A Primer on Webinars! – Adding Value to Your Section Membership

By Jerold M. Aronson MD SOSM Webmaster

(Disclaimer: the author is neither an “expert” in webinars, nor a vendor. Material in this article is derived from acknowledged web research with input from AAP colleagues)

The term webinar is short for web-based seminar, a presentation, lecture, or workshop that is transmitted over the Web. Webinars are a dynamic, engaging way to convey information remotely to a geographically dispersed audience of individuals or groups at a specific location on a budget. Since our organizations (e.g. AAP Section) face an ongoing need to i) add value to continued membership in the AAP and our Section and ii) share information long-distance with limited education and travel funds, webinars may help save money. Additionally, webinars reduce our carbon footprint to those amongst us that are concerned about such things. Webinars are in regular AAP use and cover topics such as: Coding, Practice Services, Pediatric Care Online, Patient Safety, Medical Home, Mental Health & Red Book. The AAP currently uses VCall as their webinar client. One can view examples of Vcall webinars to experience the use of polling, streaming live video, and/or webcasts that demonstrate Vcall capability. AAP Staff Member Sherry Fischer is actively involved with AAP Webinar activity. Some AAP webinars are “free” to participants dependent upon “grant funding”; others are market priced in accordance with demand often between $99 and $135.

A typical AAP webinar produced with VCall consists of:

- A speaker or speakers using PowerPoint slides with voice-over.
- Operator Assistance and Technology Technical Assistance by VCall
- Active Polling of participants during the presentation re: answers, attitudes, satisfaction, etc. in addition to Q&A either telephone moderated or via “type-in” chat box.
- A Web Record/3 month Archive of the event as a CD or DVR

Nonprofits regularly use webinars for meetings, training events, lectures, or short presentations (including software training), sharing information about a new product or service, or promoting a program. New online tools are making it easy for any organization to host a webinar from any internet-linked computer, even with limited technology expertise. Some vendor solutions require additional software to be installed.
(usually via download) by the presenter and participants, while others eliminate this step by providing physical hardware.

Web conferencing, a component of some webinar offerings, is often sold as a service hosted on a web server controlled by the vendor. Webinar pricing and costs vary per vendor but most hosted services provide a cost per user per minute model, a monthly flat fee model and a seat model (fixed number of participants). For example, a 60 minute AAP webinar/web conference using VCall for approximately 50 individuals costs about $1,500 to produce without speaker honoraria.

Webinars can also be provided as hardware “in-house” to conduct live meetings, remote training or presentations via the Internet. Some vendors provide a complete solution while other vendors enhance existing technologies. Most vendors also provide a means of interfacing with email and calendaring clients in order that customers can plan an event, share information about it, and manage registration functions, in advance. Most vendors also provide either a recorded copy of an event or a means for a subscriber to record an event. Information is shared simultaneously amongst participants in nearly real-time. A participant can be either an individual person or a group. The method of controlling access to an event is provided by the vendor. Additional value-added features are included as desired by vendors who provide them. As with any technology, the value-added features are limited only by the imagination.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_conferencing)

Webinar Elements:

Communication:

Webinars might be one-way from the speaker to the audience with limited audience interaction called webcasts or may be more collaborative and include polling and question & answer sessions to allow full participation between the audience and the presenter. During a session, the webinar presenter may speak over a standard telephone line (voice over) while pointing out information being presented onscreen. Depending upon the technology, the audience can respond over their own telephones or speaker phones allowing the greatest comfort and convenience. Alternatively, webinar participants can include a Q&A with participants typing in their questions in a Q&A box on-screen. Webinar technology may also provide anonymous participant functionality, making participants unaware of other participants in the same meeting if deemed necessary.

Interactivity:

For more interactive online workshops/web conferences some organizations add electronic meeting systems (EMS) at extra cost that provide a range of online facilitation tools such as brainstorming and categorization, a range of voting methods or structured
discussions, typically with optional anonymity. EMS may not provide core web conferencing functionality such as screen sharing or voice conferencing though some EMS systems can control web conferencing sessions.

Other typical webinar features (some at extra cost) are:

- **Slide show presentations** – PowerPoint of JPG images are presented to the audience and markup tools and a remote mouse pointer is used to engage the audience while the presenter discusses slide content.

