

Webinars:

A Sales and Marketing Must-Have



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WHITE PAPER

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Introduction

Just as conversations, messages and face-to-face meetings have become digitized over the course of the 21st century, so have a number of other formats. Webinars are a great example of this extended digital influence, encompassing many distinct modes of interaction in one succinct event with a defined purpose. Webopedia defines this term as follows:



A key feature of a webinar is its interactive elements.

“Short for Web-based seminar, a webinar is a presentation, lecture, workshop or seminar that is transmitted over the Web using video conferencing software. A key feature of a webinar is its interactive elements: the ability to give, receive and discuss information in real-time.

Marketers, sales teams and even customer service leaders will see a huge amount of potential within this brief definition, and

when these assets are leveraged properly, a brand can benefit all three areas of the business using webinars. Additionally, the organization can use webinars to gain insight into the future of the market that can further sharpen its competitive edge.

Let’s dive into the advantages of webinars in the context of sales and marketing, exploring how this format can provide a boost to each aspect of the customer life cycle. Concluding with some tips on how to best execute a webinar, this paper will be a vital resource for any sales and marketing team looking to revamp its interactive efforts for exceptional results.



✓ Lead Generation

A brand needs leads to generate momentum in the marketing department and fuel sales teams with prospects willing to eventually convert. That's why lead generation is so critical to the modern sales cycle, and why webinars can be a huge help in filling empty databases with strong leads. Whether finding new prospects or fleshing out missing information, webinars make a difference.

Of course, it's not just about quantity when it comes to new leads, What about this format is so great for finding prospective customers? Webinars can help fuel lead generation efforts in the following ways:

- **Make a strong first impression** by demonstrating the features of the product with expertise and fluidity. This alone can generate many quality leads.
- **Spark interest beyond the target audience** if webinar attendees see value for their business, even if it doesn't directly impact their immediate environment.
- **Build leads more effectively** and determine who will actually want to buy. Half of leads are not ready to pull the trigger, and webinars help convince those on the fence.
- **Score leads more accurately** to make life easier for sales teams. Taking note of individual questions, comments and concerns is hugely valuable in the long term.
- **Acquire detailed information** that will prove essential in next steps. Names, preferences, locations and addresses can all be gleaned in webinar registration.

Leads aren't hard to come by, but quality leads are worth their weight in gold. With webinars, brands can get their hands on the leads that live up to their name and guide the way to revenue.



✓ Research and Conversion

Once customers have expressed interest in a brand and are identified as quality leads, they enter a stage in which research and investigation are top priority. It's up to these buyers to make the best possible choice for their organization, and the pressure is on to find out as much as possible about a new product and potential business partner. Luckily, this is where webinars add a huge amount of value for marketers and sales teams.

Close to 90 percent of companies that nurture leads properly (through close alignment of sales and marketing efforts) report increased sales opportunities. Here are a few reasons why webinars are a great tool for fostering this alignment and boosting conversions:

- **Establish key differentiators** that set the brand apart from the rest in the eyes of the prospect. Webinar leaders know what makes the product unique and effective.
- **Address questions and concerns** brought up by attendees, assuring them that the solution is the right fit for their organizations.
- **Build trust with the audience** to show that a long-term business partnership is a real possibility. Webinars simulate the scenario of working in collaboration.
- **Demonstrate expertise** in the areas of business most important to the attendees of the conference. A perfect time to show thought leadership and an innovative point of view.
- **Provide clear conversion paths** that allow interested leads to accelerate the purchase process. Ensure that all attendees can pull the trigger if and when they want to.

While it's up to sales teams to ultimately close the deal, the groundwork laid out in webinars can make the conversion process considerably more fluid and fast. The closer marketing and sales teams align their promotional efforts with the content of the webinar, the better the results will be. It's also wise to coordinate these initiatives with lead nurturing best practices.



✓ Retention and Service

Webinars aren't just great for generating leads and closing new conversions at speed - they're also excellent tools to build loyalty with a current customer base and ensure that they buy again, whether in the context of a new product or renewed subscription for a service. Webinars are also stellar supplements to a customer support strategy catering to digital demand.

These days, brand loyalty is hard to come by, and companies need every advantage they can get to encourage customers to stick around. Let's look at some of the ways in which webinars can help brands boost customer retention and supercharge their service efforts.

- **Troubleshoot issues on the fly** and put to rest any of the concerns brought up by the audience. This conveys the capabilities of the company's support staff.
- **Deepen familiarity with product** to reveal new features and layers of functionality that current users may not know. Help them discover unseen points of value.
- **Introduce updates and upgrades** in a first-look setting to generate a sense of exclusivity and insider knowledge. Who doesn't love to be the first to know?
- **Strengthen customer relationships** in a way that no other marketing initiative can. This hands-on approach also demonstrates a special level of care to prospects in attendance.
- **Inform new campaign efforts** by keeping two fingers on the pulse of user demand. Discover user priorities and craft future marketing initiatives around those points.

As far as retention and service go, it's hard to beat the dynamic, interactive environment that webinars bring to the table. Any brand emphasizing customer loyalty should make sure they include a live Web conference in their marketing schedule.



✓ Tips for the Perfect Webinar

We've established the powerful benefits webinars have to offer, but brand strategists may not know what it takes to put together an online event that benefits marketers, sales teams and customer service staff alike. What are the features of a winning webinar, and how can brands ensure they follow these guidelines to maximize ROI? Here are some things to keep in mind:

- **Keep registration open** until the last minute, as 64 percent of attendees sign up for a live webinar within a week of its occurrence. Always be prepared for a full house.
- **Cut things off at an hour** to keep everyone interested. The average webinar viewer time is around 53 minutes, so like any good event, leave them wanting more.
- **Archive webinar content** so that attendees can go back and rewatch if they so please. One quarter of registrants view archived video, and it's also a great piece of Web content that can educate visitors long after the event is over.
- **Include a range of tools** such as media players, slide windows, question and answer boxes, speaker bio and downloads. Better to offer too many features than too few.
- **Feature at least one speaker** to mix things up with different tones and styles. This also demonstrates a wider range of expertise and keeps attendees on their toes.

As a brand becomes more familiar with the webinar format, it will master the methods that work best for its products and voice. Practice makes perfect, and these guidelines will put any organization on the right track.

Conclusion: Keep it Comprehensive



Webinar content should be coordinated with other inbound efforts.

Any smart salesperson or marketer knows that webinars are just a piece of the massive jigsaw puzzle that is the modern sales and marketing mix. With this in mind, brands must be extra aware of clarity, consistency and cohesion across all of their communications efforts. This means that webinar content should be coordinated with email marketing campaigns, content creation and other inbound efforts, whether in the B2C or B2B domains.

As always, automation software can help strategists in the sales and marketing departments better align their strategies with one another, providing a pillar of stability for every initiative the brand launches, manages and optimizes. Organizations that effectively leverage webinars in coordination with automation software and marketing and sales cohesion will have significant advantages as the future unfolds.

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