

Webinars Best Practices

Ever hosted a webinar, or passed on a meeting to a fellow employee, only to be embarrassed by the outcome?

It is said that we learn more from our failures than from our successes. As a person who has been doing webinars, ever since the word (and the technology has existed), here is what I have learned. Also, I will sum things up by saying the law P for Pierre: Proper Prior Preparation Prevents Poor Performance. **BE PREPARED:**

A day prior to your webinar:

- **TEST** the webinar service you are about to use with your current browser. Have at least an alternative browser ready in case changes occur. Does the **AUDIO** portion of the conference work? Does sharing your screen work? It is preferred to use a **HEADSET**. Use a quality headset – there **IS** a difference. Practice with a fellow and ask them how you sound. Kill all noisy items in your room. Fans are louder than you think – don't go presenting from a server room. If you don't want to take chances, **USE A LAND LINE!** And don't **EVER** use a speakerphone.
- **PRACTICE** the mechanics of the Webinar tool you are using. Avoid saying, this is the first time I use this service, or they have changed the software – you **WILL** lose credibility. **BE PREPARED**. Know the routines
- **PRACTICE** your webinar **INSIDE AND OUT** – know it almost **BY HEART!!!!**
- Test your **PPT** presentation and/or **EVERYTHING** you are going to show. Have these shortcuts **ALL** available from a single folder or from your **DESKTOP** and in an area you can immediately go to. Fumbling loses audience. Also, nothing worse than spelling or grammatical mistakes in a presentation. Don't just rely on spell check. Read it and Fix it. You will be surprised what you find. And just because another marketing person did that already **DOES NOT** mean it is perfect.
- A day prior to the webinar. Refrain from doing **PATCHES**, install new software or make drastic changes to your PC
- Do you use a cordless mouse or keyboard? Ever had them **DIE** in the middle of a presentation? I have. **CHARGE** any wireless device 1 day prior to the webinar
- When you send meeting invites, be sure to specify the **TIME ZONES** – many people are confused. Don't just say 1:00PM but rather state 11AM Pacific Time, 2:00PM Central or 3PM Eastern. You can leave off the Daylight and Savings – no one cares.
- If you are going to use a Video Cam – **BE AWARE** of what's behind you.
- Be prepared to **RECORD** your Webinar so you can publish it
- If you are going to use your laptop, be sure it is **PLUGGED IN** and it is **CHARGED**. Don't rely on a battery.
- If you can be on a **SEPARATE** network/bandwidth, that is the best way to make sure other people in the office's download don't affect your presentation
- Know that despite **ALL** your preparations – things can and will go wrong. **DO** you have another laptop immediately available? **DO**.

2 Hours prior to your webinar:

- SHUT DOWN any antivirus running services – nothing more annoying than the service starting to scan your PC while you are in the middle of a Webinar
- Restart your PC. That way you are starting without a minimum set of running services of programs
- Clear your Browser's history before the Webinar – and QUIT browsing. Your audience does need to know where you have been browsing (let's just leave it at that)
- When you right click on Word or Excel or PPT – it will show ALL the places you have been. Unpin anything from the list you don't need to show publically and PIN to the list what you will be showing AND ONLY what you will be showing
- Adjust your heat or AC so it is at the ideal for you and you are comfortable during the presentation
- Have a BOTTLED WATER close to you. Especially if you are going to talk for a while. Keep the lid CLOSED until you need to drink. DO NOT have a glass of water or ANY open container. You WILL end up spilling it on your keyboard or yourself during the presentation. Use a capped bottled water and a straw. Put the cap back ON the bottled water when done.
- Advise everyone in the office that you will be doing a webinar and to keep the noise level at a minimum. The public does not need to hear background conversations.
- Shut down any backup procedure that may accidentally kick in while you are presenting
- Shut down ANYTHING (a scheduled job) that may kick in while you are presenting
- PRINT YOUR SLIDES to a printer – that way if something is to go wrong with the Video option, YOU CAN CONTINUE to talk at least.
- Don't be too wordy. Don't write novels. STICK TO KEY BULLET POINTS

