Ten Common Webinar Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

ON24

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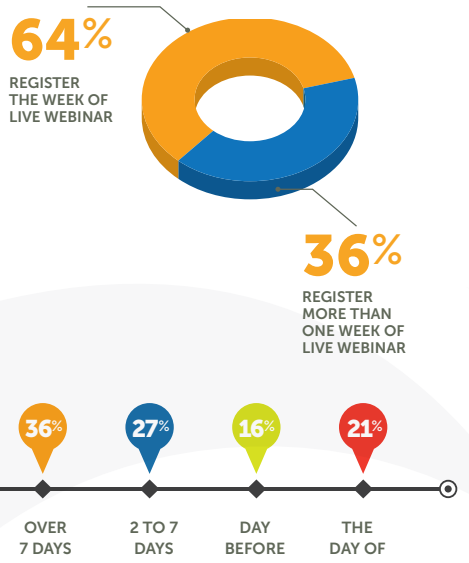
INTRODUCTION

Webinars have become one of today's most important and productive tools for lead generation, pipeline acceleration and the education of customers and prospects. As more and more marketers rely on webinars to engage with their customers, competition for the time and attention of those customers intensifies. Today, simply giving a webinar isn't enough. Companies must deliver great webinars that really stand out.

What makes a successful webinar? Well, that depends on who you ask.
For webinar audiences, success is primarily defined by the experience they have and the information they take away to help them solve a problem. For webinar producers, success may be defined by the number of attendees and the quality of the leads. Unfortunately, many webinars fall short of success. Almost always, it is because companies delivering webinars make one or more of 10 common webinar mistakes that occur over the various stages of the webinar lifecycle. This paper will address how to avoid those mistakes and share best practices on how to deliver a stand-out event.

MISTAKE #1: THE 1-WEEK EMAIL PROMOTION

START EARLY AND FINISH STRONG



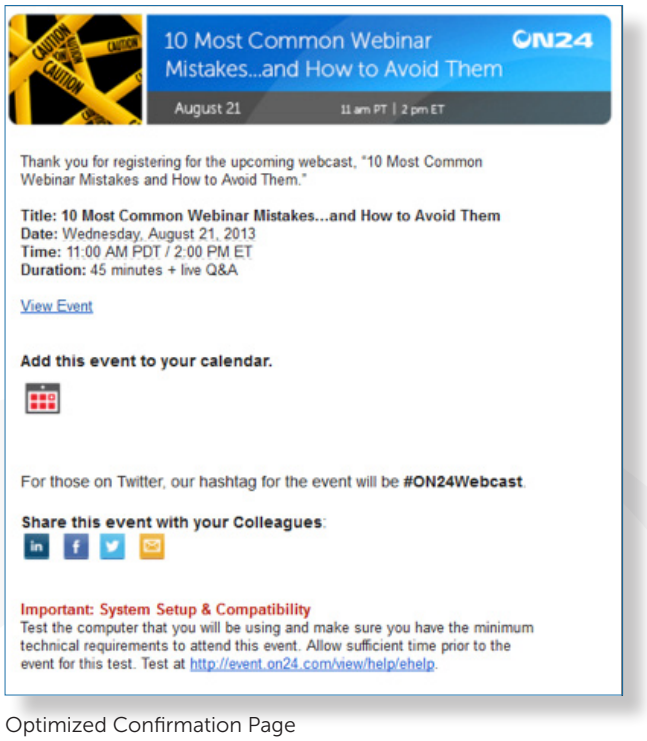
Registration data indicates the value of a two-week promotional strategy.

It is a common practice to limit webinar promotions to around one week. Companies typically drop an initial email invitation seven days in advance, sometimes followed by a second promotion one or two days before the presentation. But restricting promotions to one week leaves a lot on the table. ON24 benchmark data shows you can increase the size of your audience by up to 36% when you promote beyond seven days.

THE SOLUTION

When you give yourself a longer promotion period, you can promote from a couple different angles in three or more emails. Your first invitation could be HTML and focus on the event at a high level. The second might be plain text and zero in on featured speakers or content. The art of driving webinar registration is all about catching people at a moment of receptivity with a message that resonates with them. Extending webinar promotions beyond a week and delivering multiple messages and email types increase your chance of successfully hitting that moment of receptivity.

MISTAKE #2: FAILURE TO OPTIMIZE REGISTRATION AND CONFIRMATION PAGES



Optimized Confirmation Page

ON24 data shows only 48% of the people who click "register now" from your webinar promotions will actually complete the registration form. In other words, marketers are losing more than half their prospective audience members at the point of registration.

