Introduction

In recent years, the tools and techniques that companies use to do business and engage their customers, associates, and even their own employees have transformed. In the changing technological and social landscape, webcasting has become a prominent communication tool, but many companies still struggle to understand how to use webcasting in the most effective way and fully leverage its power to engage.

What changes have paved the way for webcasting?

• In an increasingly virtual world, online communication has become the norm for businesses in every industry. Many companies work on entire projects online with virtual teams, and use online platforms to reach out to customers throughout the country or around the world.

• With the economic tribulations of the past few years, organizations are struggling with increasingly challenging budgetary restrictions. Webcasting is an affordable alternative to face-to-face meetings, trade shows, and other expensive offline events.

• Online activities are becoming more and more social. Social marketing has been a huge buzz word this entire decade, but you may have already noticed that it isn’t as easy to get attention on Facebook or Twitter as it once was. The era of easy viral success has passed, but that doesn’t mean you can’t still get in on the action. Webcasting gives you a new social media marketing tool to leverage, not just by sharing your webcasts on social networks, but also by socially engaging your audience members.

Since webcasting is still an emerging technology, those early adopters who make the leap are going to be able to make the greatest impact on customers and the general public. You can also use webcasting effectively within your own organization to train personnel, host meetings between management staff members in different offices, and much, much more. The same rules apply: the more engaging your webcasts, the more effective they will be, whether you are presenting to the public or to members of your own organization.
Webcasts vs. Online Meetings

- Webcasts take on a “live”, one-to-many, format. Traditional online meetings focus on a small group of individuals all having a conversation about a single topic. Webcasts focus on a small number of presenters (usually one or two, sometimes as many as four or five) presenting to a larger audience where the audience interacts through chat, polling questions, social media and live Q&A with the presenters.

- Webcasts are typically planned presentations where speakers have prepared and staged their content in advance. Online meetings tend to be free-flowing conversations that can be conducted on an ad-hoc basis. The key difference is control: webcasts give presenters greater control over their content.

- Webcasts are more interactive than an online meeting. Webcasts provide the audience a unique ability to engage with the presenter’s content (polling questions, handouts, link slides, etc.), interact directly with the presenter (group chat, Q&A, etc.), interact with fellow audience members (social media, chat rooms, etc.) and have clear takeaways from the session (handouts, exit actions, websites, etc.). This type of trackable interaction is not available for a traditional online meeting, where the audience is limited to seeing what is shared by presenters.
Guidelines to Help You Prepare for a Webcast

Your webcast is only going to be effective as it is engaging. Without further ado, we will introduce you to the best practices for hosting a compelling webcast that will leave a lasting impact on your audience members and help you to achieve your presentation goals.

Create Anticipation

Creating an engaging webcast starts before your audience even logs in to the webcast. Your goals before the presentation are two-fold. First, you want to spread the word so you can get as many interested audience members as possible. Second, you want those viewers to be excited about the webcast even before they view it, so that they are eager recipients of your message.

• List any speakers and their credentials, especially if you have a celebrity or someone high profile within your organization joining the webcast.

• A compelling abstract is one tool to generate anticipation. Your abstract should clearly and accurately reflect the purpose and content of your event in a creative, articulate way. A dry or confusing abstract will deter audience members.

• Email marketing may seem old fashioned, but it’s still one of the most effective marketing tools out there. You may even already have analytics on your mailing list subscribers that can help you put together a targeted campaign. Setting up multiple e-mail reminders prior to your webcast can increase your attendance rate as much as 30%.

• Video teasers are great for generating interest. You can post these teasers to your own website and to video sharing sites like YouTube. If a picture is worth a thousand words, think how many words a video is worth!

• Post on internet forums and social networking sites. This includes not only big social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, but also smaller niche forums that are pertinent to your products or services.

