

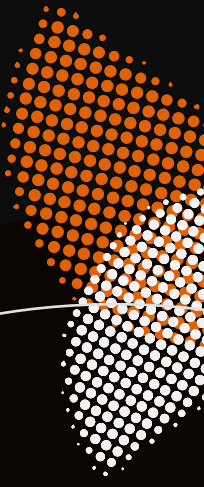
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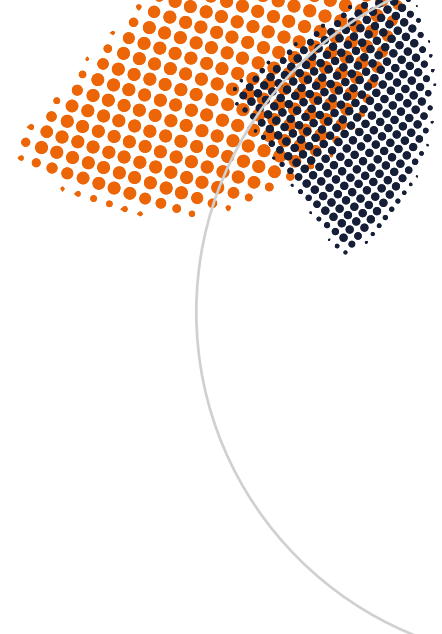
ON24

 **B2B Marketing**

Insight · Development · Training · Events

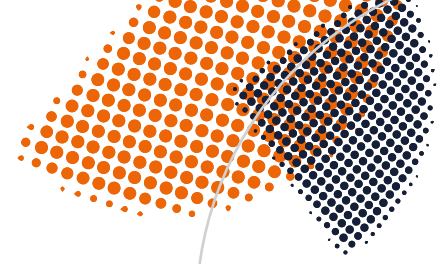
Maximize your webinar engagement – before, during and after





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Introduction

Think of a webinar and you'll probably bring to mind a dry PowerPoint presentation, narrated in a monotone followed by a truncated question and answer session.

Think again.

Leading companies are rapidly transforming the humble webinar into a powerhouse marketing channel, driving engagement with prospects and customers at all levels of the sales funnel to generate a multitude of new insights.

Webinars have untapped potential, and we've published this guide to help you unlock their latent capability.

Read on to find out:

- › What makes the webinars of today different to those of the past
- › The best times and days to maximize engagement
- › Proven tips to drive registrations
- › How to engage your audience (and get them to return for more)
- › How to make the most of the leads you've gathered.

“Engagement is the key to marketing, and webinars are engagement at scale”

Mark Bornstein, VP content marketing, On24



Is your marketing missing something?



Mark Bornstein,
VP content marketing,
On24

We have entered an incredible time in marketing. The age of ‘digital everything’ has given us automation and intelligence beyond our wildest dreams. With the push of a button, we can send an email out to hundreds of thousands of prospects. We can scan lists of strangers and use predictive analytics to find the ones that might have a higher propensity to buy. We have social channels that enable us to deliver targeted ads at specific buyer personas at massive scale. It’s truly incredible.

But we have also lost something along the way. The truth is that all of this amazing technology has turned our marketing a little cold. We have lost that human touch. Automation has turned us into professional spammers - in both good and bad ways. Most marketing has simply become clickbait, where we are hoping to capture a prospect’s attention for even a few seconds. Yet, at a time when buyers increasingly don’t want to talk to a sales person, almost up until the point of sale, it is now marketing’s role to do the selling. But how does that happen when we are optimizing for clicks, opens, views, and downloads? These are tiny indicators of interest that don’t tell us much about the people we are trying to sell to. And where is the moment of persuasion?

What’s missing? Engagement. Real. Human. Engagement.

