The Role of Webinars in the Buying Cycle

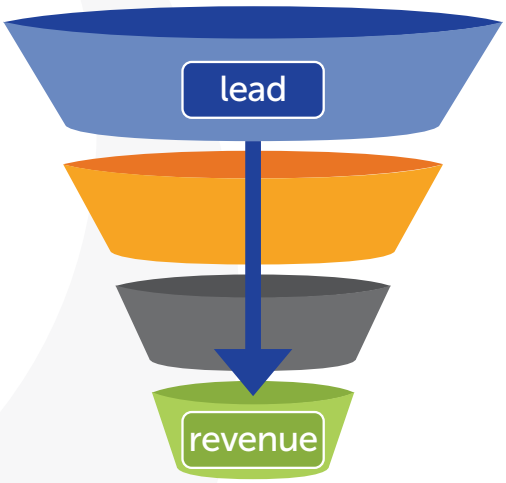
Learn how webinars can be used to optimize demand generation and accelerate your sales pipeline

ON24

TODAY'S MARKETING CHALLENGES

Sixty-five percent of business-to-business (B2B) buyers are electing to "self-educate" – that is, access industry and product information through online and mobile channels – before engaging with a salesperson. This trend has shifted the buying cycle from one that was sales driven to a more marketing-driven process.

Now, more than ever, marketers are challenged to deliver relevant and engaging content across multiple channels and throughout the customer buying cycle. Recent research indicates that 73 percent of B2B marketers need to produce more content today than they did just one year ago. Forty-one percent indicated they are producing "more" and 32 percent said they are producing "significantly more." [1]



[1] Source: "B2B Content Marketing: 2014 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends," Content Marketing Institute.

VALUE OF WEBINARS IN THE SALES AND MARKETING PROCESS

Webinars have become a primary marketing tool to "help drive the buying cycle," according to market research firm SiriusDecisions. As illustrated below, the effectiveness of webinars spans the entire sales and marketing process, from driving awareness to lead generation and lead nurturing to cross-selling and upselling.[2]

Webinars' influence on the buying cycle is driven by their ability to engage buyers, identify sales-ready leads, and integrate webinar analytics with marketers' lead scoring and nurturing process. These capabilities are discussed in more detail the following sections.

DRIVING AWARENESS	LEAD GENERATION	LEAD NURTURING	UPSELLING & CROSS-SELLING
50% *Website*	**51%** *Webinars/Webcasts*	**59%** *Telesales/Telemarketing*	**55%** *Sales Enablement*
45% *Webinars/Webcasts*	**39%** *Telesales/Telemarketing*	**44%** *Sales Enablement*	**42%** *Webinars/Webcasts*
44% *Content Marketing*	**39%** *Sales Enablement*	**37%** *Webinars/Webcasts*	**38%** *Telesales/Telemarketing*
44% *Analyst Relations*	**38%** *Website*	**37%** *Content Marketing*	**35%** *Channel Enablement*
43% *Search Engine Optimization*	**37%** *Seminars and Other Events*	**36%** *Seminars and Other Events*	**31%** *Seminars and Other Events*

[2] Source: Tech Marketing Planning Guidance, Forrester Research.

VALUE OF WEBINARS IN THE SALES AND MARKETING PROCESS



AVERAGE VIEWER TIME

BUYER ENGAGEMENT

One of the main reasons that webinars successfully influence prospects in the buying cycle is their ability to capture a viewer's attention for significant periods of time. Sending prospects an email or having them view your website may capture their attention for 30 seconds to a couple of minutes. In contrast, an average viewer spends 56 minutes in a live, interactive ON24 webinar.[3]

ON24's ability to include related content and social media in a webinar also accelerates movement in the buying cycle. According to a survey by IDG Enterprise:[4]

- An average of 8 assets are downloaded and used in the decision-making process.
- Prospects are only receptive to related content over a relatively short period of time.
- Decision-makers use social media to discover, share and discuss information.



By including white papers, data sheets, industry blogs, articles or other content, ON24 webinars can deliver multiple decision-making assets at one time. And the addition of social media, such as Twitter and LinkedIn, allows prospective buyers to share insights or invite others to join their network from with the webinar.

[3] Source: ON24 Benchmarking data.

[4] Source: 2013 Customer Engagement survey, IDG Enterprise.