With every form of advertising, make sure you include some kind of a call to action. While you may think that your advertising speaks for itself, remember that people online are usually busy and distracted. So in your posts, emails and video teasers, make sure you tell your audience members how they can access your webcast, when to register, and what date and time to log in. Additionally, be sure to ask your audience members to share your webcast link around with others they know who may be interested.
Have a plan

Even if you excel at improvisation, you won’t want to rely on it entirely for your webcast. The best presentations usually have a high level of planning, even if you expect to spend some time improvising during the presentation. New webcast presenters often underestimate the amount of planning they will need to do in order to produce a compelling webcast that has a sense of flow and direction, and makes its point succinctly and with impact.

When preparing for a webcast, it is critical that the speakers understand:

• Who the audience is

• The format of the presentation (panel, single speaker, single speaker with a moderator)

• The length of the presentation and how much time should be reserved for Q&A

• The delivery options for slide content (PowerPoint, animations, polls, desktop sharing, video clips, etc.)

• How they will be delivering the audio/video (telephone, webcam/microphone, in a studio, etc.) and what, if any, special equipment is required

Once the speakers understand the format and parameters for the presentation they should develop a PowerPoint deck specifically for the online audience, utilizing as many engaging features as are available and appropriate. Often, speakers will reuse the same decks over and over, but not tailor to audiences or online, which can create a dry experience for the online user. Speakers will want to plan for moments where they can ask open-ended questions of the audience, and have them reply through the on-screen mechanisms. When doing polling questions, speakers will need to plan content to deliver while the audience is responding to the poll so there is no dead air.
Prepare Anecdotes and Questions

Anecdotes are stories which make your content relevant and memorable to the audience. Real-life stories, startling statistics, and surprising facts can all make information more meaningful, and work great for grabbing attention throughout your presentation (especially at the beginning). Stories are a great way to close a presentation. Stories include a chronology of relatable events that are easy to remember and leave a lasting impression on an audience.

If you plan to take questions from the audience, have a few “seed” questions prepared in advance. These are questions that are written in advance of a presentation, and are a great way to kick off a Q&A session without a delay. Sometimes audience members are slow to type in their questions so a few seed questions will keep you from having dead air.

It’s also important to solicit your audience’s opinions during the presentation through the use of polling questions and open-ended questions. Polling questions are pre-defined, questions that the audience can respond to by filling out a form; it’s important to address their responses and use them answers to inform how you deliver the rest of your presentation. For example, if your audience indicates that they are new to a topic, make sure your speech and delivery style adapt to their level or you risk losing the audience.

Open-ended questions are great to get the audience interacting with you and others in an open chat. Pose questions to the audience, and be sure to comment on their responses and provide your own follow up information. This allows your audience to feel more connected to you as a speaker, making them more likely to receive your message.

Use Visuals and Variety

Studies have demonstrated that webcast audience members are more likely to stay focused and engaged if you regularly hold their attention with changing visuals. It is recommended that the content on the screen change every two to three minutes. This can be done by using animated PowerPoint, polling questions, video clips, screen sharing or virtually any other type of content.

PowerPoint slides provide additional information in a creative, compelling way. However, attendees don’t respond well to slides with too much text. Use graphs, short bullet points and animations to keep the content on screen fresh and interesting. Also, be sure to use the PowerPoint as a cue for what you want to say, not as a script to be read from. Treating a PowerPoint file as a script is a surefire way to bore your audience.
Finally, remember to use your best public speaking skills when presenting online. Whether the audience can see you or just hear you on audio, it’s important to be upbeat and excited about what you’re presenting – smile while you speak! If the speaker sounds bored or lethargic, it’s a cue to the audience that the content is boring and they will lose interest. If you’re on video, be sure to look at the camera and maintain (virtual) “eye contact” with your audience. This can be difficult for speakers who are new to online presentations, so be sure to practice before the live presentation to get comfortable with the medium.

Your Opening Act

Your webcast begins the moment an attendee logs in to the session. Most online sessions allow attendees to login 10 to 15 minutes before the actual start time. You may not be on the air yet, but you need to make sure that the viewers who arrive early are engaged from the moment they join.