- **Live or Streaming video** - where full motion webcam, digital video camera or multi-media files is “pushed” to the audience. (approximately $500 extra)

- **VoIP** (Real time audio communication through the computer via use of headphones and speakers) to allow complete web-based communications.

- **Web tours** - where URLs, data from forms, cookies, scripts and session data can be pushed to other participants though web based logons, clicks, etc. to demonstrate websites where users themselves can also participate.

- **Meeting Recording** - where presentation activity is recorded and archived on either the client side or server side for later viewing (typically up to 3 months) and/or distribution.

- **Whiteboard** with annotation that allows the presenter and/or attendees to highlight or mark items on the slide presentation and/or simply make notes on a blank whiteboard.

- **Text chat** - For live question and answer sessions, limited to the people connected to the meeting. Text chat may be public (echoed to all participants) or private (between 2 participants).

- **Polls and surveys** (allows the presenter to conduct questions with multiple choice answers directed to the audience)

- **Screen sharing/desktop sharing/application sharing** (where participants can view anything the presenter currently has shown on their screen. Some screen sharing applications allow for remote desktop control, allowing participants to manipulate the presenters screen, although this is not widely used.)

**Planning a Webinar:**

**10 Steps**

[http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/training/page11252.cfm](http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/training/page11252.cfm)
1. Ask yourself (and others) whether a webinar is the right tool for your needs.

Like all technologies, the decision to use it should be subordinate to your strategic objectives and the needs of your audience. While webinars work well for some topics, they’re not suited to every training need.

Consider your audience, the subject matter, and the time you’ll need to cover your topic. If you’re addressing a small, internal audience of colleagues about a new organizational goal, for example, a webinar may be a less appropriate option than it would be for, say, a training seminar for a large audience of members or potential funders. Likewise, a daylong course on effective interpersonal communication might not translate well to an online seminar. Most online audiences tend to lose interest after about two hours, so organize your topics and information so they can adequately be covered given this time constraint. Remember your “adult learning principles”. Break presentations into 9-10 minute chunks between interactive elements, or 20 minutes before changing modality of presentation (voice, to slide, to video, to polling, etc.). Time of the day for the webinar is also a key planning decision.

As part of SOSM evaluating whether a webinar meets our needs, we may wish to solicit feedback from members, and talk with other sections that have conducted their own webinars, and technical experts.

2. Recruit speakers and a support team.

Assemble a team of staff members or volunteers and arrange that they receive training in the technology that will be specifically used for the webinar. In general, there are four main players during a webinar: the organizer/facilitator, the presenter or presenters, and assistants. One should, in most cases, divide up the organizer and presenter roles. SOSM should also plan to include one or more assistants to monitor participant Q&A and verbally ask selected questions of the presenter at the appropriate time and/or provide technology assistance to participants during the meeting (issues such as login challenges, loss of voice/video, etc.). This allows the presenter to focus on their presentation.

Organizer/facilitator.

The organizer is the person responsible for developing the webinar topic, locating a speaker, marketing the event, setting up the registration, and communicating with participants. The organizer may introduce speakers, interview the subject matter experts, moderate audience questions, and encourage audience participation. The organizer also monitors the overall situation and helps to troubleshoot logistical and technical problems. The organizer does most of the hard work.
Presenter(s) (also known as subject matter experts).

Presenters prepare their demonstration and their PowerPoint slides. During the webinar, their main focus should be the presentation itself, as well as fielding questions from the audience. They cannot worry about the webinar software, event registration, troubleshooting, and other logistical details. It will detract from the presenters’ ability to give an engaging presentation. In certain formats (for example, a panel discussion), you might have more than one presenter.

Assistants.

Assistants are critical for at least three scenarios: i) When either the organizer or presenter or your audience is unfamiliar with webinars and webinar tools; ii) when the organizer or speaker plays a large role in the conversation (either as an interviewer or participant); and iii) when you expect a large audience. Assistants should be “tech-savvy” to answer technical and logistical questions (“I can’t hear the audio,” for example). In this case, you can recruit and train the assistant yourself, and anyone moderately tech-savvy will do a good job. When you expect a large audience and where you anticipate more audience questions than the presenter alone can answer in the time allotted, you choose to refer all unanswered questions to an online forum where the presenter can respond at a more leisurely pace.)