And that’s where webinars have taken on a completely new role for marketers today. Webinars are not a new technology; they have been around for a long time. But webinars have evolved tremendously over that past five years. Many still think of a webinar as a boring talking PowerPoint presentation (which unfortunately for some, they still are), but the modern webinar is all about human engagement. At a time when most marketing engagement exists in the blink of an eye, the modern webinar delivers a real ‘experience’. It’s a fully branded experience. It’s a multi-media experience, where we see companies creating serialized programs that more resemble compelling TV shows than stodgy marketing. They are incredibly interactive experiences, where the audience is participating in the discussion, not passively watching it. They are multi-touch content experiences, where audiences are surrounded with lots of content options that will accelerate them to the next stage in their journey. And finally, and most important, the modern webinar is a uniquely human experience. It’s people talking to people for up to an hour at a time. What other marketing channel do we have that does that?

It’s only through real engagement that we can truly learn about our prospects. Instead of measuring clicks, we can now measure audience behavior. How long did they watch? What did they download? What questions did they ask? Webinar engagement gives us the data we need to find our best leads and accelerate them towards a purchase.

At a time when people are increasingly trying to get away from our marketing, webinars deliver the kinds of engaging experiences that people actually want. And from those experiences, we will get the data we need to turn those names into customers. Now that’s great marketing.

Webinar engagement in numbers

86% of those using webinars for marketing, run up to **150** a year.

76% say webinars allow them to reach more leads, and half say the quality of leads generated through webinars is above average.

Only 6% of webinars attract more than **1000** viewers each.

54% of registrants sign up for a webinar at least eight days before, and more than a quarter register more than **15** days before.

1/3 organizations produce one-to-one webinars for targeted accounts.



Most popular interactive features

Q&A (81%)
Resource lists (69%)
Surveys/polls (36%)



Average viewing time

2019: **58 mins**
2018: **56 mins**
2017: **55 mins**



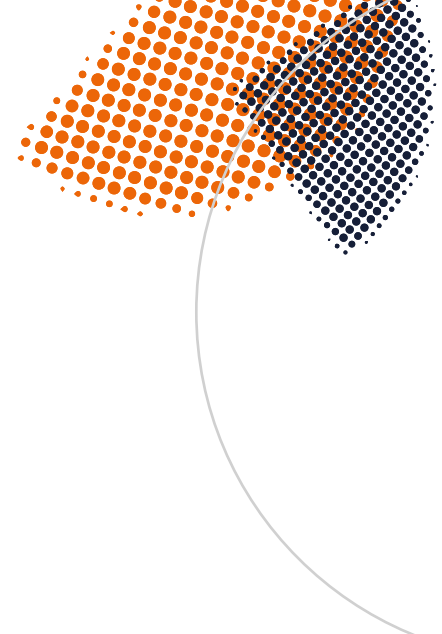
Proportion of registrations per day via email

Monday **16%**
Tuesday **22%**
Wednesday **23%**
Thursday **22%**
Friday **12%**
Weekend **5%**



Best days for attendance

Monday **10%**
Tuesday **24%**
Wednesday **27%**
Thursday **28%**
Friday **8%**
Weekend **3%**



The evolution of the webinar

What's today's typical webinar like?

Believe it or not, the webinar is nearly a quarter of a century old. The mid-90s saw the first screen sharing apps begin to morph into full web conferencing, albeit via glitchy, unsynchronized and painfully slow dial-up video. The first software specifically built to host webinars, PlaceWare, was launched in 1996, and in 2003 Microsoft snapped it up for an estimated \$200 million.

While the technology and infrastructure behind webinars has moved on light years since those early experiments, people's perception of it has been slower to catch up. For many, the term webinar still evokes the idea of the basic 'talking PowerPoint' presentation. Now they're so much more than that. They are digital, engagement-driven experiences that operate at all levels of the sales funnel.

What makes a great webinar?

A modern webinar has a number of qualities that marks it out from the hackneyed stereotype.

› They're fully branded.

It's more than just slapping a logo on at the top of a screen. Most webinar platforms now allow for full customization of the console, with top-line messaging, corporate imagery and product pictures.

› They're incredibly interactive.

Interactivity has traditionally been confined to a hosted Q&A at the end of a presentation.

The Q&A has survived, but it's supported by polls, surveys, instant messaging chat and downloadable content.

› They're increasingly multimedia.