VALUE OF WEBINARS IN THE SALES AND MARKETING PROCESS

SALES-READY LEADS

For optimum lead generation success, it is critical to follow up with your most qualified leads within 24 hours of your webinar. ON24 webinar analytics allow you to do just that without the hassle of combing through dozens of reports.

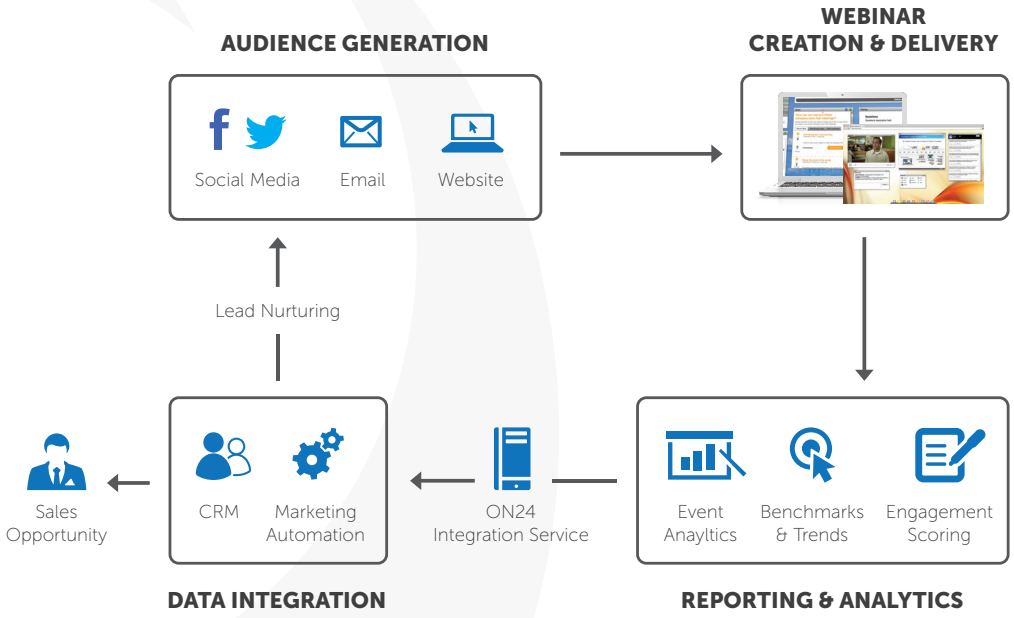
With ON24 webinar analytics, you can assess user interest and identify the best sales prospects. It allows you to generate reports so you can evaluate user engagement, buying stage, and webinar trends. It also empowers you with real-time graphical dashboards and drill down tools to prove your ROI, deliver leads to sales, and impact revenue.



VALUE OF WEBINARS IN THE SALES AND MARKETING PROCESS

CRM AND MARKETING AUTOMATION INTEGRATION

While the webinar analytics are incredibly valuable in and of themselves, they become significantly more valuable when incorporated into a company's lead-scoring and nurturing process. ON24 webinar metrics, such as viewer activity and engagement, can be delivered to leading CRM and marketing automation platforms, including Salesforce, Microsoft CRM, NetSuite, Eloqua, Marketo, Silverpop, Exact Target, and HubSpot. With such integration, ON24's webinar analytics enable marketers to optimize demand generation, enhance lead qualification, and accelerate opportunities in their sales pipeline.



