How to Use Social Media to Increase the Impact of Your Webinars

ON24

SOCIAL NETWORKING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Social networking can be a valuable tool in the promotion and delivery of your webinars. As your social footprint grows, so does your ability to drive registration to your events, create a more engaging virtual experience and extend the reach of your content. This white paper will highlight some guidelines and best practices on how social networking can be used to increase the value of your webinars. Sound interesting? Perhaps you would like to tweet about it?

YOUR FOOTPRINT IS ONLY AS BIG AS YOUR FOOT

Social Networking has changed the way people communicate with each other and the world around them. What does this mean? Well, social networking is all about the immediacy of NOW. People have become habituated to checking their social networks, almost constantly, both taking-in and communicating-out information that seems applicable to their lives.

The same goes for companies. Social and professional networks allow organizations of all sizes to engage both internal and external audiences in a constant dialogue. Never before have we had the opportunity to communicate so easily with such targeted audiences. The problem is that social networking is only as good as your ability to develop a large social footprint. If you haven't established a strong social presence, all the blogging in the world won't make a difference. Think of the tree falling in the proverbial forest. Building your social network is the key to reaping the benefits of social media.

As we explore different ways to integrate social media into the webinar experience, remember that the benefits will grow over time as your social network expands. The more you use social media tools, the more effective they become.

WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

"Social Media integrates technology, social interaction, and content creation using the 'wisdom of crowds' to collaboratively connect online information. Through social media, people or groups can create, organize, edit, comment on, combine, and share content".

— Howto.gov

A simpler way to say it is that social media has become the primary way most people communicate online. While businesses have been slower to adopt social media, it's hard to ignore its likely future as an important tool for companies to effectively communicate with their growing number of constituencies.

TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

While social media is still a relatively young concept, the many types of social networking tools that have been developed over the last few years is impressive, including: blogs, social networks, professional networks, microblogs, Wikis, discussion forums, podcasting, communities, photo sharing, video sharing, social bookmarking, social Q&A forums and many more.



4 WAYS TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO IMPROVE YOUR WEBINARS

1. DRIVING REGISTRATION

When you think about the various tools used to promote webinars, a few typically come to mind: email, website, ad placement. According to most studies, emailing your customer and prospect lists is responsible for a majority of your event registrations. Surprisingly, in many of the same studies, social media is viewed as a far less effective methodology to drive people to your events. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't do it.

Most effective methods for driving registration

1. Your prospect list (71%)
2. Your website
3. 1-on-1 invitation from sales
4. List rental / display ad sponsorships
5. Cross promotion by partner / guest speaker
6. Social platforms (Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook etc)
7. SEM
8. Print
9. Direct mail

ON24 Benchmarks Study 2011

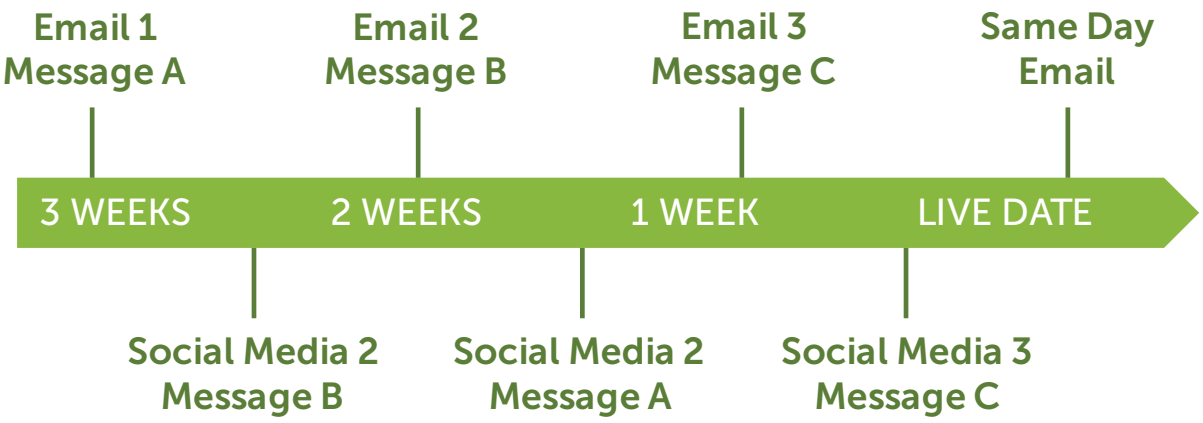
The primary reason companies have had less success using social media to promote webinars is because they have not developed a strong social presence or following. There are two critical steps in using social media to drive registration to your events:

1. Diligently network with social media groups/thought leaders/media outlets/forums that are relevant to your industry.

2. Communicate regularly with your social community on high-value content and upcoming events. Consistent updates on high-interest events, will increase the value of following you, and will increase the attention paid to your messages.

Promote from Different Angles

The more time you have to promote your webinars, the more opportunities you will have to drive registration. Adding social media to your marketing mix gives you the chance to communicate to your target audience, at different times, with different messages. This is important as your email may not be read at a period of "receptivity" but your tweet, or post, might. Or perhaps one message will resonate stronger than another. This strategy works particularly well when your promotional campaign synchronizes your social media and email promotions in a way that maximizes the potential exposure to your message.



By spreading out your emails, and social outreach, over a longer period of time, you have the opportunity to utilize a "staggered" approach to driving registration to your webinar. It works like this:

1. Choose three or more different angles to promote your event

There are many ways to describe an upcoming event. Possible angles include: General description, focus on speakers, relevant content angles, value to viewer, establishing a need. Create 2-3 different themes for promoting your webinar.

2. Create a staggered schedule

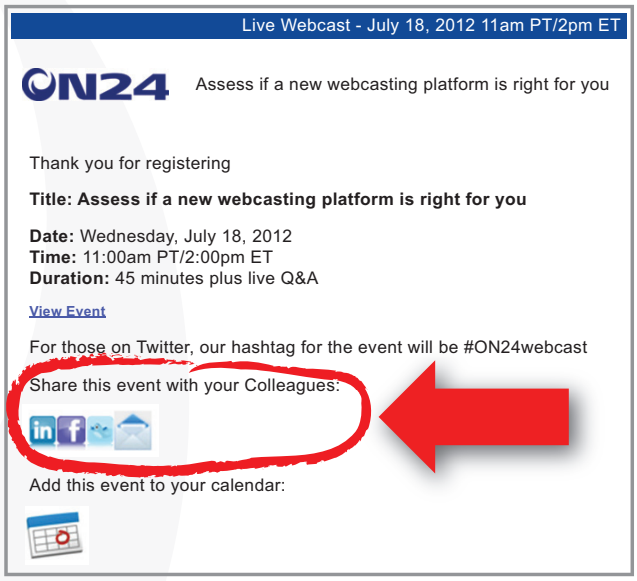
Build a promotional calendar to deliver each of these messages, using both email and social media, where you stagger the delivery dates and the promotional messages. See Chart 1.

3. Analyze results and improve process

Analyze the effectiveness of your themes by measuring the registrations driven from each communication. This can be accomplished with campaign tracking tools and creating unique URLs for each email or social outreach. The more intelligence you get on success rates, the better able you are to choose effective promotional themes for your next events.

Integrate social media into your registration and landing pages

Even when a majority of your registrations are driven by more traditional marketing methods, such as email or your website, there is still an opportunity to leverage the power of social media. By placing links to social media platforms on your registration, conversion pages, and reminder emails, you encourage registrants to promote your webinars through their own social networks. As an example, you can create a Facebook link that will place your webinar on a registrant's public calendar. This automatically exposes an increasingly larger, and more targeted, audience to your event. You also provide an opportunity for your registrants to personally communicate about your webinars to their social networks.