There are a number of reasons for this problem:

1. LENGTHY REGISTRATION FORMS.

Companies often ask for too much information on the registration form. Busy customers take one look at these long forms, decide they will be too time-consuming and exit the registration process.

THE SOLUTION

To fix this issue, only gate for the basic demographic information that will help you determine whether a prospect is right for you: company, name, title, industry, revenue and contact information. Your registration rates will jump.

MISTAKE #2: FAILURE TO OPTIMIZE REGISTRATION AND CONFIRMATION PAGES [CONTINUED]

2. INCONSISTENT CREATIVE.

Attendees need visual confirmation that the event for which they are registering is the same event they saw in the promo, yet often there is a visual mismatch from promotion to registration.

THE SOLUTION

Assure your prospects they are in the right place by using consistent creative on every page, including emails, registration pages and landing pages.

3. NOT OPTIMIZING CONFIRMATION PAGES.

Confirmation pages are another great opportunity to grow your audience numbers. Most companies miss this opportunity by failing to optimize these pages for maximum attendance.

THE SOLUTION

Enable social sharing. Embed Twitter, Facebook and other social tools directly in the confirmation page so registrants can tweet or post that they just signed up for your webinar. Doing so promotes your event to a much wider audience. Over time, the additional viewers you capture via social sharing can add up to significant numbers.

4. NOT INCLUDING A CALENDARING TOOL.

If you don't provide registrants the ability to quickly and easily put your webinar on their business calendar, chances are good they will schedule another meeting and miss your event. Calendaring tools dramatically improve registration-to-attendee conversion rates.

THE SOLUTION

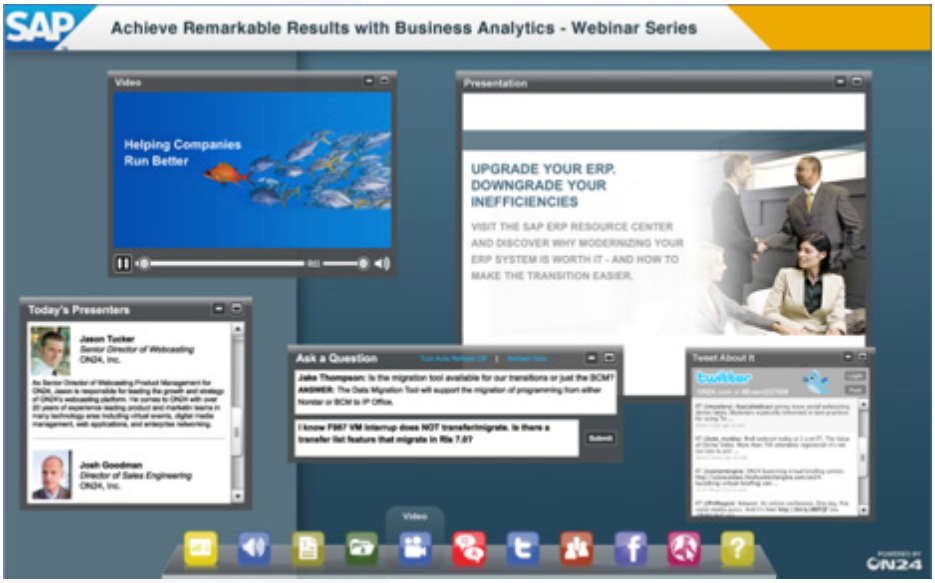
Imbed a calendar tool on every landing page, allowing registrants to place your webinars on their business calendars. Include login details in the information that goes to the calendar.

MISTAKE #3: THE VANILLA WEBINAR CONSOLE

When you ask your customers to attend a presentation, you are asking them to stare at a fixed location for up to an hour. If that location is not visually engaging, you will see a high drop-off rate.

