MINI GUIDE TO WINNING WEBINARS

The top 5 webinar frustrations and how to overcome them

Introduction

When it became impossible to hold live events, webinars emerged as the new normal. They help us to stay connected with customers and prospects, and carry on our business. In fact, there are many advantages to webinars and they can be a positive choice, not only as a temporary replacement of a physical event. Without the restrictions of a physical venue, more guests can participate, and you remove costs associated with a physical activity. Yet the skills required in organising a successful webinar are quite different to those needed in organising a physical event.

Many marketeers are still refining their approach and discovering what works. In this guide, we take a look at the 5 most common frustrations and offer some tips on how to resolve them efficiently and effectively to produce a winning webinar.

Frustration 1: No shows

There's hardly anything more frustrating than organising a wonderful webinar only to suffer low attendance, see people drop out along the way, or entertain inappropriate guests. If this sounds familiar, you're not alone! Although it's true that no shows are more common with online events, there are also some easy and efficient ways to take control and get the guests you really deserve. Read on to discover how.

Match your content with your guests
Lacking the physical restrictions of a venue, there are actually no restrictions to the number of people you can invite to your webinar. This means it can even be a great opportunity to invite suppliers or ambassadors, or a new target audience you've been watching for a while. Whoever you decide to invite, if you want them to sign up, show up and stay engaged, it's very important to match your content with your audience. Get it wrong and they'll be more likely to let you down. Achieving the perfect match means good targeting. This requires a proper understanding of the audience, and then aligning your input.

Data integrated from other platforms, such as your CRM, is a rich source of information, and can guide you in knowing who's interested in which topics, as well as highlight serial non-attenders.

Start on time

If you want the right guests to attend, you'll need to start early with a save the date, so they make room in their busy agendas. Then keep them committed to setting time aside for the forthcoming webinar with appropriate reminders. Meanwhile, you'll have the opportunity to track interest along the way and make any adjustments, so there'll be no need for any last-minute panic over attracting an audience.

Two heads are better than one

Marketing usually takes care of the guestlist for an online webinar. However, no one knows the customers better than Sales, and they can therefore be a real help in choosing customers and convincing them to attend. So be sure to integrate sales expertise in the guest selection and follow-up process, whether your event is online or in real life. Sales team too busy?

Suitable software, such as InviteDesk, can make this process really easy, allowing efficient and accessible collaboration, but without adding lots to the workload. Need some help on how to engage sales for events? (Take a look at our blog on how to engage sales for events).

Knowledge is power

Once your invitations have been dispatched it's important to stay in control, and knowledge is power. Keep good track of who has received, opened and responded to their invitation, so you can take action to send out reminders to those guests you were really hoping for. This process is easily automated with some suitable software, making the data more transparent and your life much easier, and optimising your potential to get the guests you deserve.

Treat them right

Ever received an invitation in the wrong language? Or been put off by a mail addressed to Mrs. instead of Mr., or with your name misspelt? There's a lot of communication involved in organising a successful webinar and achieving your desired attendance and ROI, and a lot to get right (or wrong) when it comes to the format.

Are you on first name terms? Which language(s) should be used? Which brand or design is concerned? Does it look attractive? And a million other factors which are easy to get wrong, but which make a real difference to potential guests and their interest in your event and company. Managing the communication flow and getting the format exactly right can be a real challenge. If you automate this process it becomes much easier and will save you time, money and frustration. The good news? Appropriate software is now available, allowing you to do this really easily and affordably.

InviteDesk is an example of event management software that helps to ensure your most valued customers attend your events. It allows your marketing and sales teams to work together more efficiently, and integrates perfectly with your CRM or marketing automation software - so you can use it for everything from invitation to lead qualification.

Frustration 2: Technical issues

Technology is/can be both terrific and terrifying, and can be a major source of frustration for anyone organising or participating in a webinar. 'You're on mute' must be the most commonly heard sentence in the webinar world. Time for some tips!

The right support

If you want professional help in perfecting your webinar, you can invest in the comfort of a rented studio and take advantage of in-house expertise. This allows you to make a big impression. However, if you have a camera and a suitable platform, you can also manage a webinar perfectly from your (home) office. Software, such as InviteDesk, makes it easy to include hi-tech webinar features, such as Chat, Q&A, Polls, Attendance Tracking, etc.

Accessible platform

Consider your audience. However keen they are to attend, they'll need to have the right technology available to participate. Choose a tool that's accessible, and communicate your choice well ahead to give people the chance to download it, if necessary. Or make life really easy with a platform that allows guests to join through their browsers, without the need for plugins or apps.