A few years ago only a tiny percentage of webinars would include any video. Now companies are broadcasting in high definition, using webcams, integrating video clips and using screenshares rather than hiding behind a slide deck.

› They're multi-touch content.

No longer does a webinar simply provide a presentation. You can now surround your viewer with content. With fewer marketing touches in the overall customer journey nowadays, it's crucial to expose your audience to as much as possible when you can. The idea isn't that they'll consume this content simultaneously, but they'll take it away with them and digest later.

› They're now human experiences.

Forget the disembodied voice behind the screen. The video of a webinar is now more akin to a late-night chat show, panel discussions or interviews. Companies are moving away from PowerPoint presentations toward serialized programming, changing the tone to make them more approachable.

Technology companies were early adopters of mixing up the format, such as LinkedIn's LIVE with marketers in a sofa-based discussion show. The past two years has seen other sectors pick up this baton, such as Schneider Electric's live case studies with customers in the manufacturing industry.

What if I don't have a massive budget?

The idea of a full-HD broadcast from a high-tech studio with a custom-built set might sound appealing, but it's hardly realistic for a marketing team of a couple of people who need to provide proof of concept for webinars before they get investment.

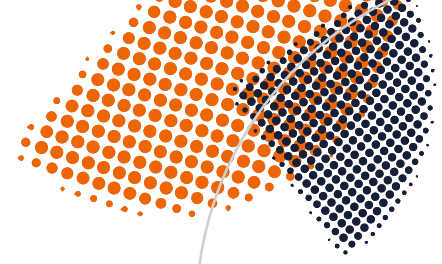
Don't worry, says On24's Mark Bornstein. "Webinar technology is one of the great democratizers of marketing. While you may not be able to afford a full broadcast studio or elaborate sets to do a panel discussion, the elements that make a great webinar are available to any company."

Branding you can provide yourself. Making it an interactive experience only requires creative thinking. Many companies are actually moving away from broadcast quality video and replacing it with simple webcam tech because people are more familiar with it. "In surveys of audiences shown a full broadcast video and webcam video, people actually liked the latter better because it's a little less antiseptic," Mark adds.

"The audience is now an active participant rather than a passive listener"

Mark Bornstein, On24





Pre-webinar engagement

What's the best time and day to hold your webinar?

This is a frequently asked question, with no simple answer.

According to On24's Webinar Benchmarks Report, the best day for webinar attendance is Thursday (28%), followed by Wednesday (27%) and Tuesday (24%).

However, it depends on your target audience. If you're a medical devices manufacturer with a target audience of doctors, they're unlikely to be able to sit down for a webinar on Thursday at 2pm. One such company ran its webinars at 7pm instead and drove excellent engagement.

In the US, the optimum time to hold a live broadcast is cited as 11am PST to reach viewers on both coasts. But in the UK, the most popular time to hold a live webinar is actually 8am.

While the live broadcast remains important, the rapid growth of on-demand viewing means there are alternatives if your audience can't make the initial event.

Setting up a promotion strategy

Having decided when you're going to hold your webinar, you need to start driving people to register for it.

Some 80-99% of webinar sign-ups still come as the result of email marketing. The quality of the data you use will always have a significant impact on who you're targeting.

That's not to say that you can't drive registrations through other channels. Another medical device company recorded an on-demand webinar and only used paid social (primarily Facebook ads) to promote it. They managed to drive 10,000 views of the webinar over the course of six months.



All the usual rules of email marketing apply. Use an attractive subject line. Show the prospects what's in it for them. Provide strong calls-to-action. Personalization is also vitally important.

— *“A mistake people make is they just have one promotion that they push out over and over again. It's important to differentiate. If you're going to drop two or three different emails, vary the type between HTML and plain text. Personalize them. Segment the database so you're promoting the webinar in a way that's more applicable to their industry”*

Mark Bornstein, On24

Don't be afraid to tap into your presenter and speakers' networks. Lean on them to promote your webinar to their audiences, especially if you have influential speakers.

Working with partners can also be an effective way to promote a webinar. Susanna James, who established the webinar program at the customer service business Kayako, says her top tip for driving sign-ups is to pair up with a partner company or guest speaker with an engaged following and get their support on promotion.