30 minutes prior to your webinar:

- Whether you think you need to or not – USE THE BATHROOM. Nothing worse than the urge to go in a 2 hour long webinar.
- If you present from your house / home office, be sure that your windows are down and your door is closed. How many times have we heard lawn mowers or the dog in the background? Get the doggy out or in a place where they will NOT be distracting to you. Refrain from scheduling your lawn people at the same time as your conference
- You WILL be using BANDWIDTH when you present. Shutdown your
 - a. Wireless cameras
 - b. Any device on your LAN that is NOT NECESSARY
 - c. Stop UPLOADING and DOWNLOADING stuff – this will affect your bandwidth and your presentation and if you are using a MIC, your audio. If you are in an office, advise others.
- Kill ANY background noise – that loud laser printer, that fan, etc... nothing more annoying than background noise
- And MOST importantly – SHUT DOWN YOUR EMAIL – and EVERYTHING ELSE. Don't forget to CLEAR your browser's history AGAIN. Be sure that when you launch your browser that it has not cached previous pages. Be sure you ONLY have the material you are going to present open AND NOTHING ELSE. NO DISTRACTIONS!
- Turn OFF your cell phone and ALL other phones. By off – I mean OFF not just on mute. You don't want your phone's update routine to KICK IN in the middle of your presentation and eating up all your bandwidth. Same with your tablet or ANY OTHER PC you can keep off.
- NO DISTRACTIONS!!!!!!

15 minutes prior to your webinar:

- LOG IN! Be there. You can play a backward timer on your PC – there many free or inexpensive routines that will display a backward timer.
- START ON TIME. Don't say we are waiting for a few more to show up. Not fair to those who did show up on time. Be precise. Start at EXACTLY the time.
- MUTE YOUR AUDIENCE. If you do not, someone invariably places you on hold and we get to hear their Music On Hold add. Then you are trying to find out who it is. Extremely disruptive.

During the webinar:

- Start by THANKING your audience for attending
- Introduce yourself, give your contact info – introduce everyone else that will be assisting you if applicable, alongside with their title, all contact info and their territory if applicable. This way your audience knows who their point of contact is/will be.
- Start by showing AN AGENDA. It should have the TIME you will be covering each topic and the person that will be presenting. Try to stick to the time (if possible) and the agenda. Nothing worse than a speaker getting off for minutes on a tangent. You still have to answer the questions, but bring the presentation back on track quickly
- If you are not a great speaker – you are NOT to present. It is not just the matter – it is the MANNER that counts. Enunciate correctly. Don't use slang.
- Be polite, considerate, kind.
- You WILL be asked difficult questions. Pause, think, act. NEVER react. If you do not know the answer, that's ok – let them know that you will find out and will get back with them AND DO! Don't make stuff up just to seem knowledgeable. Others may call you in on it
- Be HUMBLE yet CONFIDENT. You are here to EDUCATE not to show off what you know. Come across as a person willing to share information and a win-win attitude.
- Never mispronounce, use bad grammar or anything but perfect English!
- Stay away from jokes, political insinuation, political events that just happened or anything not 100% purely business – small talks are ok for 10 seconds but GET BACK ON TRACK! I was one time nearly booted out of a webinar for calling International FIFA Football SOCCER as most of my audience was not from the U.S. at that time. So even sports can have challenging situations. You are here to present. Not entertain. Be positive, pleasant, humble, kind but also on track!
- Interact with your audience if you can.
- Have a notepad ready to write down notes. Some speakers know how to split their screens and write down in a hidden area – but then forget that they are ALSO SHARING THAT! Did you just write down something embarrassing?
- Don't put your audience on hold – no one needs to hear your Music On Hold.