3. Determine the format.

A webinar can be structured in a variety of formats to suit different purposes. Below are some popular formats you may wish to consider.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Speaker</td>
<td>A single presenter speaks, demonstrates, and answers questions from the audience.</td>
<td>Fewer people to coordinate and train on the webinar tool.</td>
<td>A lone presenter is more likely to become the authority at the “front of the room,” which might make some in the audience reluctant to participate and ask questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Style</td>
<td>Interviewer asks a set of predetermined</td>
<td>More engaging to hear multiple voices.</td>
<td>More people to train and coordinate.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The fact that the</td>
<td>Scheduling the run-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>questions.</td>
<td>interviewer is asking questions of the expert(s) often encourages the audience to do the same.</td>
<td>through and the actual webinar may be more difficult.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moderated Panel Discussion</strong></td>
<td>Multiple people on the line at the same time, with a moderator facilitating the discussion.</td>
<td>Offers a variety of voices and perspectives.</td>
<td>More people to train and coordinate. Scheduling the run-through and the actual webinar may be more difficult. Can be challenging to keep panelists from talking over each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interactive</strong></td>
<td>Audience members participate fully via instructor-led exercises and facilitated conversations.</td>
<td>If done well, participants receive a deeper understanding of the topic because they're fully engaged in the dialog and the exercises.</td>
<td>Can only accommodate a small group. Requires a very skilled, experienced teacher/facilitator.</td>
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4. Plan your visuals.

Since webinars rely on audio and visuals to get the message across, both should be engaging. Plain slides with a lot of text don't work as well as interesting visuals that illustrate the topic being discussed.

Some visuals you may wish to include with your presentation are:

- Pictures of the Presenter and/or Assistants for the program to personalize the presentation with job title, affiliations, disclaimers, etc..
• An introductory slide reminding your audience how to log in to the audio and what time the webinar will begin.

• A quick overview of the webinar agenda and the topics to be covered.

• Screen grabs of websites or tools you will be discussing --- but, if possible, try to show the sites and tools in action (rather than just the image stills) for a more dynamic experience. Most webinar tools allow you to share your desktop, displaying in real time your interaction with programs and websites.

• Remember: webinars are visual tools. Therefore, consider multiple visuals per topic point to maintain participant interest.

5. Pick a tool.

The AAP is currently using VCall (a product of Precision IR). However, the AAP Department of Membership may be selecting a “webinar conferencing tool” as a pilot project for Sections to use (either free or at limited cost) from the dozens of Web conferencing tools out there. To familiarize yourself with the capabilities of webinar tools, consider reading Idealware’s article A Few Good Online Conferencing Tools and/or TechSoup’s webinar Getting to Know Online Conferencing Tools. The choice of webinar tool is critical; once you get started with a particular webinar tool, it’s hard to switch to a new tool because you and your colleagues have learned to use the software; your regular participants are familiar with this tool; and you’ve already paid for a subscription to this program (unless you’re using a free tool).

The issues to consider in selecting a webinar tool include:

**How many people will the tool accommodate?**

Most tools and pricing plans set a cap on the number of participants (# of seats). Once you reach that number, new participants find themselves locked out, or the tool lets them in and charges you a fee for each person above the cap. For free and low-cost Web conferencing packages, the cap is often as low as 15 or 20 participants. Other plans top out at 50 or 100, while enterprise-level packages allow as many as 1,000 participants per webinar.

**How much does it cost?**

While some packages are free, others vendors charge for Web conferencing and audio separately, some charge per participant per minute, and others charge a flat fee per month or per year. When you add in the fees for hosting recorded webinars and the cost of a toll-free phone bridge (when applicable), the pricing schemes can be complicated.

**Which features will you need?**
Do you want to just show a presentation or demonstrate how to use a specific piece of software? Would you like your participants to be able to take control of your desktop? Do you want a live video feed of the speakers? Make sure you choose a tool that allows you to do what you want.

**How is audio handled?**

Some products offer integrated, *Web-streaming audio*, which allows participants to listen to the presentation through their computer speakers or their computer headsets. With this arrangement, if participants plan to talk, they'll need a microphone for their computer, or a headset with a built-in microphone. If they work in close proximity to their colleagues, they will also need computer headphones or a computer headset to avoid bothering their neighbors. A headset with microphone that plugs in via USB or standard audio ports is well-suited to this type of webinar and costs less than $50.

