

How to Deliver an Engaging Online Presentation?

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Abstract. After this Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a growing invitation for business people and educators to deliver presentations remotely especially through Webinars instead of in person, as the former offers more benefits particularly the ability to reach out to a geographically more expansive audience and the prospects of time and cost savings for the those who host it, resource persons who deliver the contents and audience. To be able to fully leverage on such benefits, effective webinar presentation strategies are needed. In this article, strategies proposed by many scholars are synthesized and presented in eight points that could enrich the effectiveness of webinars in line with the best practices. In overview, the strategies include: knowing the whereabouts, why and how the webinars are organized, empathizing the audience, delivering clear contents and attracting the audience, staying prepared, getting to know the technology, keeping momentum, and weighing the effectiveness of the delivery. In all, it is hoped that these tips would facilitate presenters in improving the efficacy and quality of their webinar presentations.

Keywords: Webinar, Online Presentation, Effective Presentation, Pandemic, Covid-19

1 Introduction

The current global climate where the spread of Covid-19 has halted classes, lectures, group meetings and conferences as well as travelling. During this pandemic, there is growing need for educators to do presentations through webinars instead of in person. Webinars entail virtual events that are broadcast live and can be in the form of presentations, workshops, and seminars where participations are enabled via the usage of personal computers or mobile devices. Educational webinars are now growing in popularity as a means for conveying knowledge and connecting educators from various locations. Webinars have been proven to be well-received by participants and effective in transmitting valuable knowledge. The proliferation of webinars means that educators too will be presented with growing opportunities to become webinar presenters. This article hence presents strategies that educators can use to make their webinar presentations more effective and impactful since these strategies have been proven to be successful based on experiences as well as according to the best practices suggested in relevant literatures.

2 Strategies

There are many communication systems or webinar tools available in the market. To name a few; Demio, WebinarNinja, GoToWebinar, WebEx, ClickMeeting, Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams. You may be using any of these. However, if you want to deliver an effective webinar, the following tips would help you deliver an effective and catchy webinar. The proliferation of webinars means that educators too will be presented with growing opportunities to become webinar presenters. This article reviews the important guidelines proposed by experts and researchers (e.g.: [1]) that can be taken into account by educators and presenters when delivering webinars.

2.1 When and Where

You should gather information about the arrangements of webinars including the date and time of broadcast, projected duration inclusive of time for question and answer sessions, and the composition of the audience. It also helps to determine beforehand whether the webinar will be accompanied by a live video stream that will allow participants to watch you speak.

Determine whether the webinar will be recorded and archived for viewing, or if any of the participants will be physically there in the same room with you during the presentation. You should also find out if your presentation materials including slides and handouts are downloadable during the webinar or in advanced so that the participants can familiarize themselves with the content first.

Determine how the webinar will be evaluated and whether the evaluations will be made available to you [2]. If no evaluations will be conducted, inquire whether you can dispense your own evaluation pre and post presentation so as to gauge the participants' level of learning and satisfaction of the webinar.

Confirm the dates for when you are required to submit your materials to the organizer, and inquire if there will be any practice session. Many speakers only begin to inquire about arrangements when the presentation date is already near. By then, it would already be too late to make any changes especially if the presenter's plans differ significantly from that of the organizer's. Late material submissions are highly inadvisable because it could affect the participants' ability to download materials in advanced as preparation.

2.2 Why and How

Requirement analysis can be carried out via inquiries to the organizers. Ascertain the organizer's expectations of what would come out of your webinar teaching, specifically the kind of new knowledge, skills or abilities that the organizer is expecting the participants to acquire. It is also important to determine whether the webinar is a one-off presentation or part of a series. In case of the latter, it would be good to determine the topics that precede and follow your presentation. Gain some insight about how the organizer envisions the fit of your presentation with the overall goal of the series of presentations. If opportunity presents itself, you could conduct direct surveys on participants to ascertain their current level of knowledge as well as their goals for participating in your webinar [3]. Finally ask yourself about how your presentation can help the participants in addressing their current issues.

Using data from the requirement analysis, jot down the key learning objectives. If your webinar is part of a bigger curriculum, inquire the organizer about specific knowledge, skills, or abilities that the participants may need in their attempt in addressing their current issues.

Ask yourself if you want the participants to demonstrate increased knowledge on a certain topic or to be able to apply certain skills in certain situations [4]. The development of appropriate objectives for the participants at varying learning stages can be facilitated by learning taxonomies. For instance, beginners may benefit more from knowledge-based learning objectives whilst advanced learners may be more suited with learning objectives that focus on applied knowledge. Based on the learning objectives, develop a presentation title that reflects both the outcomes of participating in the webinar and the motivating factor for the participants to attend [3].