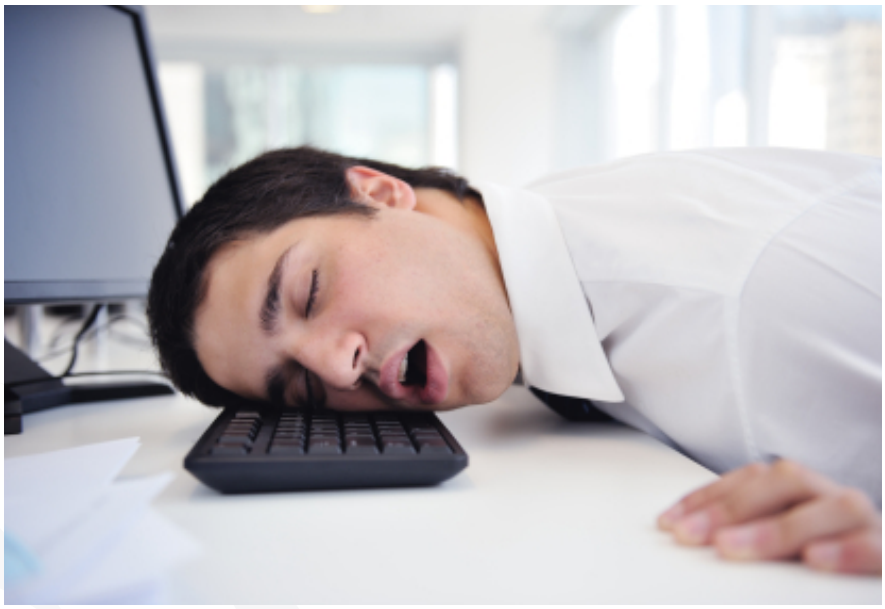
THE SOLUTION

A great webinar console helps you retain the focus and attention of your audience throughout your presentation. It also provides an opportunity to reinforce your branding and top-line message. Every webinar console should include a company's corporate logo and corporate color scheme and include the presenter's top-line message at the top of the screen. If attendees remember nothing else, they'll remember your key message after staring at it for an hour. Further, make the background of your webinar console visually appealing by using bold colors, images, and/or graphics. The console is your pallet upon which you overlay the audience experience.



Branded Webinar Console

MISTAKE #4: LEAVING YOUR AUDIENCE OUT OF THE CONVERSATION



"USE INTERACTIVE TOOLS, SUCH AS POLLS, SURVEYS, Q&A, AND CHAT, TO HAVE CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR ATTENDEES"

Audience interactivity is one of the most important developments in webinar technology today. Asking your attendees to simply stare at a static screen for up to an hour is no longer acceptable. With so many audience participation tools now at our disposal, we must stop thinking about webinars as a way to deliver a presentation and start thinking about them as a way to have a conversation.

THE SOLUTION

Here are some of the best tools for engaging with your audience:

LIVE Q&A. Live Q&A consistently ranks as the most widely used interactive tool in the webinar experience. It is a great way to directly engage with your audience and address their questions, comments and interests in real time.

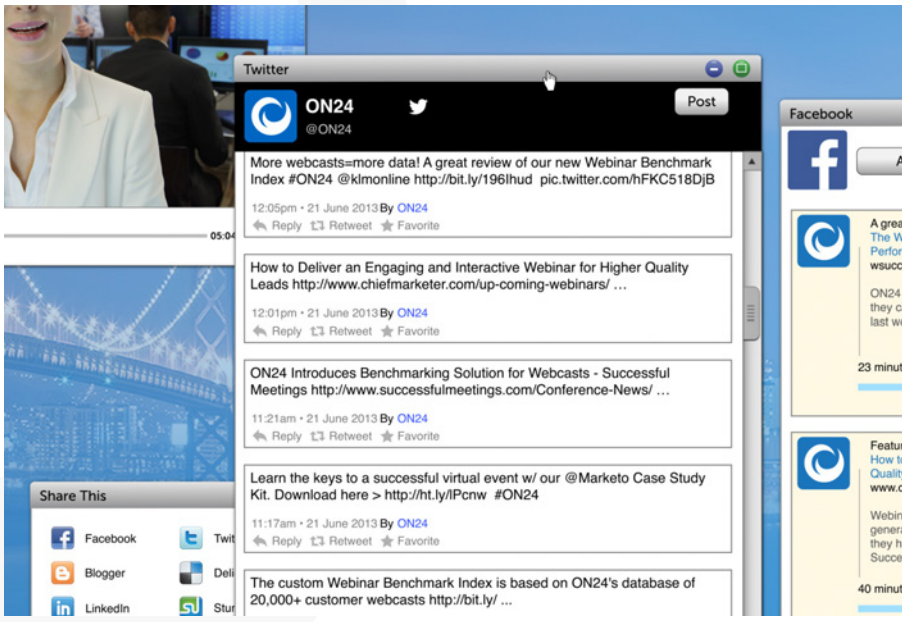
POLLING. Webinar polling is one of the most powerful tools in your arsenal. It enables presenters to directly engage with viewers, ensures viewers are paying attention by requiring them to take an action, supplies an important snapshot of your audience's interests, and enables attendees to benchmark themselves against their peer's votes.