Other webinar platforms require that participants and presenters dial in to a special phone number, often referred to as a *phone bridge*. You usually have two options for this: a toll number, in which case the participants have to pay the fees charged by their long-distance or cell phone provider; and a 1-800 number, in which case you or your organization will pay five to ten cents per minute for each participant. If you absorb the costs of these calls, be aware that they can add up quickly during webinars with a high turnout: for example, 53 participants times 60 minutes times six cents per minute is $191.

Finally, many webinar platforms offer you both Web-streaming audio and phone-bridge options, and you can choose to enable one or the other, or both. Enabling both types of audio gives you and your audience some flexibility in the event of a technical problem.

**Do you want to record the webinars and make them available for later viewing?**

If so, ask how the software handles recording and whether the vendor charges extra to make that recording available on the Web. Most vendors charge for the Web hosting, rather than the recording feature itself, but you should always check to be certain. Monthly hosting fees can be as high as $15 or more per month per recorded hour. If you feel the fees are excessive, you can download the recording and make it available yourself, but serving or streaming the recording from inside your network might put a strain on your bandwidth or your technical expertise.

When evaluating software, you will also want to ask what exactly gets recorded. Some tools, for example, only show the slides along with audio, but don't record the chat conversation or the desktop sharing. Vendors also vary in terms of how long they save the recording: some delete it after a month, while others save it until you delete it yourself.
6. Create an agenda.

Weeks before your webinar, hold a conference call with the speaker or speakers and determine what questions will be asked and the order in which the speakers will present. If you are using a format that enables visuals, ask each speaker to furnish the graphics and images to accompany his or her section of the presentation well ahead of time. (If speakers are demonstrating software, only a few slides will be necessary, as most of the webinar will likely be spent on the application itself.) You may also want to ask speakers to send a photograph and brief biographical description that you can use for registration and outreach.

Follow up this initial call with an email containing notes from your discussion. These notes may include:

- A list of topics and questions you came up with during the conference call.
- Deadlines for materials.
- An agenda with the order of the speakers and the duration of each segment.
- Wrap Up: Moderator wraps up webinar, thanks participants, and tells audience where they can go for more information.

7. Schedule a dry run.

A few days before your webinar, you should schedule at least one 30- to 60-minute run-through with all participants to work out any unresolved questions or technical issues.

Your dry run should cover all of the details of the webinar. Make sure that your participants know who they should turn to if they have questions during the webinar --- and how they can reach them. Discuss how to use the tool, what features are available to the presenters, and where participants can go to get extra practice in using the tool on their own before the event.

This may include:

- The chat feature if there is one and you’ll be using it; this tool gives presenters and participants a space where they can type questions and comments to one another during the presentation. Or you might need to demonstrate the

- The drawing tools. With this feature, presenters can write notes, draw simple images, or point to particular places on their slides.

- A demonstration of how presenters can forward their slides and share their desktops. If your Web conferencing vendor has unresponsive servers, or if your
participants have bandwidth problems, your audience might experience a one- to 10- second lag. In other words, when the presenter advances to the next slide, some participants may need to wait for 10 seconds before they see it. Presenters should therefore watch for this issue and be prepared to advance slides more slowly if they receive complaints.

- **An equipment check.** This is a good time to ensure that all of your presenters' operating systems, Web browser, headsets, and other equipment are compatible with the Web conferencing tool. Fortunately, most webinar tools let presenters and participants test their computer for compatibility before the event itself. Usually, this can be done by directing them to a Web page where they can launch a wizard that tests for the necessary components and plug-ins; or, they may be prompted to step through the wizard after they register. Be sure to include instructions for this with your registration information. While you can't force attendees to check their computers, do follow up with your presenter to ensure that she has all of the downloads and plug-ins she needs.

- **A review of your agenda and visuals.** Go over the agenda and move through the presentation to ensure slides are in the right order and that speakers know where they come in. Before the run-through, compile your presenters' visuals and load them into the conferencing tool. This will help presenters understand what the attendees will see, as the presenters' view is different from the attendees' view.

8. Reserve your equipment and space.

By and large, the webinar tool you choose will determine the type of equipment you'll need to run it. In general, you will want to have the following:

- **Headsets.** The organizer and all presenters will need headsets: *telephone headsets* if your webinar tool uses a phone bridge; or *computer headsets* if your tool uses integrated Web audio. Technically, you can use the telephone handset if your webinar package has a phone bridge, but it's distracting and tiring to lift a phone to your ear for an hour or more, especially when you're using a mouse and keyboard. Never present a webinar using a speaker phone: even in a quiet location the audio quality is often poor, and in noisier spots a speaker phone will pick up background noise.