Use the tools to see who is in the session and what company they are from, and introduce yourself to the attendees as they arrive via the chat room. Make them feel welcome, and ask if anyone has any questions or expectations for the presentation. Find out what they are hoping to get out of the session. Even though you haven’t technically begun delivering your presentation, you are already establishing rapport with the audience.

You can display pre-recorded videos, polling questions or a PowerPoint slide during this period. These can set the stage for the presentation and give the audience something to interact with while they wait.

When it’s time to begin the presentation, make sure you start on time. If you are late with your introduction, you will test your audience members’ patience, and that tells them you do not respect their time. Don’t run long either, for the same reasons. If you say a presentation will take one hour, don’t take one hour and fifteen minutes. Respect your audience’s valuable time and listen to them as they interact with you during the course of the event.
The Introduction

When you do begin the main event, remember to lead with something attention grabbing. Audience members are typically at work during webcasts and have a lot of demands on their time. If they aren’t engaged within the first two minutes, you might lose them. Here are some ideas for opening statements:

• Tell a real-life story which has some grab value. Stories are wonderful for engaging audience members because they are relatable, and make audience members want to know more.

• Share a surprising statistic. Numbers, like stories, can make an impact, because they are palpable and concrete.

• Open up with a compelling quotation. Quotations, like stories or statistics, may be more effective if they are somehow surprising, counterintuitive, or challenge expectations.

• Ask your audience members an open-ended question and allow them to respond via the group chat. Even though your question is probably rhetorical at the time that you ask it, you are directly involving your audience members by asking them to answer the questions and start being an active participant in the presentation.

• Start with some other type of content. You could begin by sharing a pre-recorded video which tells a story, or start out with a demonstration that illustrates your main objectives for the session.

A strong main event starts out with a confident, engaging introduction from a well-prepared presenter. Get started on the right foot, and the rest of your presentation will naturally flow from there.
The Main Event

As your presentation unfolds, you will need to maintain the level of engagement that you created during your opening act and introduction. Here are some essentials to keep in mind if you want to stay on track for a successful webcast:

• Be interested in your own presentation. If you expect other people to take an interest in what you have to say or demonstrate, you should set an example by being interested yourself. There is nothing worse than listening to a dry, disinterested speaker.

• Be interested in your audience! You can’t expect your audience members to respect you or what you have to say if you do not show the same respect and interest in them. If you solicit feedback or open up the forum for discussion, then really participate. Don’t try to direct every single conversation. Don’t ignore audience input just because it wasn’t what you expected or planned. Give your audience members a real voice.

• Entertain as you educate. Webcasts are meant to be fun, compelling events. Prepare ways to excite and entertain your audience members as you inform them. Information is always retained better if it was delivered in an entertaining way. Take your presentation seriously, but don’t be afraid to have a sense of humor.
Never forget that you are not entitled to your audience and their interest. Whether you are a company reaching out to potential buyers or a member of HR training employees, your audience members are the people you rely on for your success. Those people deserve nothing but respect and gratitude. Show them that throughout your webcast, and you will earn theirs.

The Chat Room

Webcasting gives you a number of tools you can use to interact with members of your audience. Most of the communication between you and your audience members will take place in the chat room. This also gives your audience members a medium to communicate with each other. The chat room fulfills several different purposes:

• Feedback on how the session is going. If your session is engaging, you will probably see a substantial amount of participation. Of course, if your webcast is very compelling, there is a chance that your audience members will not start talking until you give them a break to think and talk. It’s important to set the expectation early that you want to get feedback via the chat room and respond to it. To spur communication in this area, ask open-ended questions or direct the audience to make comments on certain topics.

• Feedback on the topic of the presentation. The amount of activity may reflect how your session is going, but the content of the chat room conversations will also provide you with valuable qualitative information. You may find direct feedback and suggestions pertaining to your topic. If you’re developing a product, you may find it useful to gauge what your potential buyers are looking for. You may see suggestions for future webcasts as well.