MISTAKE #4: LEAVING YOUR AUDIENCE OUT OF THE CONVERSATION [CONTINUED]

SOCIAL MEDIA. Most people are habituated to sharing thoughts and reactions to events and content with their social networks in real time. They are going to do it anyway; rather than forcing them to leave your webinar to access their social platforms, give them the tools to share directly from your console and keep them in your webinar. As an added benefit, social sharing advertises your event to a larger audience.

GROUP CHAT. Allows audience members to converse directly with each other during the presentation, generating additional discussion about your topic.

GROUP COLLABORATION AND IDEA GENERATION. These tools let you present ideas for audiences to vote, rank and comment on, keeping the conversation flowing throughout the presentation. These interactive tools enable multi-directional communication: presenter-to-audience, audience-to-presenter and audience-to-audience. Choose interactive tools strategically where they best support your content, and you will see a sharp boost in audience engagement.



MISTAKE #5: DEATH BY 1,000 BULLETS



Want to bore your audience to death? Give them PowerPoint slides crammed with line after line of text. Soon they will tune out to check email, talk to a colleague and, eventually, exit the presentation.

THE SOLUTION

Presenters have long struggled with the problem of excessive text. More words do not strengthen your message – they weaken it. Always remember you are telling a story. Your visuals are there to support that story, not convey it word for word. Make your slides visually interesting with bullets that highlight key points. And don't simply read those bullets – nothing turns off an audience faster. The best presentations tell compelling stories, using engaging visuals, where the speaker is the storyteller, not the slide.

MISTAKE #6: SELLING, NOT HELPING



No one wants to be pitched. Audiences come to your webinars to get answers to pressing problems and to consider new ideas. If you are leading them into a sales pitch, you are missing a valuable opportunity to establish credibility and earn trust. When you give prospective buyers new ways to think about their toughest business problems, you establish yourself as a trusted advisor – a position which ultimately will enable you to more effectively present your solutions, products or services.

THE SOLUTION

Great webinars solve problems. Every year, we study thousands of webinars, and the ones that do well have titles like, "How to Optimize…," "7 Keys to Successful…" or "How to Build a …." This is not to say you cannot address your products or solutions – you can, just do it from the angle of how it solves a problem.

Also, be careful to avoid the bait and switch. You know the trick: you attract an audience with the promise of addressing a specific business problem but then give that problem only surface-level treatment before jumping right into a detailed product pitch. This tactic will backfire every time with attendees dropping off fast – and deleting future promotional emails. Every webinar is an opportunity to help people, and by helping, you will be selling.

MISTAKE #7: THE CELL PHONE PRESENTER



Poor quality audio is a webinar killer. It is incredibly frustrating for audiences, who are interested in your content, to struggle to hear what you have to say. There is no quicker way to get audience members to drop off of your webinars than poor audio quality. Additionally, bad audio conveys an unprofessional presentation, which can lead to similar perceptions of your company as a whole.

THE SOLUTION

We understand presenters are busy people who are constantly on the move. However, audio quality is simply too important to leave to chance. Next time you present, follow these important guidelines to ensure great audio:

- Never use cell phones or speaker phones.
- Use a good-quality handset or headset.
- Present in a small room; big rooms often have an echo.
- Turn off air conditioning, heaters or other noisy devices. You may think they can't be heard over the phone line, but they can.
- If your cell phone is in the room, turn it off so it doesn't ring during the presentation.
- If you are using a room in your office building, place a DO NOT DISTURB sign prominently on the door so co-workers don't barge in unexpectedly.
- Mute the volume on your computer speakers.
- Sound check every speaker 30 minutes before the webinar, so you have time to address any issues with audio quality.

MISTAKE #8: NOT RESPECTING YOUR AUDIENCES TIME

VIEWING TIME

AVERAGING IN LENGTH
BETWEEN 45-60 MINUTES



53 MIN
AVERAGE
VIEWER TIME

When someone signs up for your webinar, you enter into a pact with them in which you promise to present the stated content within a specified period of time. If you exceed that time, you break your attendees' trust, and they may not come back.

THE SOLUTION

Here are five important rules for showing you respect your audience's time:

1. DO NOT EXCEED THE ADVERTISED WEBINAR LENGTH.

Not only does it make you appear unprofessional, you put people in a tough position by forcing them to choose between finishing your event or making it to their next meeting on time.