- **A power cord** if you're using a laptop, as a backup for your battery.

- **A network cable** to connect you directly to the network if you aren't using a wireless connection.
Regardless of the equipment you use, you will need a **quiet space** from which to conduct your webinar. In addition to using a headset, you should reserve a conference room or place where there won't be background noise or interruptions. In addition to keeping out background office noise, you'll also want a space secluded from outside distractions, such as construction din or sirens.

9. **Cost and Pricing:**

Should SOSM charge for Webinars or provide them as a “free” service, e.g. a member benefit? In making this decision we should consider the Inform/Perform Distinction (Ruth Colvin Clark and Richard E. Mayer). Clark and Mayer define inform programs as those that communicate information while perform programs build specific skills. Using this distinction, “inform” Webinars using a “subject matter expert” share basic information or news model that can be offered for little or no charge to members. These webinars are positioned as a member benefit and as fulfilling the organization’s mission. They would be offered without CME or other credit.

“Perform” Webinars, on the other hand, should offer a richer experience which might include, for example:

- Clearly stated learning objectives
- Increased interactivity through the use of self-checks, Q & A, real-time chat, and other activities
- Potentially, pre- and/or post-session interactions
- Meaningful supporting materials (e.g., job aids, templates)
- Scored assessments
- A trained, expert presenter
- Availability of continuing education credit

The application of research-based terminology – *inform* and *perform* – make clear the additional value provided by the perform Webinars – value for which the organization should charge accordingly. It also ups the stakes for the perform Webinars and encourages the use of effective instructional design principles, meaningful training of speakers, and other elements that contribute to the delivery of consistently high value. These principles are operative whether you are using a webinar for purely educational purposes or for marketing a specific product or service.

Before you begin marketing your webinar, determine what tool you will use to register attendees. Some online conferencing programs, such as ReadyTalk (provided through
www.techsoup.org), offer built-in registration tools. Signing up participants using free event-registration tools is another option, but bear in mind that free tools frequently lack the advanced features that you'll want if you manage a lot of events.

Idealware's article A Few Good Online Event-Registration Tools offers a roundup of registration options for a variety of needs, as well as a list of guidelines for choosing the right tool.

Keep in mind that while organizations that invest significant time and energy into a regular series of high-quality webinars might recoup some of their costs by charging, nonprofits that only produce a few webinars a year may drive away potential participants with a fee, not to mention creating extra work for themselves for very little profit. As we assess our audience's needs (see Step 1) we can determine whether they might pay for the type of webinars you'll be offering. If you're unsure, you can always ask for an optional donation until you get a better sense of your audience and their willingness to pay.

If you plan to charge a fee your audience will see as, make sure most or the entire following are true:

- The Webinar will be of high value to the participant. The presenters must have a wealth of hands-on experience, an especially deep knowledge of the subject, or something else that makes your advice especially valuable to potential participants. Do some Web searches on your topic. If you find a lot of high-quality, user-friendly resources that contain the same information you plan to present, think twice about charging for your webinar.

- You have a lot of experience with training in general and online communication in particular. Keep in mind that participants have higher expectations when they pay; the more money you charge, the greater the expectation that you will deliver an engaging, well-produced webinar.

- We have the capacity to collect payments easily..

One advantage of charging for your webinar is that it provides an incentive for participants to show up. If everyone pays beforehand, you'll have fewer no-shows; with free webinars, you can expect that roughly 50 percent of the people who sign up will fail to attend.

10. Publicize

Finally, a word about Web Conferencing Tools: Picking a package that meets your needs!
In general, web conferencing tools work in the same way. The person initiating the conference sets up a new meeting in the tool and then invites participants to join by sending them an email containing the meeting’s time, date, password, URL, and login instructions. Some conferencing tools require participants to install a piece of software on their own computers before they can participate, though others are entirely web-based. All require an Internet connection.

The tools diverge primarily in the features they provide for collaboration and communication. For instance, some let participants speak to one another through their computers’ microphones while others let everyone interact via video.

Installation and Setup

- **Required Software**
  Certain web conferencing services require that the meeting initiator — and in some cases the attendees — install a software program or browser plug-in. If you decide on a service that requires such software, make sure that the appropriate parties are willing to install the application and understand how to do so. Also, you should check to make sure that meeting initiators and attendees are running an operating system that’s compatible with the software.