— *“The most successful webinars I have been involved with have tied into an existing campaign. This enabled me to heavily promote the webinar alongside all other marketing activity associated with that campaign, which broadened the reach of the webinar and was more cost-effective”*

Susanna James, digital strategy consultant, Emark

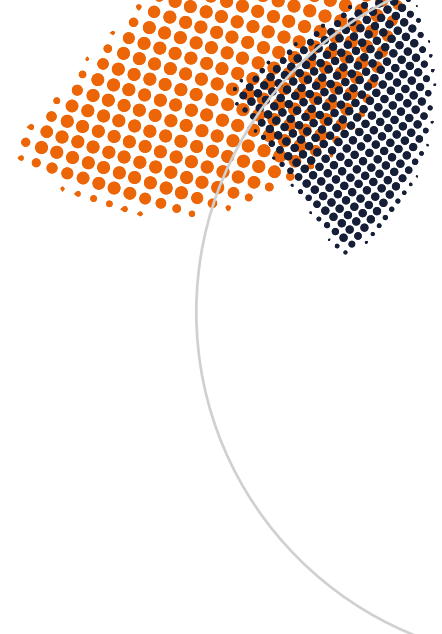
How long should you promote your webinar for?

One of the most startling statistics from On24's webinar benchmark report was that more than a quarter of viewers (28%) register for a webinar more than 15 days in advance.

A further 26% sign up eight to 14 days before. These early registrations are also more likely to turn into qualified leads, as they're the enthusiastic prospects hungry for content. Between four to six weeks should be sufficient time to promote your webinar and drive registrations.

Top tips: Landing page optimization

- › Make email the top field of your registration form. Not only will this make a massive difference to conversion rates (as visitors will fill that field in first), it will also trigger the autofill function of most web browsers.
- › Include a diary function that will automatically put the webinar into registrants' calendars.
- › Add a video. On24 found videos on webinar landing pages increased registrations by 17%.



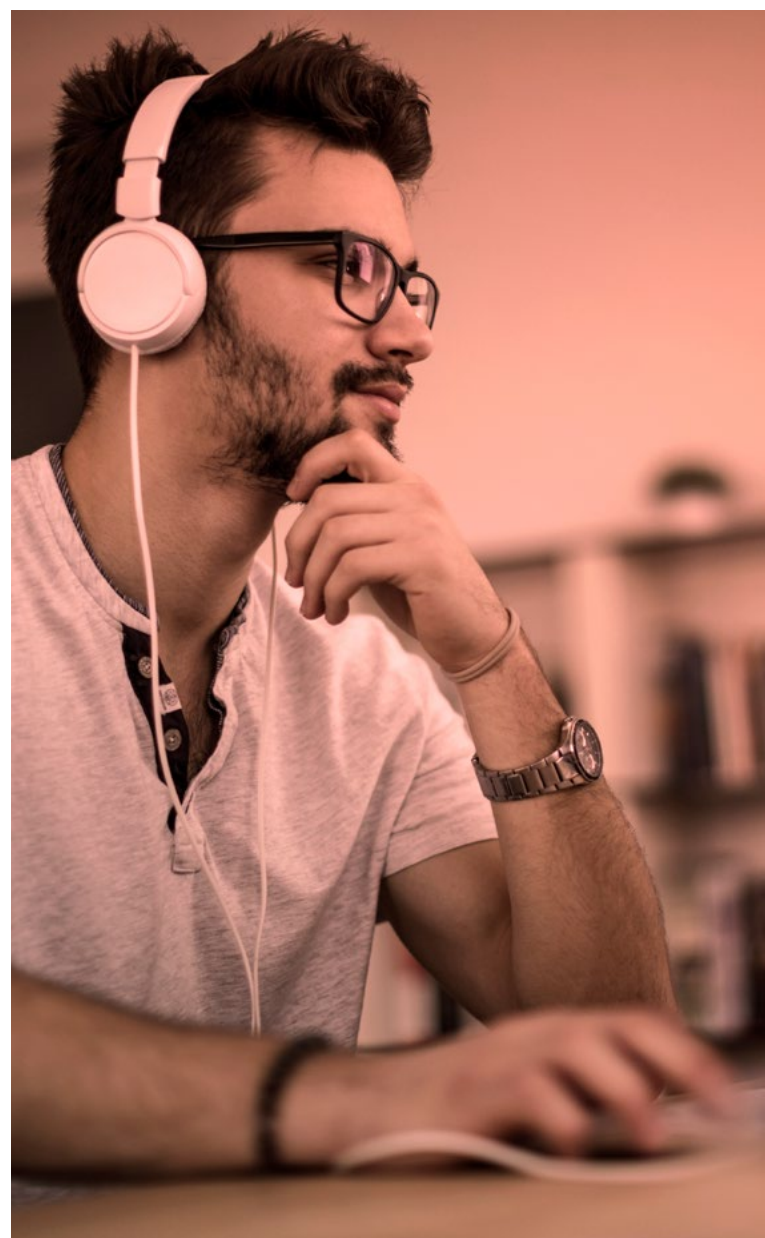
Maximizing engagement during the webinar