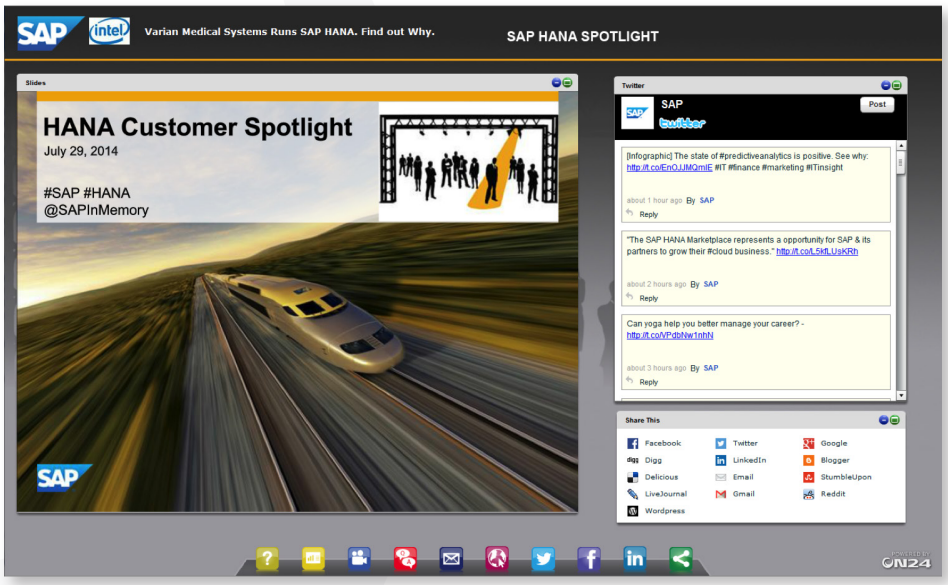
WEBINAR RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Because of their demand generation and customer engagement effectiveness, webinars are fast becoming one of the greatest contributors to a company's marketing success. Webinar benefits include the ability to:

- Attract new prospects
- Improve the quality of your sales leads
- Significantly reduce your cost per lead
- Influence the progression of opportunities in your sales pipeline

Numerous ON24 customers have obtained such benefits, including SAP, Navex Global, and Latham & Watkins. Their webinar use cases and ROI are described in the sections below.

SAP Hana delivers bi-weekly webcast series where satisfied customers discuss their experiences. The webinars have influenced over 200 opportunities amounting to over $100 million in measurable pipeline sales.

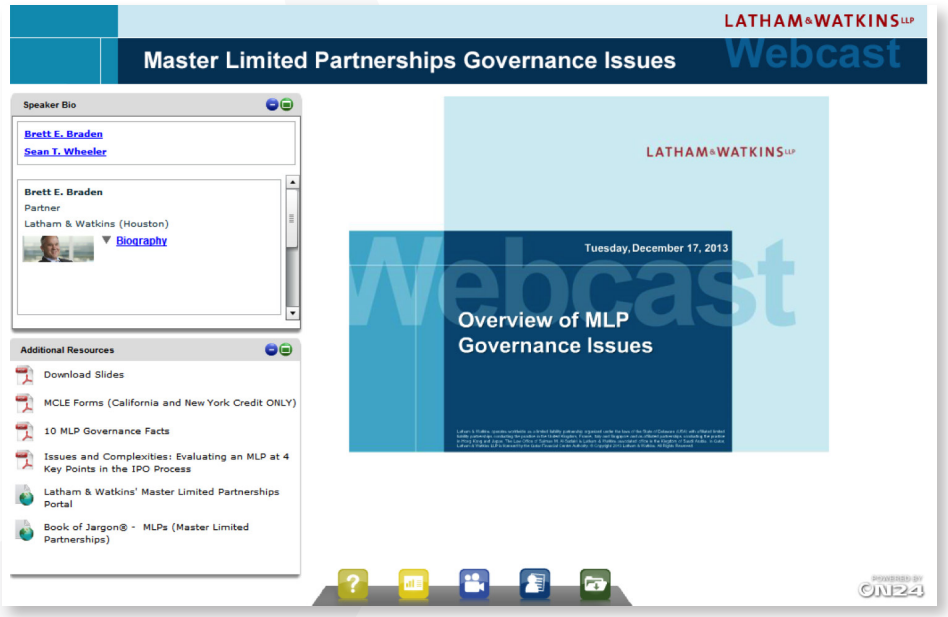


WEBINAR RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Navex Global delivers monthly "deminars" that provide product demonstrations to key prospects. The company closed $782,000 in revenue and influenced $4.2 million in sales pipeline as a direct result of these deminars.



Used for thought leadership, Latham & Watkins' webinars provide per-person cost savings of more than 80% over its previous live, in-person events.



MATCHING WEBINAR CONTENT TO THE BUYING CYCLE

To be most effective, webinar content must be tailored to the specific objectives of each stage of the buying cycle. Marketers' primary goal is to progress prospects and opportunities from one stage of the buying process to the next (ultimately moving them to the purchase stage). The key is to deliver the right type of webinar content at the right time, as depicted in the illustration below.



MATCHING WEBINAR CONTENT TO THE BUYING CYCLE



AWARENESS STAGE

Prospects in the Awareness stage are just learning about your brand. They've articulated a need and are now doing research to identify their options.