Integrate Social Media into registration conversion pages and reminder emails



Social media amplifies your message

2. EXTENDING THE CONVERSATION

Social media can be a powerful tool to increase the level of engagement that you have with your attendees and well beyond. By integrating social media tools directly into your webcasts, you will instantly reap the benefits of expanding the reach of your content to a far greater audience than just the one attending your event. By allowing your audience to react to your presentations on social forums, you extend the conversation from the confines of your webinar, to the far reaches of your attendee's social networks.

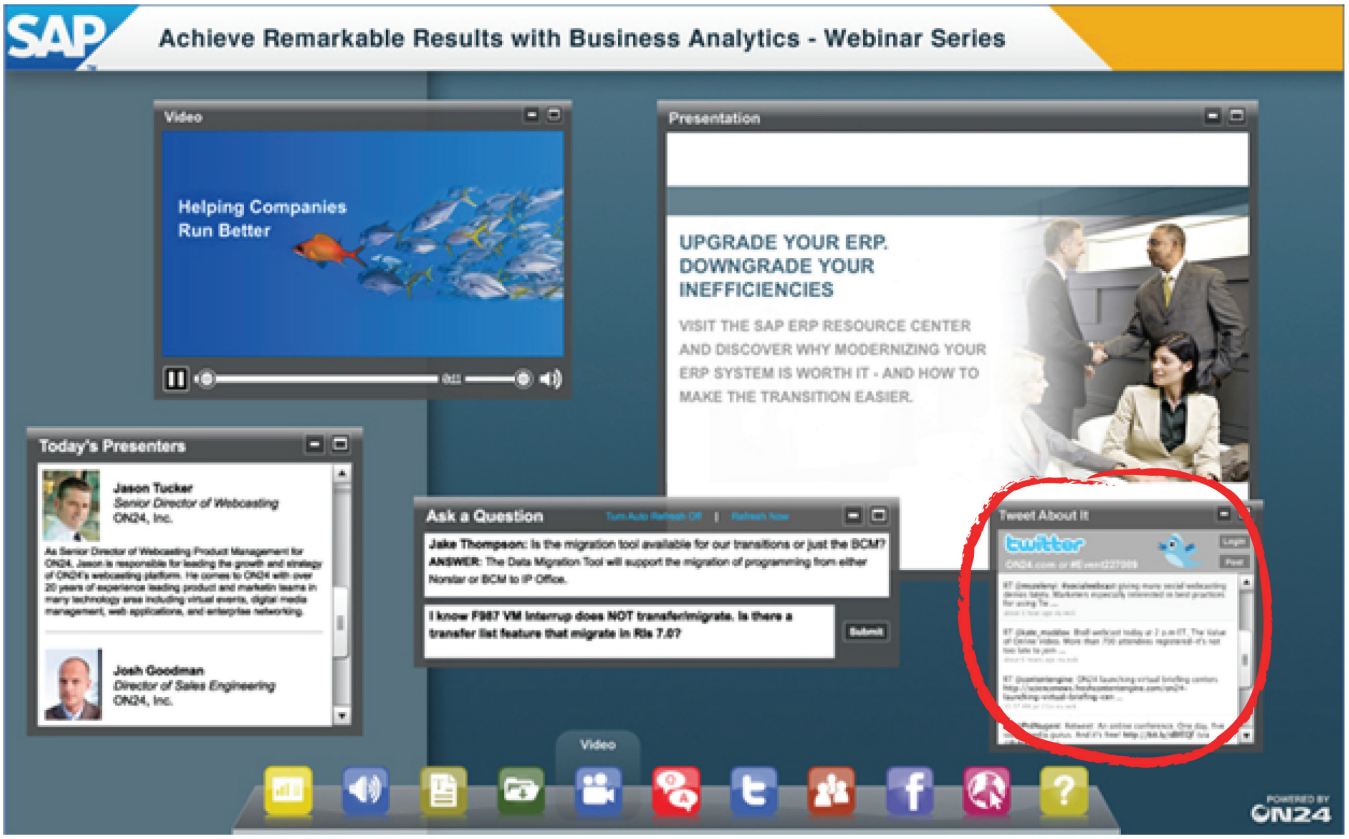
This process amplifies your messaging and further promotes your events.