Experiment, engage and entertain

Webinars are increasingly interactive, multimedia experiences. The more engaging and entertaining the experience is, the more people will want to come back. However, just 7% of organizations describe their webinars as very interactive.

Here are a number of suggestions to drive engagement on the webinar itself.

- › **Experiment with the format.** Don't restrict yourself to presentations followed by a Q&A just because that's the way it's always been done. Depending on what works for your audience, you could trial panel discussions, one-on-one interviews, product demos – or hybrids of these.
- › **Play with the duration.** Who says webinars need to last for an hour? Consider whether your content could be shorter, or perhaps you need to be more ruthless over what's included. Just be upfront with viewers about what they can expect to see and how long that'll take.
- › **Let them see your presenters.** Viewers today want a more authentic, human experience. A voice emanating from behind a slide deck doesn't create a strong connection with the audience. Some presenters aren't comfortable with video, but it doesn't have to be broadcast-quality in order to build a bond.
- › **Invite questions all the way through.** A Q&A session is an intrinsic part of any webinar, but why restrict it to 10-15 minutes at the end when viewers might not have stuck around? Presenters could take questions as they come in, or set aside chunks of time to answer them. Keep reminding viewers to submit questions all the way through.



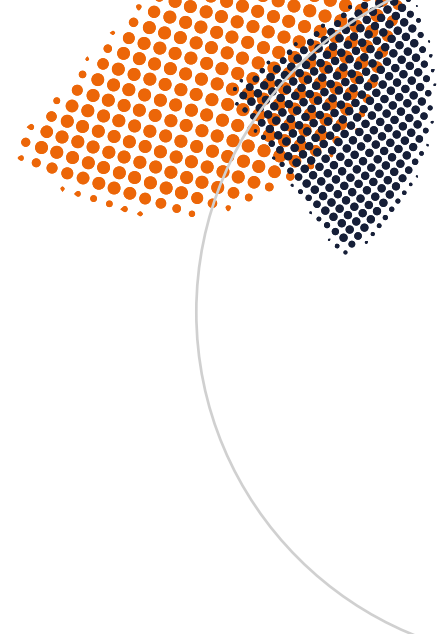


- › **Learn more about your audience.** Not only are polls and surveys a great way of keeping the audience engaged and interested, they're a great way to gather intelligence about your prospects and customers.
- › **Surround them with content.** While it's not the intention for viewers to consume the additional content you provide during the webinar, giving viewers something to click on when their attention starts to wane, be it content or a call-to-action, is a way of keeping them on board.
- › **Introduce gamification.** A number of platforms allow viewers to build a profile and earn points or achievements based on actions they take. You could set these goals based on actions you want the audience to take, or rewards for increased interaction.

Of course, the best ways to maximize engagement remain the same as they've always been – have an interesting topic, recruit engaging and authentic presenters, and speak to the issues and challenges relevant to your audience.

