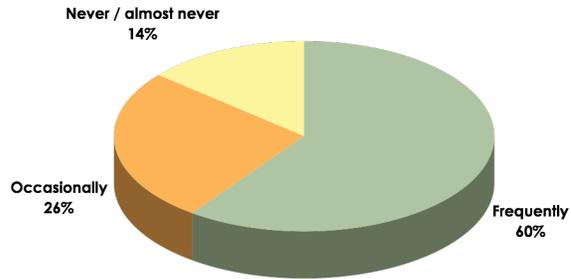
Do Attendance Rates Improve When Including Guest Speakers?



2. Plan a Rehearsal of the Webinar

Rehearsals in advance of a live Webinar session are another best practice followed by the majority of Webinar sponsors – the vast majority of these sponsors hold these rehearsals at least occasionally, although most do so for most of the Webinars they conduct.

When You Include Guest Speakers in Your Webinars, How Often Do You Run a Rehearsal Session for the Webinar in Advance?

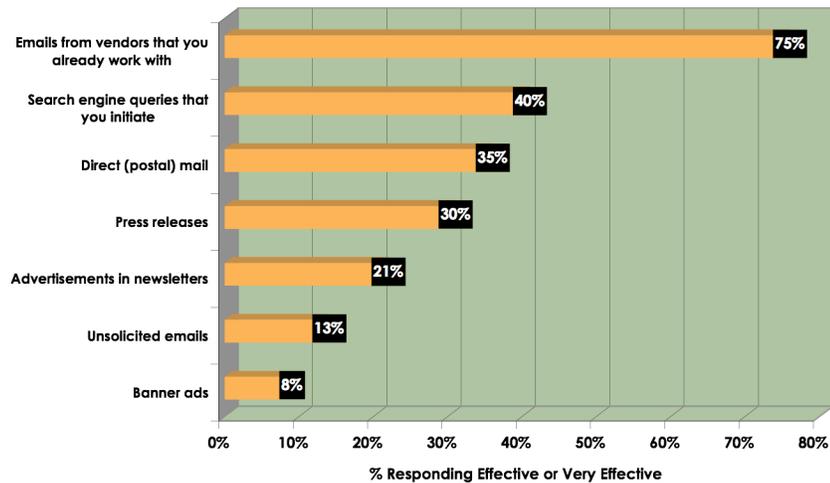


3. Promote the Webinar in advance

One of the important, yet fairly difficult, aspects of conducting Webinars is getting the vast majority of registrants to attend the event itself. The most effective method for generating interest and signups in a Webinar is for current vendors to send email to their customers requesting their attendance at the event. Much less effective, but still worthwhile, methods include search engine inquiries initiated by prospective Webinar attendees, direct mail pieces and press releases.

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Effectiveness of Various Methods for Advertising Webinars