2.3 Put Your Leg In One's Shoes

To gain first hand insight on the format and what it feels like to be an audience member, you should take part in an actual webinar. It would be ideal to attend a webinar that utilizes a similar presentation platform as yours. Learn about how the screen is laid out and how the information is presented. Figure out your own preferences and plan the necessary changes which you can discuss with the organizer. Play around with the interactive tools for the webinar including the polling questions, break-out rooms, and discussion area. Study their impacts and how you can utilize them to prompt greater audience engagement [1].

2.4 Cristal Clear and Beaconing

To ensure that your presentation slide is clear and fetching, use large fonts and well-designed and organized images. This is particularly important for webinars because the slides are the only thing that the participants will be able to see. Some participants may be using mobile phones with small screens. Hence, the webinar slides must be able to convey the presented information. The slide design template should be consistently simple throughout the presentation without the use of distracting patterned backgrounds or multiple colors. Red and green should not be used as participants who are color blind would not be able to differentiate anything. With light backgrounds, use dark fonts. This is because texts that have the same luminance as their background are hard to read [1]. Preferable font size and types would be 32-point sans serif Arial, Helvetica, or Tahoma. The font on all the slides should be kept uniformed; bold fonts should only be used to indicate emphasis. Meanwhile, capital letters should not be italicized. Do not use intricate fonts or graphics, animations and sound effects as these are unsuitable for webinars. Website links stated on your slides must entail the website's full title and preferably full web address or Uniform Resource Locator [5]. Underline all texts that are hyperlinked to a different website so as to help color blind individuals to identify the hyperlink [5]. All terms and concepts used in your presentation must be defined as clearly as possible. Participants from other states or countries may be unfamiliar with certain acronyms, abbreviations, or cultural references. Instead of using full texts, state only key phrases and important information on your slides. The slides can be used to summarize the main themes and messages of the presentation which can then be expanded during the actual presentation [3]. It is more impactful to state only one point per slide together with a fetching image instead of stating three to four points on a single slide. Sequential presentations of points on one single slide should only be for points that relate to the same topic or theme.

Text on the slides can be enhanced with the use of images that visually represent the presented concepts. The images you use must be clear and of high quality and of which you have attained permission for use or have been identified as suitable for re-use. If you can tell that an image is too small or unclear for the audience to see, do not use it. Number your slides

and refer to them according to their numbers as you go through your presentation. This is particularly helpful for participants who are following the webinar on audio and have the downloaded the slides in advanced. Advanced distributions of the printed slides enable the participation of individuals who live in locations where internet live-streams are hard to access. At the end of the presentation, provide a summary of all the key points [3]. The slides must first be proofread for spelling and grammar mistakes [6]; after you have done so, ask another person to proofread them again. Reading the slides out loud can facilitate the proofreading process.

2.5 Do Your Homework

Use the webinar platform to practice your presentation several times [3]. While presenting, time yourself to ensure that you did not exceed the assigned time. Remember the time needed for the organizer to introduce you. Consider what material you can delete if you end up running low. Ask colleagues to listen to your presentation, and use the webinar platform to do so, if possible. Many webinar presenters tend to stand up when presenting, because this can enhance spirit and excitement. You may experiment with various presenting style, such as standing, sitting, or using hand gestures, and rate the effectiveness of each style by asking for feedbacks from colleagues. However, bear in mind of any technological problems that could arise while practicing, and take your time with the webinar organizer to discuss about the issues and how to tackle them [6].

2.6 Be Tech-Savvy and Early Bird

Before the presentation begins, get familiar with the webinar platform such as learning how to move the slides forward and backward, answering the questions in the chat box and using interactive features of the platform. Make clear of the positions the organizer needs you to perform; these include posting slides and handouts, setting up the forum for the webinar and moderating the chat box. You can use your phone to check the quality of the webinar audio. In general, the usage of headset, or a handset connected to a landline is preferred rather than a speaker phone or cell phone. If technical problems occur, it is necessary to establish a backup plan with the webinar organizer [6]. Account for various circumstances like when there is power outage, or when the phone lines are dead [6]. Find out if there is a webinar checklist for planning which outlines the roles and responsibilities of each individual [7]. Depending on the issue, this planning will enable you to identify the most suitable person to refer to. Create a system to communicate individually with the presenter during the webinar, to ensure that the technology is functioning properly and to address issues that may transpire [1]. In case your computer, or webinar platform, or internet connection is not working, it is always a good idea to bring a copy of your slides and handouts [3]. These materials can be saved on various devices that are attainable, such as in your inbox, or in a pen drive.

It is advisable to log on to the webinar platform at least 20 minutes before the webinar begins. Do not forget to check out the sound system with the webinar organizer. If you use a battery-powered laptop, do full-charge the laptop before the presentation. If you are presenting through a video, wear an appropriate dress and make sure your back surroundings are clean and organized. You should always remind yourself to look at the camera instead of the slides when presenting. It is better to present in a space that is quiet, and able to eliminate potential noises. The sounds on your computer, phone, mobile device, and any other electronics in the room should be muted. You also can ask the organizer to mute any sounds from the webinar platform, such as the notifications sounds that pop out when participants join the meeting.