Webinars in this stage should be focused on your industry and your company's unique approach and value proposition. It's important to introduce your prospects to industry trends that explain developing issues and present the business value of adopting change. Your webinar content should demonstrate that your company is a thought leader and an expert in the prospect's area of need. Content topic recommendations:

- Industry trends
- Benchmarks
- Analyst coverage
- Basic "101" education



Example of a "Thought Leadership" Webinar

MATCHING WEBINAR CONTENT TO THE BUYING CYCLE



CONSIDERATION STAGE

When prospects are in the Consideration stage, they're gathering research and data to paint their benefit story. At this point, your potential customers know what's wrong and have an idea of how to fix it, but they might not be completely sure of the best way to do so. Prospects in this stage want content that educates them, helps them do their job, and moves them closer to a decision.

Consideration-stage webinars should focus on vendor-neutral, solution-based themes. Your content should focus on problem-to-solution scenarios. That is, the business value of solving the problem considering the prospect's current situation. Content topic recommendations:

- Typical challenges
- Vendor-neutral applications
- Benefits
- Pitfalls to avoid

Example of a "Vendor-Neutral Application" Webinar



MATCHING WEBINAR CONTENT TO THE BUYING CYCLE

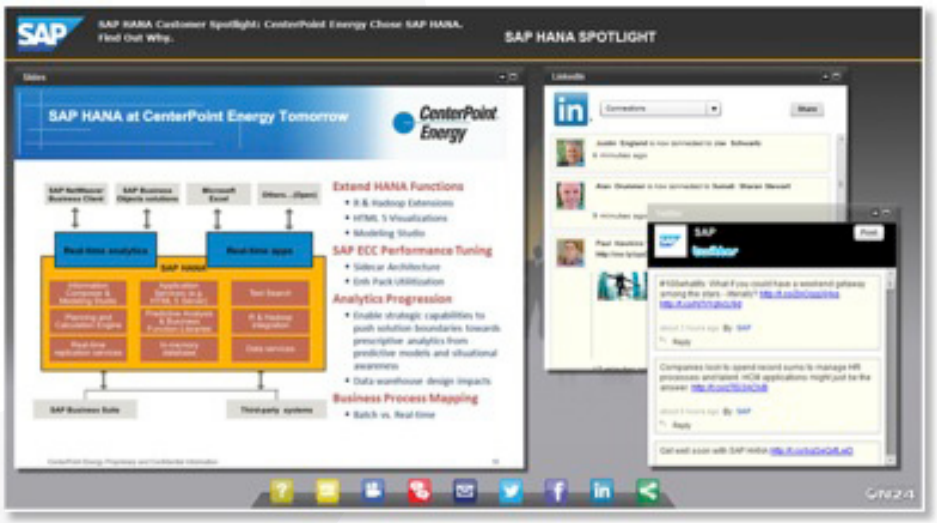


EVALUATION STAGE

In this stage, your prospects are aware of your business as a potential solution for their needs, but they're not convinced yet that you're the vendor they should work with. To make that decision, they need specifics about what you offer and the benefits you can provide them. The outcome of this stage is a short list of companies and solutions.

Webinars for the Evaluation stage should describe your solution in detail, present its key features, and demonstrate its return on investment. The webinars and supporting collateral should also create clear points of differentiation between you and your major competitors. The desired end result is that the potential customer is convinced your company has a solution that can fully meet their needs. Content topic recommendations:

- Solution features
- Competitive differences
- Customer testimonials
- Buying criteria