- **Integrated Invitation Features**
  Many web conferencing services provide features that interface with Microsoft’s ubiquitous Outlook email application. If your organization plans to hold regular or recurring meetings with a large number of attendees, choosing a service that adds the meeting’s details to participants’ Outlook calendars can help ease the planning process. For added convenience, some web conferencing tools also let you schedule or join meetings from directly within Outlook.

Collaboration Features

- **Screen-Sharing Capabilities**
  One of the most common collaborative features found in web conferencing services is the ability to share resources on one computer with the entire group. While the majority of web conferencing tools will let the presenter show attendees’ his or her desktop or certain documents, others go one step further by sharing chosen applications in a full-screen view or by allowing the presenter to highlight a specific portion of his or her screen.
• **Multiple Presenters**
  Since meetings frequently include staff members and volunteers who have expertise in different areas of a project or an initiative, the initiator may want to hand off presentation duties to someone else. If your organization needs to run meetings this way, look for a conferencing service that allows for multiple participants to assume presentation duties.

• **Drawing and Annotation Tools**
  In the course of presenting a document or a web page to your colleagues, you might need to underscore certain points or note ideas generated during the discussion. To this end, many web conferencing services provide annotation tools — such as pencils, pens, and virtual sticky notes — similar to those found in popular graphic-design applications.

• **Whiteboard**
  If your organization routinely uses dry-erase whiteboards to capture notes and thoughts when holding in-person meetings, you may want to look for a web conferencing service with a virtual equivalent. A whiteboard gives meeting participants a dedicated space for brainstorming ideas or outlining projects, a potentially useful feature when you're bringing people together to collaborate rather than simply presenting information.

**Communication Features**

• **Text Chat**
  Instant-messaging (IM) is a rapid form of text communication that can often be more efficient than sending email back and forth. Just about all web conferencing services offer a built-in text-chat tool that participants can use to communicate with specific attendees or the entire group, eliminating the need for attendees to install or use a third-party IM client.

• **Teleconferencing**
  Just because you've moved your meetings to the Internet doesn't mean that you have to abandon traditional conference calling. Most web conferencing products include some form of voice-calling feature, allowing you to talk to fellow participants while the meeting is in progress. While some services include a free teleconferencing option, others charge to use this feature. Beware, long-distance fees may accrue. Also, one should check if the AAP third-party teleconferencing provider can be integrated with online meeting tools.

• **VoIP**
  Besides teleconferencing, some online-meeting services also offer audio communication in the form of Voice-over-Internet-Protocol (VoIP), a technology
that allows users to make telephone calls over the web. Generally speaking, VoIP offers cheaper calling rates than teleconferencing services, though the quality of the calls is often not as good. Note that in order to use a VoIP application, all callers will need to purchase headsets that can be connected to their computers.

- **Videoconferencing**
  If you need your online meetings to closely resemble an in-person gathering, consider a service that offers a videoconferencing feature. Videoconferencing lets participants with webcams — small, inexpensive cameras that send images over the Internet — to broadcast a video image of themselves into the online meeting. While videoconferencing can help lend an immediate feel to web-based meetings, many services that offer this feature will also charge your organization a fee to use them.

**Other Considerations**

- **Recording**
  One advantage that many web conferencing services have over in-person meetings is the ability to record entire meetings (including audio) as a video file. This way, if meeting attendees forget important points or need to reference presentations at a later date, they can simply view the recording rather than contact other participants with questions. Some services allow meeting initiators to store recordings on their local machines, while others host the files on their own site.

- **Subscription Versus Pay-Per-Use Plans**
  How often your organization plans to hold online meetings is a key factor in deciding whether you should select a service with a subscription model or one that charges you on a per-meeting basis. If you just need to hold occasional, small meetings, a pay-per-use plan — which generally costs around 30 cents a minute per participant — might be the most economical choice. On the other hand, nonprofits that need to hold larger weekly meetings may find it cheaper to subscribe to a service that charges a flat monthly (or yearly) fee for a set number of participants. If you do decide that a subscription makes the most sense for your organization, check to see whether the service locks you into a contract, and make sure you’re comfortable with the terms.