Any computer programs that could keep you distracted, such as email notifications, should be closed during your presentation. Place a 'Busy' or 'Do not disturb' note on your door and keep a glass of water and a clock near you. The screen should be placed at eye level, and make ergonomic changes to maintain a comfortable position for your head and neck. If there are any external websites that you would like the participants to enter during the presentation, the link can be pasted in the discussion box. It is always good to smile and be enthusiastic while the presentation is running!

2.7 Do Not Let Them Sleep

Establish some form of interactivity with the participants during your presentation [3]. There may be a number of possibilities that you can use such as creating polling questions, organizing break-out discussion rooms, holding discussion box conversations, and using images like raising hands letting the participants to indicate that they agree or have a question [8]. Consult the organizer and find out about available interactive features and effective activities in the past. The use of polling questions will enable presenters to instantly gauge the participants' current level of knowledge or determine how many participants have experienced a related event to the topic at hand [9]. Meanwhile, online break-out discussion rooms divide participants into smaller groups to complete certain exercises. Interactive activities during webinars require proper time planning as they usually take longer than when conducted in person.

Participants may engage better with the use of handouts if they are accompanied with questions or learning activities. Handouts should ideally be downloadable and utilized all through the course of the webinar. You must also ensure interactivity with participants who are not on the online webinar platform i.e. those participating via audio only and those who are physically present there. Reading out loud, discussion box, questions and comments can facilitate the inclusion of audio-only participants [8]. Make sure you understand how the webinar's interactive features work before actually using them. Determine if questions will be asked during or at the end of the session, or if the questions will be given via the discussion box or the phone feature. As there is a possibility that you may have answered the participants' questions at some point of your presentation, it is then best to leave the Q&A session by the end of the webinar instead of throughout.

There are several possible drawbacks in allowing questions to be asked using audio during the presentation including the prevalence of background noise and disruptions due to poor audio quality [9]. State your preferences about asking questions clearly to the participants at the very beginning of your presentation via an introductory slide and request for the participants to put their microphones in mute [1]. You should also devise plans on engaging active participations. Use polling questions to see if the number of responses corresponds to the number of participants. Remind unresponsive participants to answer the poll and about the importance of being involved. With a smaller group of participants, questions can be asked directly through audio or the discussion box. From the onset, inform the participants that you plan to ask individualized questions so that they can prepare.

2.8 Check If They Learned from You

Feedback can be obtained in a variety of ways, including a post-webinar survey of participants, conversations with colleagues, reviews from participants during and after the webinar, and your own self-evaluation. You can ask the organizer to provide you with a copy of the comments in the discussion box that participants submit. Encourage the organizer to distribute

the feedback survey directly after the webinar, instead of delaying it to weeks or months, to make it easier for the participants to remember specific webinar information and potentially increase the participation rates. You may take time to evaluate yourself on how the presentation had been, and how to strengthen your ability to present in the future. It is beneficial for us to self-evaluate as soon as the webinar ends to help remember the aspects that went well, and aspects that would like to be improved in the future.

Evaluate your presentation results to see if the participants achieved the learning goals of the presentation. You can determine the learning outcomes and presentation's satisfaction by using a post-webinar survey. Ask questions directly discussing the effect of using a webinar platform on the experience, learning and interactivity of the participants. Additionally, you can ask knowledge-based questions to assess progress before and after the webinar. Lastly, consider surveying participants during the weeks or months following the webinar to find out whether the research has been put into action. The presenter should provide a feedback from his or her point of view to the webinar organizers on the things that went well and those that can be improved in the future. Provide input on all aspects of the webinar including the invitees, arrangements, rehearsal sessions, the presentation itself and the data obtained from the assessment.

Hearing this feedback is important for webinar organizers, so that they can make improvements for future presentations. They use these feedbacks to make improvements to webinar preparation leading to an improved webinar experience for presenters and attendees. In education, webinars are being widely used to present information and teach skills. Webinars allow broad application of presentations and can reduce the organizers and participant's costs. In using the tips outlined here, it is expected that educators will be able to deliver excellent quality webinars. These hints are beacons of attention among the key points to consider and the list might grow further.

3 Conclusions

In education, webinars are being widely used to present information and teach skills. Webinars allow broad application of presentations and can reduce the organizers and participant's costs. In using the tips outlined in this article, my expectation is that educators will be able to deliver excellent quality webinars. More research is needed in order to develop methods that can improve the quality of webinars and assess their effect on participants. In order to better understand their impact on learning, future studies should empirically review the techniques outlined in this paper. Based on the results, such techniques can be refined. As time passes, I hope there will be a greater emphasis on using empirically validated teaching methods while delivering webinar presentations.

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