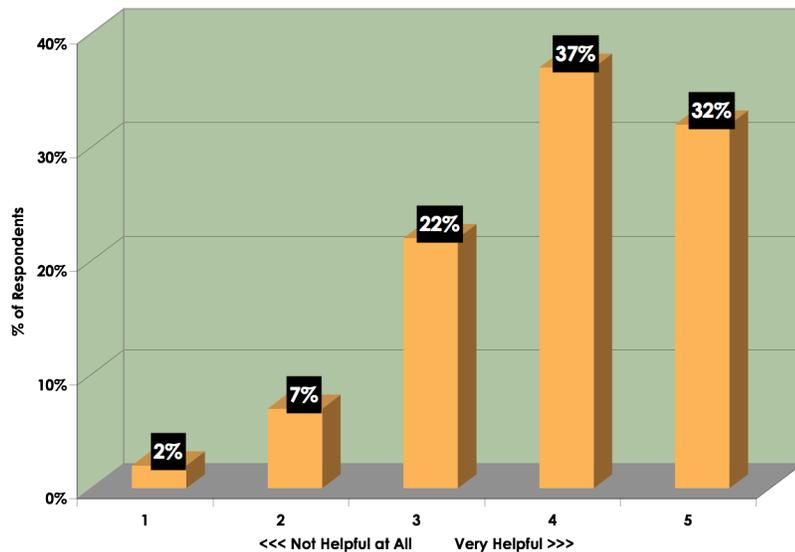


4. Obtain Registrants' Profile Information

The vast majority of Webinar sponsors find it helpful or very helpful to have information on registrants' profiles in advance of the event in order to be able to customize the content of the Webinar. This is an important, if not critical, best practice, since it allows content to be more closely matched to the specific needs of the audience, ensuring that the Webinar is as relevant as possible for attendees.

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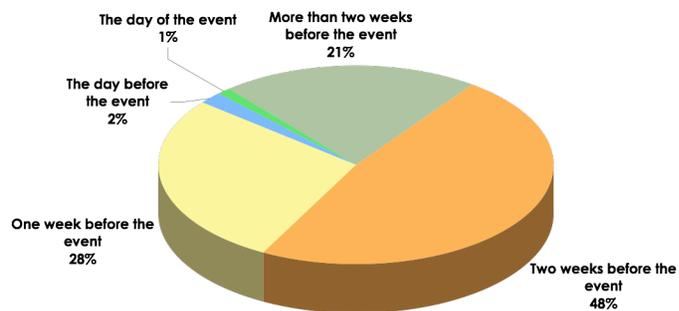
Helpfulness of Having a Preview of Registrants' Profile in Customizing Webinar Content



5. Send Invitations At Least One to Two Weeks in Advance

The vast majority of Webinar attendees prefer to receive invitations a week or two prior to the event itself, while about one in five attendees prefer longer notice.

How Much Advance Notice Do Attendees Prefer When Receiving Webinar Invitations?



6. Limit Most Webinars to One Hour

Our research has found that median length of a Webinar is 60 minutes, although certain types of Webinars, such as those conducted for in-house training, last longer.

However, it is typically considered a best practice to limit the length of a marketing or similar Webinar to 60 minutes in order to allow a minimum of disruption for attendees.

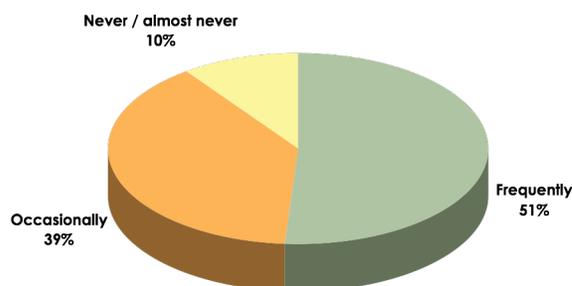
Our research has also found that Webinars open up for attendees a median of 15 minutes prior to the event. This allows attendees time to test the audio connection and Webinar interface, to download any needed software for the Webinar interface or to iron out any technical difficulties that might arise. It is important for Webinar sponsors to have someone available to field questions and to resolve technical difficulties – including last minute sending out of access instructions – during this pre-Webinar period.

The question-and-answer functionality provided by most Webinar interfaces is used frequently by about one-half of Webinar attendees and occasionally by most of the rest of attendees.

7. Provide Time for Q&A

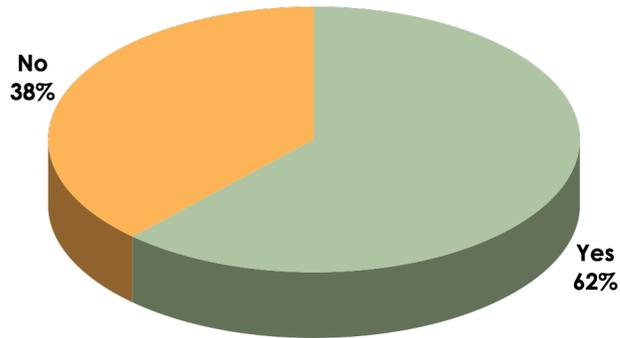
The question-and-answer functionality provided by most Webinar interfaces is used frequently by about one-half of Webinar attendees and occasionally by most of the rest of attendees. Only one in 10 attendees rarely or never uses the question-and-answer function, underscoring the importance of providing this function and monitoring it closely during a Webinar.