2. SCHEDULE YOUR WEBINAR LENGTH BASED ON YOUR CONTENT.

Many marketers default to the 60-minute webinar: a 45-minute presentation followed by 15 minutes of Q&A. But if you have only 20 minutes of great content, schedule a 30-minute presentation and include 10 minutes of Q&A. Do not fall into the trap of padding content to expand the presentation time. People know when they are getting filler, and they'll drop off the call. These days, a lot of people prefer shorter webinars and will be thankful for a 30-minute event.

3. DON'T START MORE THAN 2 OR 3 MINUTES LATE.

It is a fairly standard practice to start webinars about two minutes after the hour. Many attendees will be running from another meeting and it can take that much time to get to their computer, put on a headset and log in. Any delay longer than two or three minutes, however, abuses the time of waiting attendees.

MISTAKE #8: NOT RESPECTING YOUR AUDIENCES TIME [CONTINUED]

4. ALLOW AMPLE TIME FOR THE Q&A.

Attempting to compress Q&A into a rushed minute or two at the end of a presentation does your audience a disservice. It prevents them from being able to get answers to the many questions they may have about your content. To ensure you have ample time for Q&A, rehearse your presentation, ideally two or three times. This is the only way to know for certain how long it will be. If it tends toward running long, pull some material out to allow plenty of time for audience questions.

5. FINISH EARLY IF NECESSARY.

If there is still five or ten minutes left in your allotted time but your presentation is complete and no more questions are coming in, don't be afraid to end your webinar early. Your audience won't think less of you – they will thank you and appreciate getting a few minutes back. In fact, this could earn additional good will.

MISTAKE #9: NOT HAVING AN ON DEMAND STRATEGY

ON-DEMAND ATTENDANCE BY REGISTRANTS

WEBINARS AVERAGING IN LENGTH BETWEEN 45-60 MINUTES



25%

ON-DEMAND VIEWING TIME

AVERAGING IN LENGTH BETWEEN 45-60 MINUTES



46.8 MIN

AVERAGE VIEWER TIME

INTEGRATION OF WEBCAST

VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS



14%

We are undergoing a major change in the way audiences take in content. ON24's most recent benchmark report revealed that one in four webinar registrants are attending webinars on demand. Most of these are people who miss the live event entirely. There are two trends driving the increase in on-demand viewing:

1. MOBILITY IS CHANGING THE WAY PEOPLE ABSORB WEBINAR CONTENT.

Now that most webinar platforms support mobile viewing, registrants are free to view your content when it is most convenient for them. Since most people don't have a lot of time during the day, they are choosing to watch at "off" times, such as during long commutes, on mobile devices.

2. THE INCREASINGLY GLOBAL NATURE OF BUSINESS MEANS INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES, SCATTERED ACROSS MULTIPLE TIME ZONES AND CONTINENTS, ARE VIEWING YOUR WEBINAR CONTENT.

This makes it impossible for everyone to attend live. Think about it—all of the tools you use to promote your webinars are borderless, including your email lists, website and social media applications. A borderless audience means your webinars have to be available on demand for instant viewing anytime on any device type.

MISTAKE #9: NOT HAVING AN ON DEMAND STRATEGY [CONTINUED]

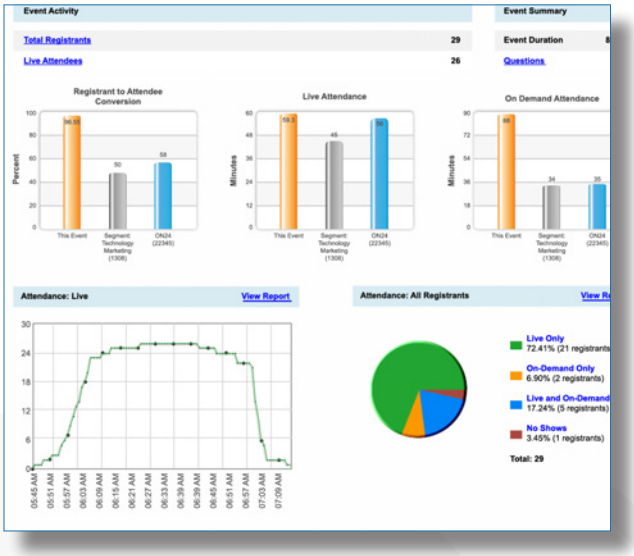
THE SOLUTION:

