How to present an effective webinar

Webinars are live virtual events such as presentations, workshops or seminars that allow the attendees to participate using their computer or mobile device.

Webinars have several advantages including:

- ease of access
- re-usable learning resource
- the ability to include attendees in rural/regional and international settings

Here are some tips to assist you to deliver effective webinars. These tips have been summarised from Twelve tips to present an effective webinar by David R. Topor and Andrew E. Budson published in Medical Teacher, volume 42, 2020, issue 11.

Tip 1: Learn webinar logistics

- Be aware of the logistical information about the webinar such as the webinar date and time, expected duration (including time for attendee questions) and audience
- Ensure you know if the webinar is being recorded, how the webinar will be evaluated and whether attendees will have access to the slides before, during or after the presentation

Tip 2: Conduct a needs assessment

- Conduct a needs assessment by asking the webinar organiser and/or surveying attendees
- Determine what the webinar organiser is hoping you can teach
- If possible, directly survey the attendees to determine their current knowledge level and goals for attending the webinar

Tip 3: Write specific learning objectives

- If possible, write the learning objectives based on the needs assessment data
- Use a learning taxonomy to write action-orientated learning objectives
- Use these learning objectives to develop the title for the presentation that both summarises what attendees will learn and motivates them to attend

Tip 4: Attend a webinar

- Attend a webinar to understand the format and gain experience of being an audience member
- Take note of the layout of the screen and if they use interactive tools such as polling questions, break out rooms and discussion areas
- Think about how you could use similar tools to increase participant involvement in your webinar

Tip 5: Create clear and engaging slides

Clear and engaging slides are particularly important for webinars as attendees may only see the slides and not the presenter and they may participate using their phones which have limited screen space.

Ideas for creating clear and engaging slides:

- Use a simple slide template
- Avoid using red and green colours to accommodate those who may be colour blind
- 32 point Arial, Helvetica and Tahoma is suggested
- Clearly define terms and concepts in your presentation as attendees may be from other states or countries
- Only include key phrases and essential information on the slides
- Images can enhance the text on the slide. Use images that you either have permission to use or are identified as acceptable for re-use
- Include a slide at the end of the presentation summarising the main points

Tip 6: Develop interactive learning activities

- Identify ways to interact with the attendees such as using polling questions or break out rooms
- Polling questions allow the presenter to quickly ascertain current attendee knowledge or identify the number of attendees who have experienced something related to the topic
- Break out rooms allows attendees to join smaller groups and complete exercises or take part in discussions
- Plan your timing for interactive activities as often these take longer via webinar than in person
- Ensure you know how the interactive features work and practice these before the live webinar
- Clearly communicate preferences about asking questions at the start of your presentation

Tip 7: Familiarise yourself with the technology and develop a backup plan

- Practice how to move the slides forward/backwards, respond to questions and use the interactive features
- Be aware of the role of the webinar organiser e.g. will the organiser introduce you? Will the organiser moderate questions?
- Develop a backup plan with the webinar organiser if there are technical issues and have a paper copy of your slides with you

Tip 8: Practice your presentation multiple times

- Practise your presentation using the webinar technology
- Time yourself to make sure you are within the allotted time frame and take into account the time for the organiser to introduce you
- Use 'you' language in the presentation e.g. 'During today's session you will learn…' rather than 'Today I will talk about…' Using 'you' will help create a more one-on-one relationship with the attendees despite them not being physically in the room with you

Tip 9: Be organised, prepared and energetic

- Log onto the webinar platform 15-30 minutes before your webinar and complete a sound check
- Ensure you present in a quiet location and minimise potential noises. Limit potential distractions such as closing any computer programs that sends you notifications
- Position the screen at eye level and look at the camera while presenting and not the slides

Tip 10: Evaluate participant learning

- Use a post-webinar survey to evaluate learning outcomes and satisfaction with the presentation

Tip 11: Learn from feedback

- Ask attendees, peers and the webinar organiser for specific feedback on the presentation
- Take time to self-assess how the presentation went

Tip 12: Share your experience as a presenter with the organiser

- Provide feedback to the webinar organiser on the aspects that went well and those that could be improved in the future

Reference – to read the full article click the underlined DOI below

David R. Topor & Andrew E. Budson (2020) Twelve tips to present an effective webinar, Medical Teacher, 42:11, 1216-1220, DOI: 10.1080/0142159X.2020.1775185