Don’t forget to plan for audience interaction in the chat room when you outline your presentation. A single question or comment in the chat room may provide an onramp to insightful, compelling discussion. And remember, when you reach out to your audience members, quote them, and allow them to inspire you and take you in new directions.

Polling Questions

Another feature you can use to interact with your audience and keep audience members involved is polling. Polls allow you to ask your audience members for their opinions, and provide a simple, effective way to gather statistical feedback. This tool can be used creatively in a number of different ways:

• Poll your audience members to make sure they are paying attention and comprehending the information you are sharing with them. This is very helpful if you are running a training session or some other educational event. Quiz your participants regularly to check their knowledge. This is a great time to prompt them to share any questions they may have in the chat room or via the Q&A tool.
• Ask audience members for feedback or opinions. Perhaps you are a product developer showing off your latest product, still in the design stages. You could poll your audience for feedback on product size, color, or other specifications and then actually use that feedback to create a product that will be in high demand.

• Gauge knowledge gained during a presentation. Ask a polling question about the topic you are presenting on to see their responses at the beginning of the session and then ask the same question again at the end. This will allow you to see if your audience understood the concepts being presented and gauge overall effectiveness of the session.

• Poll your audience for suggestions on future presentations. Do you deliver regular webcasts? Trying to decide on topics or activities for your next session? Give your audience members a chance to voice their opinions by voting on your options. Ask if anyone has any additional suggestions in the chat room.

Those are just several ways you can use the polling feature included in your webcasting platform to engage your audience. As you can see, polling fulfills several different purposes. It keeps your audience members involved, tests their knowledge, and allows you to glean important insights into their wants and needs.

Question and Answer Session

It is important to build in time to take questions from the audience during the presentation. Be prepared to go over additional concepts, demonstrate ideas and discuss what matters most to your attendees.

When answering audience questions, remember:

• Read the text of the question and who it was from. Audience members like to feel as though they are a part of the presentation. Addressing their question and reading out their name allows them to feel invested in the content.

• Don’t be afraid to say “I don’t know.” If you’re not sure about an answer, let the audience member know you’ll follow up with them after the session with a response. It’s important that you actually do follow up with them, though so make sure to address this in a timely manner. The answers you find may serve inspiration for future webcasts.

• If you don’t have time for all the questions, follow up after the webcast. Make sure to address all the questions either live or with a post-webcast email. This will ensure your audience knows that their questions matter to you, and will encourage them to attend future sessions.
Every presentation should leave the audience with one or more “to do” items. Presentations should invite the audience to take further action, such as buy a product, download a document, engage with a new service, take additional courses, or call for a demo.

**Call to Action**

- Provide documents to download that contain additional information. You can also ask participants to submit their own documents and content. Have a regular webcast schedule? Offer your participants the chance to submit content to be featured in your next installment.

- Share links to your website or other pertinent destinations online.

- Ask your audience members to share your webcast with others online through Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other social networks. Social sharing buttons embedded in the information make it easy to do this with just one click. Getting others to share your content is challenging, but it’s much easier to do when your audience members are already engaged with you in the moment.

- Prompt your audience members to contact a company representative. If you are giving a sales presentation, you can ask your participants to contact a representative to finalize a sale at any time.

You can also have your audience members fill out surveys to provide you with detailed information about their opinions or situations—more on that in the next section!

**Surveys**

Surveys give you a chance to learn more about your audience members. The analytics you receive allow you to make important decisions about products, customers or even future webcast content.

Surveys are typically used to gauge satisfaction levels with the content, style and presenters following a presentation. Ask your viewers for topical feedback. For example, did you show off a new product? Ask your customers for their thoughts on what they saw, and how satisfied they are with the features you demonstrated. You could also survey them on their past experiences with other products you have developed. Do you have regular news broadcast? Find out which aspects of your company’s operations and which projects viewers are most interested in learning more about.

Solicit feedback on your performance as a webcast presenter.

- Ask whether your performance was engaging and insightful.

- Find out whether your participants would have preferred more or fewer slides.
• Discover whether your participants enjoyed videos or other content you shared.