How Often Do Webinar Attendees Use the Question-and-Answer Function During Webinars?



Most Webinar attendees have asked a question of presenters using the Web interface's chat function. This is an important tool for attendees, since many Webinars do not permit voice communications between presenters and attendees.

When Attending a Live Webinar, Have You Asked the Presenter a Question Using the Chat Function?

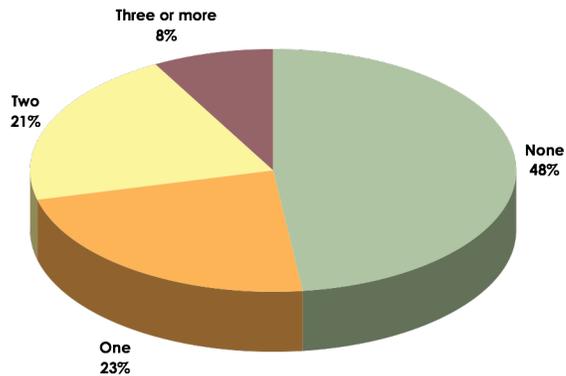


Polls are an important mechanism for soliciting feedback from attendees, either to keep attendees engaged in the event and/or to tailor content to the specific needs of the audience 'on the fly'.

8. Conduct Polls During the Event

Most Webinar sponsors conduct at least one poll during their events, although nearly one-half do not do so. Polls are an important mechanism for soliciting feedback from attendees, either to keep attendees engaged in the event and/or to tailor content to the specific needs of the audience 'on the fly'.

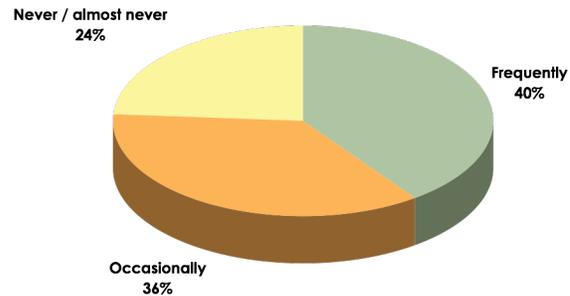
Numbers of Polls Conducted During Webinars



9. **Conduct Product Demonstrations**

Most Webinar sponsors conduct product demonstrations during their events at least occasionally, although about one in four rarely or never do so.

Frequency With Which Product Demonstrations are Conducted During Webinars

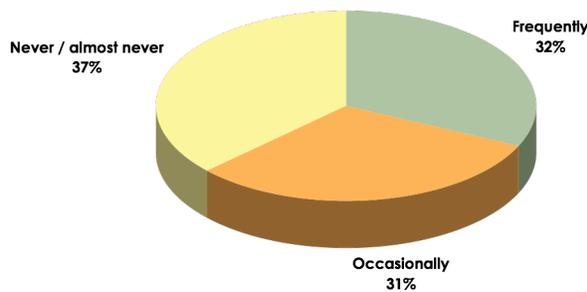


Most Webinar sponsors conduct post-event surveys of the individuals who attend their events, although more than one-third of sponsors rarely, if ever, conduct these types of surveys.

10. **Conduct Post-Event Surveys**

Most Webinar sponsors conduct post-event surveys of the individuals who attend their events, although more than one-third of sponsors rarely, if ever, conduct these types of surveys. These surveys are a useful to gain feedback on the event itself, and to provide additional information for use in sales calls, future Webinars, etc.

Frequency With Which Post-Webinar Surveys are Conducted



Summary

Webinars are a very effective and inexpensive method for imparting information, whether the goal is to market to prospective customers or to train employees. There are a variety of relatively simple best practices that any organizations should consider implementing during a Webinar. These practices can dramatically improve the effectiveness of Webinars and provide much greater return for very little extra effort.

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