— *“You need to constantly engage with your audience before, during and after the webinar, whether they attend or not. Creating a clear customer journey is the best way to do that. Be sure to tailor your automated emails both at sign up and reminders in the run-up to the event, emphasising why it's worth them attending and what they will learn from the webinar. After the webinar, provide them with relevant content or upcoming webinars that are of interest. Get this right and the viewer will have already had several touchpoints with your business which could make all the difference when contacting them”*

Minesh Mistry, B2B Marketing webinarer



Maximizing post-webinar engagement

Putting an on-demand strategy in place

The work doesn't stop once the broadcast ends. A few years ago the number of people who watched a webinar on-demand was tiny, now – according to On24's benchmarks – it's a third of the total audience.

Making your webinars available on-demand isn't solely about providing access for those who couldn't attend on the day. Continuing to promote that content to new audiences is just as important. Make space in your content plan to promote existing webinars, and come up with new content that can link back to and help promote these existing presentations.

Forward-thinking companies are building webinar hubs on their sites, which provide a Netflix-style interface. It goes beyond just acting as a resource library and instead lets users find content specific to them by vertical, product or use-case.

Using webinars throughout the sales funnel

For many, webinars are resolutely a top-of-funnel lead generation exercise, to the extent that the content is almost secondary to the collection of registrants' contact information.

Webinars remain a strong source of lead generation, but can offer so much more – at all stages of the funnel. Case studies, for example, are a classic middle-of-the-funnel marketing tactic. Companies are now asking customers to come on a webinar, letting prospects hear straight from the horse's mouth and engage with them by asking questions. This is a far more effective way of driving people through the consideration stage of the customer journey.

“For so many companies that deliver a webinar, as soon as it's over it's dead and forgotten about. Any company that doesn't have an on-demand strategy is missing a giant chunk of audience share”

Mark Bornstein, On24

Demos and tutorials have long been a bottom-of-the-funnel tactic, and these too are being revitalized by the webinar. Glossy and polished videos that you can't interact with are being replaced by live, interactive demonstrations where the audience plays as big a part as the presenter. Prospects might not want to talk to a salesperson, but they're eager to fire questions at someone who has lived through the same issues.

Others are pre-recording demos, and then hosting a live Q&A after the broadcast. Tableau (recently purchased by Salesforce), has done this in its own webinar program. It pre-records a webinar to go live at a specific time and date, and then is able to respond to questions in real-time. The company has generated 27,000 leads through its webinar program with 18,500 attending for a combined 800,000 minutes of content.

What to do with the leads you generate

The purpose of driving engagement on your webinar is to generate additional insight into your prospects and customers, so there's no point simply passing leads to sales without any of this valuable information. Driving engagement will give you a better understanding of who they are, their needs and desires, and where they are along the customer journey.

Integrating that data into your CRM and/or marketing automation (or simply to the sales team if you don't have the technology), will arm sales with the information to continue a conversation, rather than starting one from scratch.

On24 creates a prospect engagement profile, which is a card integrated into the CRM. Every time a prospect attends a webinar, the card is propagated with every action they took – how long they watched, whether they asked questions and if so, which ones, did they respond to polls or click on a survey etc.

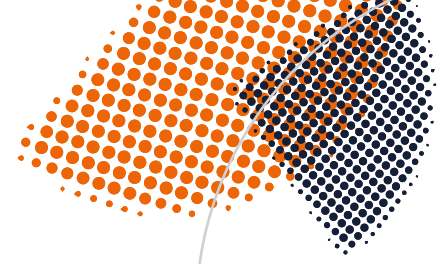
Each of these profiles has an engagement score assigned to it, so sales can easily see that of the 400 leads they have, 120 have an engagement score of six, or higher. This means they can prioritize who to follow up with. These profiles can be pulled up when prospects are contacted, so a conversation can be continued and a stronger relationship forged.

5 tips to boost on-demand engagement

- › Make it available on-demand within 48 hours.
- › Share the on-demand link with registrants and sales.
- › Archive it in your webinar/engagement hub.
- › Add to your content plan and continue to promote.
- › Repurpose content from the webinar and turn it into new content.