• Find out which features viewers found most helpful, and which they didn’t enjoy.

• Learn whether your viewers enjoyed the interaction in the chat room, and whether they would have wanted more or less time devoted to Q&A.

Ask for ideas for future presentations. Just by having your audience members rate their satisfaction on a scale for topics and features, you will be able to gauge a lot about their future expectations. But it can also pay off to present open-ended questions. Your viewers have creative minds, and they may be able to come up with some amazing ideas for future webcasts. Since those ideas come straight from your viewers, you know that they will tune in and find them relevant and interesting.

Surveying your audience also fulfills one more important function: It demonstrates to your viewers that you truly care about their experiences with you. This is excellent for publicity and for strengthening bond between you and your audience. That bond takes the form of trust, and will often translate into regular viewership and a measurable boost in your sales revenue.

Evaluate the Data

Once your session is complete and the live event is over, your work doesn’t stop. One of the great advantages of running a webcast is the fact that everything is recorded. That includes the session itself, and the activity of all your participants. Q&A, chat sessions, downloads of documents downloaded, links clicked, polls, and surveys, are all tracked and reported on.

Reviewing and understanding post-webcast data is critical to understanding the success of the webcast and planning future sessions.
Evaluate when people joined and left the session to understand how your audience responded to your content. Perhaps you need to shorten your webcasts or tighten up your scripts to not run long.

Webcast reporting will also show the details of how users answered the polling questions, and surveys, what they wrote in the chat and what questions they asked. In aggregate, these statistics will help you to understand how well the audience understood the information. Individually, you can see how each person responded and use this information to follow up with that person as a potential lead, a potential speaker, or as someone who can provide insight into what went well or poorly, and adjust for future sessions.

You might use more slides (or less), change your speaking style, include additional presenters, increase the amount of polls or open-ended questions, etc. You may also receive requests for information on particular topics or clarification on certain points that were raised during the previous installment. This may determine what topics you decide to discuss in your next presentation.

Webcasting is a Collaborative Medium

We have given you a lot of concrete advice today for the best practices for hosting a webcast. To review briefly:

- Work hard to **create anticipation** before your webcast even airs. A compelling and clear abstract, coupled with a dynamic speaker will help to sell potential viewers on your webcast. Email marketing, teaser videos on YouTube, posts on relevant niche forums, and promotion on social networks can all generate interest in your webcast.

- **Plan**, outline and rehearse your presentation in advance. Get a feel for timing, come up with anecdotes to share, and questions to seed conversation. Be prepared for open-ended questions and discussions with your audience members that can take you in new directions. Create PowerPoint slides to help keep your audience engaged.
• **Start out strong** with a story, question, statistic, or another memorable opening act. Make sure that you introduce yourself to your attendees, learn who they are, and answer any questions they have about the event.

• Follow your own rules, especially those that relate to **timing** during the course of your webcast. Be interested in your own presentation, entertain your audience, and let your audience members get involved.

• Use the **chat room** to communicate with audience members, stimulate conversation, and get feedback on your session as well as the topics you are presenting. Plan plenty of time for chat with audience members.

• **Poll** your audience members to verify that they are comprehending and retaining information, or to gather opinions. Using the information you glean from polling, you may be able to come up with discussions questions for your next webcast.

• Answer the audience’s questions in a **Q&A** period, either at the end or throughout the session. Addressing their questions clearly and concisely is an important part of making sure they feel the presentation was beneficial.

• Use strong **calls to action** to get your audience members to download or upload documents, create and share content, promote your webcast on social networks, contact sales representatives, and more. People rarely take action without you telling them to do so. Give them a little nudge in the right direction and they will be much more likely to respond.

• **Surveys** are great to use to gauge satisfaction. You can gather feedback on both the topic of your presentation and your presentation itself. This is an excellent tool for planning for future webcasts—and making improvements to products, services, and more.