Do a dry run

Remember that some people involved in your online event, such as guest speakers, may be new to the art of webinars or unfamiliar with your chosen platform. So make sure they are properly equipped and at ease before starting. Brief them on the technology beforehand so they will feel confident when making their presentation, handling questions, and so on. A dry run is valuable in making sure that everyone feels comfortable with the webinar tools.

Be prepared

If you do choose to organise the webinar from your home office, take the time to consider what could go wrong, and take the necessary precautions so it doesn't. Is your computer charged, and is your charger at hand? Home alone, or could unwanted visitors cause disruption? Be sure to brief other members of the household not to disturb you, and close the door and attach a note as a reminder. That includes the cleaning lady. Sharing the network with your partner or kids? Time to ban Netflix! Also, turn off mail or diary reminders, and close all other screens. There's nothing more embarrassing than your participants viewing details of a private appointment or mail, or accidentally sharing the wrong screen.

(Chat)room with a view

If you're managing your webinar from your home or office, take a good look at the background, and at what will be on show when you go live. Arrange the camera carefully, or use a backdrop to prevent people from viewing your private affairs or confidential information in your company. The opportunities to enhance your corporate style in the background and make an impression are greater in a studio. However, there are also ways to boost your branding when organising your webinar yourself. See Frustration 4.

Frustration 3: Lack of engagement

The key to a successful webinar lies in engaging your audience. However, this is also the greatest challenge. Life is much easier at physical events, where you can actually meet and chat, and get a sense of people's body language. Let's be honest, it's harder to build relationships from behind your computer. Not only that, it's difficult to stay focused in front of a screen and people's attention span is considerably shorter. Take a look at our tips to do better at capturing and engaging your audience's attention, even when they're behind a computer.

Get the party started
For some types of webinars, it might make sense to prepare your guests and break the ice with a 'pre-party' at the start, or just before the webinar. This will give attendees the chance to meet other guests and voice any expectations. In doing so, you'll help them relax and become familiar with the tools. Get things moving with some easy questions, such as: Where are you from? What do you hope to get out of the webinar? In this way, you'll warm things up and make everyone feel involved in the session. As a result, they'll be more likely to pay attention and participate later.

KISS
When preparing the webinar, remember there is much more to life than one long PowerPoint presentation. The key to retaining your audience's attention lies in serving up content in bite-sized pieces, so KISS: Keep It Short and Simple! For example, use different speakers to tackle different topics. Add variety in the methods used to present, for example, by switching between slides and videos. Or tell a story. A change of scene can do wonders too.

Did you know that InviteDesk Present&Engage offers easy-to-use tools to switch content and speakers in the blink of an eye?

Tools to promote involvement and interaction
Participation and interaction are also helpful in keeping people involved. So add a quiz, use the chat function and give people a chance to share their opinion through a poll. This gives you instant feedback, which can be shared with your guests in a visual, bringing the content bang up to date and keeping them interested. Also, it allows you to respond directly. We certainly recommend including a Q&A during the webinar. Make your life easier by appointing one specific employee to keep track. Also, be sure to leave room for questions at the end of the session, to give people the feeling that their voice has been heard. Integrated surveys are useful for interaction, and they also provide valuable information and learnings for next time. Combined with attendance data you can find out who dropped out and why, which topic was being covered at the time, or whether it was just taking too long. Find out more about how integrated surveys can improve your event in our blog.

Relevant and rewarding live-chat sessions
It's well worth using the live chat, but ensure to keep it relevant and, even better, make it personal! This can be a wonderful opportunity for your sales team to involve and get together with customers. Rather than selecting one general moderator, your sales talents can break out and chat one-to-one with customers or guests, whenever a relevant topic is raised. The InviteDesk integrated webinar solution provides an easy way to let your sales crew directly chat or video call with their customers, evoking a sense of live contact.

Frustration 4: Brand experience online vs offline

We're all familiar with the many options for branding a physical event. From the moment guests arrive they are generally confronted with a host of colourful logos and messages. Agreed, branding is more challenging online and this is a frustration for many marketeers and event managers. Yet, although many of the traditional tools are inappropriate, there are still other opportunities to be successful in adding branding and visibility. More than you might imagine, in fact.

Communicate in style

There's a long list of communication to complete when organising a webinar: from a save the date, invitation mail and registration form, right down to the thank-you mail and follow-up survey. Every one of these can be designed in your own corporate style and used to get your message across. This is time-consuming, especially when you have a lot of different brands, but can be managed more quickly and easily with automated software, such as InviteDesk. This will not only ensure you get the right brand, but also take care of other important details, such as the guest's correct name and title, correct language, and so on.

Another advantage is that it will be more easily recognised by your customers, and less likely to disappear into the depths of their mailbox.