Won't they leave my webinar?

Perhaps the most often asked question about integrating social media into a webinar is: Won't this encourage people to leave my webinar? The truth is exactly the opposite. In today's socially networked world, people want to communicate their thoughts about your webinar, or content, as they are experiencing it. If you don't provide access to their social networks, they will leave your webinar to have those conversations in another window. In today's socially networked world, nobody saves a thought for later. Once an audience member leaves the webinar console, the chances of them drifting to another task (ie: checking email or chatting with a co-worker) greatly increases. By providing access to common social media tools in your webinars, you give your audience members an opportunity to express themselves without disengaging from your presentation.

How to integrate social media into a webinar

Simply placing a link in your webinar to a social networking site is not effective. Once again, you are sending your audience member out of the event, which is not what you want. Social networking tools have to be imbedded into the webinar console in a way that makes them usable directly from that environment. As an example, imbedding a Twitter feed with a pre-selected hash tag, allows your audience to tweet about your event without ever leaving it. The hash tag keeps them on topic.



Integrating social media directly into a webinar

3. GETTING FEEDBACK ON YOUR WEBINARS

Another benefit of integrating social media into your webinars is that it provides you with instant feedback on your presentations, speakers, and content. Perhaps more than end-of-event surveys, social media delivers unscripted analysis of your webinars which can be highly valuable as you develop future presentations. Every bit of feedback, can help you to learn what worked, what didn't, and why. While surveys can provide some basic webinar ratings, the very nature of social media encourages more uncensored commentary. The more you can learn from this feedback, and make the necessary adjustments, the better your future webinars will become.

4. ENHANCING INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Social media has also become valuable in the development of webinars for internal communications and training. Enterprise focused social networking tools, like Yammer and Chatter, have been developed to provide companies with an internal social forum that allows employees to share their thoughts within their companies and departments. Integrating these tools into company webcasts, like town hall presentations or CEO addresses, can greatly enhance the internal dialogue. In addition, social tools for idea generation and group collaboration have been created to allow employees to suggest new ideas and concepts, post them, and have their peers rate them, comment and even suggest other ideas. This "group learning" process has been a powerful tool for managers and trainers to inspire team building and collaboration while delivering internal events.

CONCLUSION: ADDING VALUE TO YOUR WEBINAR

Despite the fact that online social forums have been around for many years, social media is still considered a relatively new concept. It's potential for driving business communications seems unlimited. Unfortunately, for many companies, leveraging the benefits of social media is still a mystery.

Integrating social media into webinars is a very practical way to help drive registration to your events, create a more engaging virtual experience, extend the reach of your messaging, and provide you with more direct feedback on your presentations and content. Whether you are developing webinars for marketing, training or internal communications, social media can significantly increase the impact of your events and the return on your investment.

WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT?

Become a part of the ON24 social community

http://twitter.com/on24

http://www.facebook.com/ON24inc

http://www.linkedin.com/company/on24

http://www.youtube.com/user/ON24Inc

Quick TIP: Managing the Conversation

One of the great benefits of integrating social media into your events is that it encourages an open dialogue about your presentation in real-time. It's important to remember however, that this discussion will go on, with or without you. If you don't pay attention, you might miss an opportunity to answer a question, clarify a point, or correct a misconception. More importantly, you don't want to miss a chance to learn which audience members have a specific interest in your products or solutions.

A best practice for integrating social media into your webinars is to pre-assign a member of your staff (perhaps someone from PR, marketing, or sales) to monitor your integrated social networks during your event. This ensures that if there is a conversation about your content, you are a part of it.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SUCCESS AND FAILURE

In the global marketplace, well-educated employees, partners, suppliers, and customers are a critical success factor. Companies across industries are using virtual corporate university solutions such as the ON24 virtual environment to achieve this goal. These organizations are providing highly effective learning experiences to their global workforces at much lower cost compared to traditional learning methods.

For more information on the benefits of the ON24 virtual environment, contact us at 877.202.9599 or visit www.on24.com.

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