• **Evaluate the data.** Review your webcast and all the participation logs you have of chats, polls, surveys, downloads, and more. Use the analytic information your webcasting software generates to draw conclusions about your audience members, their interest level, and what you can do next time to get them even more involved.

Webcasting is ultimately a collaborative endeavor between you and your audience. While webcasting software is presentation-based, it is not a one-way street. The best webcasters don’t treat their presentations as linear experiences are set in stone. They allow them to be transformed in response to audience input, while still following pre-determined direction and plans.

Like any other skill, this one takes some time and effort to develop. You’ll learn many lessons from your first presentation, which are all part of the process of growth. Keep refining your presentation style based on feedback from your audience, and you’ll eventually pick up not only the concrete elements of presenting, but also the intangible essentials. You’ll be able to integrate careful planning with improvisation, and you’ll discover how to balance your audience’s contributions with your own. This is not only fundamental to webcasting, but to business as a whole, which is why webcasting is ultimately a reflection of the way you run your company and engage your personnel and customers.
Built on INXPO’s award-winning digital communications platform, both XPOCAST and Social Business TV enable you to deliver live, simu-live, and on demand webcasts that incorporate interactive elements like polls, moderated Q&A, group chat and social activity walls, that engage your audience and at the same time giving you the feedback you need to improve your programs.

Some Key Benefits Include:

- **Flexible Broadcasting Options** - Live, simu-live (pre-recorded with live Q&A) and on-demand broadcasting options give you full control of when and how your presentations are delivered.

- **Global Reach** - With the industry’s leading mobile experience you can reach iOS, Android and Windows users, anytime and anywhere in the world, without sacrificing any of the interactive features offered on desktop devices.

- **Personalized Experience** - An engaging experience that promotes meaningful dialogue between presenter and audience, fostering knowledge transfer and collaboration.

- **Robust Analytics & Reporting** - Access to dashboards for real-time metrics, giving you the ability to track and measure your ROI immediately.

- **Disruptive Pricing** - A simple and effective subscription based pricing model allowing you to deploy unlimited webcasts to drive increased content creation.

- **Streamlined Content Delivery** - A single destination portal designed to host new and existing content for your audience to engage with.

- **Intuitive Program Wizard** - Packed with unbelievably interactive features, this out of the box self-service tool allows anyone to develop, personalize, and deliver powerful programming in just 7 easy steps.

- **365 Day Environment** - Allowing your audience to consume live and on demand content all year round.

- **Increase Revenue** - With unlimited webcasts, SBTV allows you to produce as many demand generation programs needed to fuel your sales pipeline. Broadcast multiple channels at once to reach diverse audiences with your proposition value.
Deliver interactive webcasts with INXPO’s Next Generation Webcasting solution XPOCAST.

Broadcasting Software Designed to Turn Boring Presentations into Memorable Experiences

Key Benefits:
- Flexible Broadcasting Options
- Global Reach
- Personalized Experience
- Robust Analytics & Reporting

Host your webcasts in a secure environment that’s “always on” with INXPO’s Social Business TV solution.

Unlimited Channel Programming for Consistent Engagement

Key Benefits:
- 365 Day Year Environment
- Unlimited Webcasts
- Secure & Streamlined Content Delivery
- Elegantly Simple Self Service Tool
About Us

INXPO’s next generation webcasting solutions help organizations communicate in a more interactive manner with their employees, customers, prospects, partners, and members. Each webcast can be deployed as a link on a website, in an email, in an Online Event on our award-winning event platform, as part of an ongoing 365 Community or inside our Social Business TV product.

In addition to delivering audio and video webcasts, we complement these broadcasts with social tools that turn lackluster presentations into memorable experiences.

Also, INXPO is unsurpassed in the market with its mobile webcasting viewing and interactive experience. From their iOS and Android device users engage with high levels of interaction including; group chat, Q&A and testing.

Contact Us

To learn more about how INXPO can fit into your organizations communications strategy please visit www.inxpo.com, email contactsales@inxpo.com, or call us at (312) 962-3708.

GET STARTED