Example of a "Customer Testimonial" Webinar

MATCHING WEBINAR CONTENT TO THE BUYING CYCLE

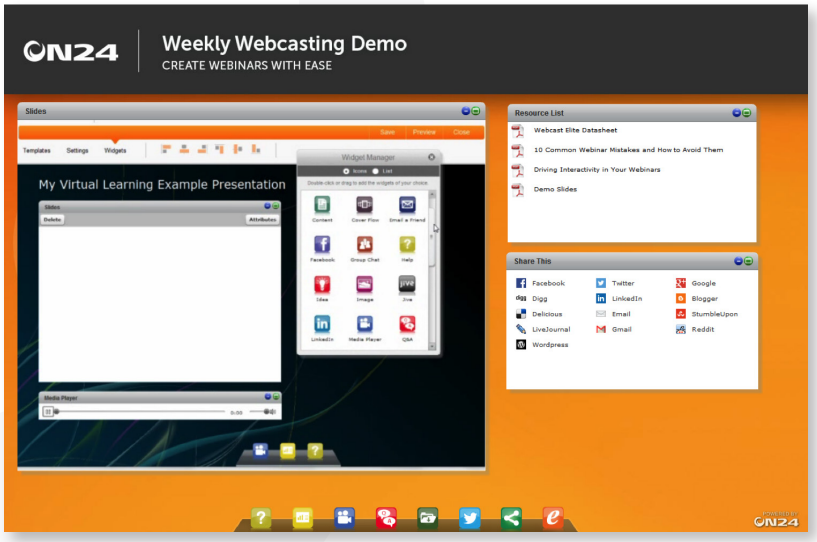


PURCHASE STAGE

In the Purchase stage, prospects are ready to make a decision and are narrowing down their options. They've identified their top two or three choices and are looking for the key factors that will motivate their decision. Potential customers need to be sold on your product/solution and the sense of urgency that says they need to make this purchase now.

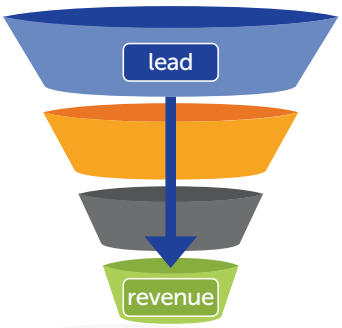
Purchase-stage webinars are about validation, justification and risk mitigation. Your webinars should showcase customer success stories, demonstrate the features of your solution, and highlight your competitive differences. It is also important to show how other customers have implemented successful projects and attained business value.
Content topic recommendations:

- Demo webinars
- Case studies
- Competitive advantages
- "Working with us" guides



Example of a "Demo Webinar"

CONCLUSION



Webinars are the most important tool for marketers to drive demand and generate new leads. As prospects increasingly self-educate through the buying cycle, webinars have become a primary source of information that buyers turn to before making a purchase decision.

To be most effective, your webinar content must be tailored to each stage of the buying cycle. For example, while thought leadership works well for top-of-funnel lead generation, it is not appropriate in the latter stages of the purchase process. If designed with the buying cycle in mind, webinars can be an extremely effective method for moving prospects from one stage to the next.

While the webinar's content influences, the equally important webinar analytics measure user engagement, stage progression, and trends. Webinar analytics allow you to identify sales-ready leads in real-time, and follow up with the most-qualified leads immediately. And webinar analytics become much more valuable when integrated with your CRM and marketing automation platforms and incorporated into your lead scoring and nurturing process.

In short, webinars allow you to optimize your marketing programs by accelerating prospects through the buying cycle: from lead to revenue.

ABOUT ON24



ON24 is the global leader in webinar-based marketing solutions that drive demand generation and customer engagement. Its patented cloud-based platform features an interactive and immersive user interface and industry-leading webinar analytics for events, campaigns, and benchmarking. Providing one-click access from any computer or mobile device, ON24's award-winning solutions are integrated with leading CRM and marketing automation platforms, enabling marketers to optimize demand generation, enhance lead qualification, and accelerate opportunities in their sales pipeline.

Additional business applications for the ON24 product portfolio include virtual training, talent development, and town hall meetings. More than 1,000 small, midsize and large enterprises rely on ON24, including IBM, CA Technologies, Merck, JPMorgan Chase, Deloitte, Credit Suisse, Ernst & Young and SAP. The company is headquartered in San Francisco, with offices throughout the world. For more information, visit www.on24.com.

ABOUT THE ON24 WEBINAR NETWORK



The ON24 Network is the world's largest – and fastest growing – webinar network. It includes over 8.3 million viewers, who watch 732 hours of ON24 webinars each hour. And with new registrants joining every 1.8 seconds, ON24's business audience is growing 30% each year. The ON24 Network leverages two redundant data centers and a network of global delivery partners to distribute massive amounts of information to its millions of viewers, while providing uptime in excess of five-nine (99.999%) reliability. Over the last five years, the ON24 Network has delivered 110 thousand live webinars to more than 30 million viewers who watched over 27 million hours of content.