“When a webinar is over, most marketers just share the names with sales – they don't even look if they attended. That's what's been done for two decades, and it's not effective”

Mark Bornstein, On24



Case study

AutoTrader's road to webinar success

AutoTrader's webinar program has enabled it to engage with its audience of dealers and position itself as a leading UK digital brand.

The automotive industry is beset by a number of challenges.

- › Forecourt visits are down. In 2010 there were 30 million visits. Four years later this had fallen to 15 million – and is probably even lower today.
- › Where customers used to visit seven dealerships before purchasing a car, they now only visit one.
- › Car dealers are rated below estate agents and bankers in terms of trust. Only 7% trust them, although that rises to 92% once they have bought a car from them.

This presents a real problem for AutoTrader, which relies on external dealers' advertising through its website (it ended its print publication in 2014).

"Many of our traders left school at 16 and are now millionaires, and they don't see why they should change," AutoTrader's market research director Nick King told the audience at B2B Ignite. "If they don't change, they're going to go out of business – and if they go out of business, we don't have a business. It's both philanthropic and in our interests to make them get it, but we have to do it humbly and gently, because they see us as a necessary evil and that they have to advertise through us."

Nick wanted to get in front of the dealers to show them how AutoTrader offered value for money if dealers took advantage of everything the website had to offer.

Initially he spent two years driving up and down the UK, racking up in excess of 50,000 miles and visiting thousands of dealers to spread the message. This wasn't sustainable. "It nearly killed me – I did 200 to 300 presentations a year just to tell the story," he said.

Given AutoTrader's ambition was to be the leading digital brand in the UK, a colleague suggested trying webinars instead. So Nick bought a basic £36 camera and from a living room in Stoke, using his laptop, presented his first webinar to an audience of 10 people. It hasn't been easy; it's taken years to build a regular audience.



Nick King, market research director, AutoTrader

“We did another webinar; got another 10 people. Very slowly we built it up and started measuring the people listening to our advice,” he recalled. “Was it worth it? Six to nine months later, the people who listened to our webinars were buying more and churning less. We’d hit some kind of gold mine.”

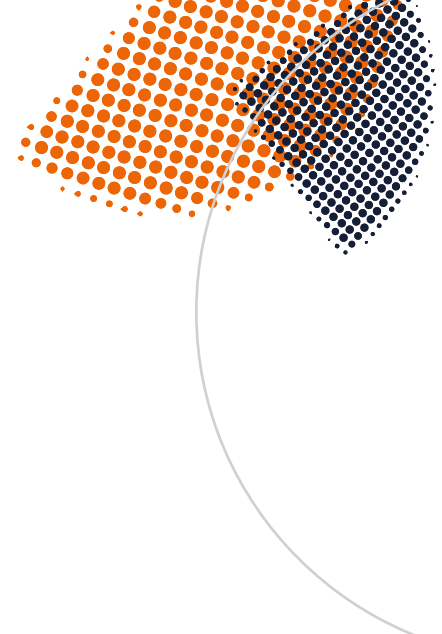
It’s been such a success that AutoTrader now has a custom-built studio in its London HQ, complete with vision mixing and 4K HD camera equipment. The company does regional seminars, bespoke seminars, masterclasses, product updates, internal webinars for its staff – it even hires the studio out to clients to run their own webinars.

Nick cited having someone with technical expertise as crucial to his success. “You’ve only got one chance, and if it looks a bit dodgy they might watch it, but they won’t watch it again. Just like if a program comes on TV, and it doesn’t grab you, you won’t watch it again. You have to deliver in a compelling way. Don’t be scared and hide behind the camera, go out and show yourself.”

Nick said AutoTrader’s approach could be applied no matter the sector, and if done right “it’ll give you an easier, more successful purchase journey for whatever you’re selling”.

Nick King’s key takeaways to produce outstanding webinars

- › Keep it simple.
- › Keep aware of your entire audience, don’t alienate anyone and baffle them with jargon.
- › Make compelling content - you’re creating TV.
- › Use polls and don’t forget the Q&A.
- › Promote your next sessions.
- › Make it a seamless experience.



About

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