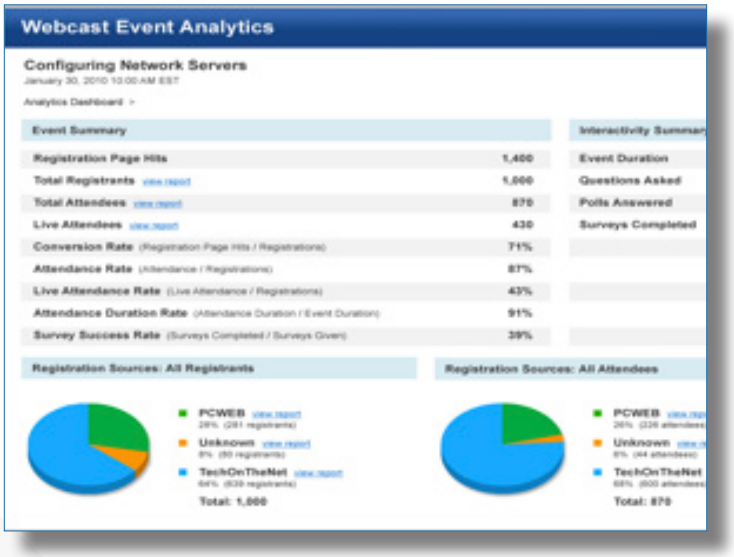
With on-demand viewing providing such a massive opportunity to extend the life of your webinar, marketers must have a strategy to not only archive the event but to promote it beyond the end of the live date.

HERE ARE FIVE BEST PRACTICES FOR PROMOTING YOUR ON-DEMAND WEBINARS:

1. Ensure your webinars are available within 48 hours of the live event.
2. Notify all registrants, not just those who missed the webinar, that the archive is available, and include a link to the on-demand event.
3. Host the link to the archived content on your web site.
4. Send the link to your sales department so they can promote it to their prospects.
5. Use the results of the live event to promote your archived event. For instance, if you have an interesting poll result, use it to pique prospects' interest and draw them to the archive.

MISTAKE #10: TREATING ALL LEADS EQUALLY





Basic Registration Data

Many organizations have fallen into the habit of taking all the leads from a webinar and dumping them into the CRM system, essentially handing them over to the sales department without any pre-qualification. This approach means that your sales department will have to work their way through a lot of dead ends, while hot leads may be cooling off in the pile. All leads are not created equal, and effective lead scoring can increase the value of your leads and the success of your sales follow-up.

THE SOLUTION

One of the marketing benefits of webinars is that they provide a wealth of data on the interests of attendees. Intelligent lead scoring simply requires a process to evaluate and score leads based on two primary criteria:

BASIC REGISTRATION DATA: Registration data is your chance to find out whether a prospect is right for you. You can quickly establish company size, industry, job title and revenue, making it easy to qualify whether a prospect makes sense for you to target further.

MISTAKE #10: TREATING ALL LEADS EQUALLY [CONTINUED]

BEHAVIORAL DATA The increased level of interactivity in webinars not only serves to engage the audience, but it also provides a wealth of data on the interests of your attendees. This data can be combined to create an engagement score that provides you with the interest level of the prospect.

BEHAVIORAL DATA CAN INCLUDE:

- Viewing duration
- Content downloaded
- Questions asked
- Results of polls and surveys
- Social media engagement

Registration data combined with an engagement score can provide you with a set of basic parameters to establish whether a lead requires immediate follow-up or further qualification. By simply prioritizing the stronger leads, you will increase the effectiveness of your sales efforts and the ROI of your webinars.

SUMMARY

Throughout the entire lifecycle of creating and delivering a webinar, there are a number of small things that may determine whether your webinar is a success for both you and your audience. By avoiding these common webinar mistakes, you can take your webinars from good to great.

ABOUT ON24, INC.

ON24, the virtual communications platform for the global enterprise, provides interactive, impactful cloud-based solutions that drive outstanding results. ON24 offers a broad and innovative product portfolio, including webcasting, virtual events and virtual environments, accessible from any device and supported by robust reporting and analytics. Applications for the ON24 platform include demand generation, partner enablement, virtual talent development, product launches, company town hall meetings and user conferences. More than 800 organizations, including IBM, CA Technologies, Merck, Unilever, JPMorgan Chase, Deloitte, Credit Suisse, Ernst & Young, Amazon and SAP, rely on ON24.

ON24 is headquartered in San Francisco, with offices throughout the world.
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