Go all the way

Highlight your brand on all presentation elements in the webinar. That includes the input from your guest speakers. So, if your speakers are showing their own material, be sure to brief them on which logos to include and how, or create an appropriate template to make their lives easy. Tools such as polls, chat, etc. can all be branded using a software platform. Want to go one step further in getting your webinar entirely in your own style? With InviteDesk, you can personalise everything right down to the buttons! You could also consider starting your session with a corporate video. You can add the link in your follow up, allowing guests to share it or watch it again later.

Branded backdrop

Your branding can be added to the scenery behind the camera. A studio especially offers all kinds of opportunities to do this and make an impact. Banners, advertisements or logos can also be added in the livestream, or when switching between presentations.

Best of both worlds: online & offline

Add an offline element to your online event. For example, add the final touch to your webinar with a branded goodie bag that is delivered to the homes of participants just before you kick off. We bet you they'll be extra motivated!
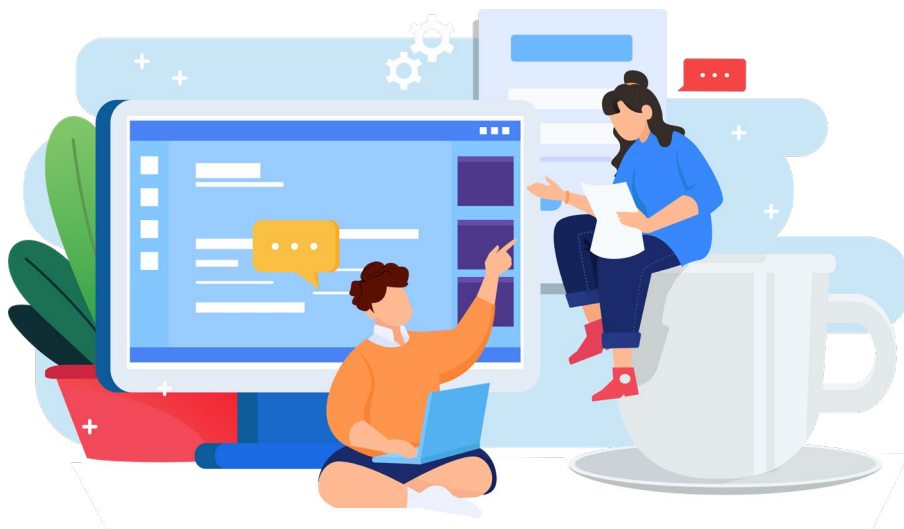
Frustration 5: Incompatible data

Last, but certainly not least, a big frustration in webinar organisation is the mountain of inaccessible and fragmented data. Data that could otherwise be so valuable in compiling guest lists, tracking progress and improving performance is of little use now because it is dispersed across different tools. Your marketing department lacks one source of up-to-date information, making it a challenge to share the status and take action. Sales remain in the dark about who's invited and who's planning to attend. Managers want regular updates to be sure of their investment and results. Wouldn't life be easy with a single, synchronised and visible source of information? It's possible! Here's how:

Specialised system

Webinar organisation is a specialised task and so much easier with specialised software. This starts as soon as the guest list is being compiled. Rather than one tool for marketing and another for sales, software allows you to create one guest list accessible to both teams. In this way, sales can add valuable names and put pressure on their side. Marketing, on the other hand, can pick up duplicates, serial non-attenders and manage the numbers.

Secondly, software automates the invitation process from A to Z. By highlighting the status of individual guests in the acceptance process it is easy to keep track and send out (automatic) reminders to those who still need to respond. In this way, you'll no longer miss out on the guests you really wanted. Furthermore, thanks to software, you can be confident that the communication issued will be perfect: brand, language, timing, etc.

The power of numbers

There is so much data available, however, it will be more powerful when it's all in one place. For example, include your CRM into the webinar process, along with input from surveys, etc. By automatically integrating this into a system you will no longer waste time entering information by hand and can make full use of the data available.

One for all

How many guests are expected? Who is attending? Where are you in the process? Do these questions sound familiar? With software, next time someone asks, you'll have the answer at hand in an instant. A single document provides a clear and real-time update on your progress. In fact, they won't even need to ask, as the document is accessible to everyone!

Conclusion

Once you've mastered the art of webinars they can be a valuable addition to your marketing plan. Although they will never fully replace a live meeting, webinars do offer a wonderful complement and new opportunities to stay in touch with your colleagues and customers. With the right platform, the process is smooth and seamless. So, embrace the potential, and all the best in your next webinar.

Keen to know more about how InviteDesk can help you in organising winning webinars? Contact us and we'll give you a free demo.