If you’re curious as to how various commercial and free web conferencing services stack up, download the comparison chart from the following URL:

which compares the features of the following ten products:

- Adobe Acrobat ConnectPro
- DimDim
- GoToWebinar (donations available to eligible organizations at TechSoup)
- IBM Lotus Live
- Microsoft Office Live Meetings
- ReadyTalk (donations available to eligible organizations at TechSoup)
- Cisco Webex Meeting
- Yugma Pro
- YuuGuu
- Zoho Meeting

Let’s sum up with some Presenter Tips for Success for the Webinar:

1. Use more visuals

This is the major difference between a face to face presentation and a webinar. In a presentation, the audience can see you and if there’s no visual slide, their attention will be focused on you. But in a webinar, if there’s no visual or you have the same visual for an extended length of time, their visual attention will wander.

Use lots of slides, and include animation. Keep things moving visually. Diagrams, pictures, even live demos can keep the material dynamic and fresh.

2. Highlight what you want people to look at on the slides

Most webinar software does have drawing tools that you can use to draw attention to items on a slide, or build highlights in via animation.

3. Avoid slides that you only want to show for a few seconds

Note - There may be a slight time lag between the presenter clicking on the slide and attendees seeing the slide. A short slide may be seen by some attendees only very briefly. Don’t build a sequence of slides that is reliant on exact synchronization between the slides and what you say.
4. Keep your photo up during the presentation. This allows people to visualise you talking to them during the webinar.

5. Show a slide while you’re taking questions – Here’s an example:

6. Have a printout of slides and make available on website prior to webinar.

7. Use headphones to prevent audio feedback via your PC speakers and a very disconcerting echo.

8. Use a remote control to retain the the feeling of presenting to a face to face audience!

9. Turn off all your phones and dogs (since our presenters will be in remote locations), including your landline and cellphone.

10. Have a clock – use if during rehearsal and during the presentation.

11. Rehearsal – Remember: You are using two layers of technology - your slideware and the webinar software. So once you’ve got your basic presentation well-rehearsed, rehearse using the webinar software.

12. Let people know when you’re going to be silent. Your voice conveys your presence. If you’re going to be silent, for example, you’re going to take a sip of water, let your audience know.

13. Use micro pauses

The long dramatic audio pauses you might use for effect in a face to face presentation don’t work so well in a webinar context. Attendees might be concerned that they’ve lost the sound! Instead of long dramatic pauses use micro pauses. You can build micro pauses into your speaking by chunking. Chunking is speaking in short bursts of words with silence in between. A chunk of words can be a phrase or a short sentence. Chunking has three additional benefits which you can read about in these posts:

14. Break for questions
Decide in advance and inform the audience about questions. For example, attendees can type in their question at the time that it occurred to them and your Assistant can monitor the Question Blackboard. Either stop periodically, or answer the questions at the end of the talk. Consider some way that Assistant can acknowledge that question has been received.

15. Have someone else ask you questions

16. Have a spotter (more Assistants) participating as if they are in the audience.

The spotter’s task was to let your Assistant know (via the chat pane that only the Assistant could see) if anything went wrong from an attendee’s point of view.

17. Have a Plan B

If something went wrong with my computer, then the slides could be shown from another computer. An alternative is to have another computer ready to go, should your primary computer crash.

Resources:

Click on the hyperlinks below for more information about Software and service providers

- ACT Conferencing
- Adobe Acrobat Connect
- BigBlueButton
- BrightTALK
- Calliflower
- Citrix Online: owner of Netviewer, GoToMeeting, GoToWebinar
- Dimdim closed to new registration as of January 6, 2011
- Elluminate
- Epiphany Systems
- Fuze Meeting
- Genesys Meeting Center
- Glance
• **Google Wave** suspended as of August 4, 2010
• **IBM Lotus Sametime** and IBM **LotusLive**
• **InterCall**
• **MegaMeeting**
• **Microsoft Office Live Meeting**
• **Mikogo**
• **MSN**
• **Netviewer**
• **Nefsis**
• **OmNovia Technologies**
• **Openmeetings**
• **Oracle Beehive**
• **ooVoo**
• **PGi**
• **RHUB Communications Inc.**
• **Saba Software**
• **ShowDocument**
• **Skype**
• **TalkPoint**
• **TeamViewer**
• **TimeBridge**
• **Tokbox**
• **VenueGen**
• **VeriShow**
• **VIA3**
• WebEx
• WebTrain
• WiZiQ
• Yuuguu
• Zoho

As of 3/3/2012