

THE BENEFITS OF
WEBINARS FOR
B2C MARKETERS

IF YOU'RE NOT USING WEBINARS, YOU'RE LOSING MONEY

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THE NUMBERS ARE UP FROM LAST YEAR...

AND THE DIFFERENCES ARE NOTABLE.

At least according to the 2014 B2C Content Marketing research study by [CMI](#). Here are the numbers:

In 2013, 42% of B2C marketers reported using webinars as part of their marketing mix (up from 32%). And 58% rated webinars as effective.

Compare that to B2C's use of videos:

72% of B2C marketers reported using videos (up from 70%), and 65% rated them as effective.

That's a 30-point difference in usage, but only a 7-point difference in perceived effectiveness. (Put another way, B2C marketers used videos 71% more frequently than webinars, but rated them only 12% more effective than webinars.)

It's an interesting scenario, particularly given how successful webinars are for B2B marketers.

What are those 42% of B2C'ers using webinars for? Furthermore, why don't more B2C marketers avail themselves of this effective tactic?

Pondering the latter is the subject of this eBook.

The conclusion?

B2C marketers who don't use webinars are leaving money on the table.

Now let's talk about why...

IDENTITY CRISIS

They're referred to by a handful of names: Webinars. Webcasts. Web conferences. Web seminars. Web events (a safe "catch-all"). And maybe they have different definitions ... or not; no industry standards have been broadly adopted.

But any distinctions are without a difference; regardless of what they're called, the end game is the same: Information is shared with a target audience over the Internet in real time.

We decided to take a quick (and unscientific) poll, asking B2C-focused colleagues for their thoughts about webinars, and their experiences. Here's how it went:

Us



"So what kind of results do you see with webinars, webcasts, those sorts of things?"

"Webiwahats? Joking, joking ... but seriously, we don't use them."

"How would webinars help me sell more hats and shoes?"

"Oh, you mean videos? Yea, we kinda do the same thing ... it's called YouTube."

"Oh, you mean training? We use WebEx for staff meetings. Is that what you mean?"

"We post how-to videos on our community and through social. They bring in a lot of traffic."

"Webinars work for B2B marketing, but B2C is different. The interaction is much more emotional and immediate. Plus my customers do their homework, so I don't know what a webinar would teach them that a video can't."

"They're expensive, right?"



Them

All fair comments and questions that shed light on a fundamental issue: Webinars have an image problem among the B2C set.

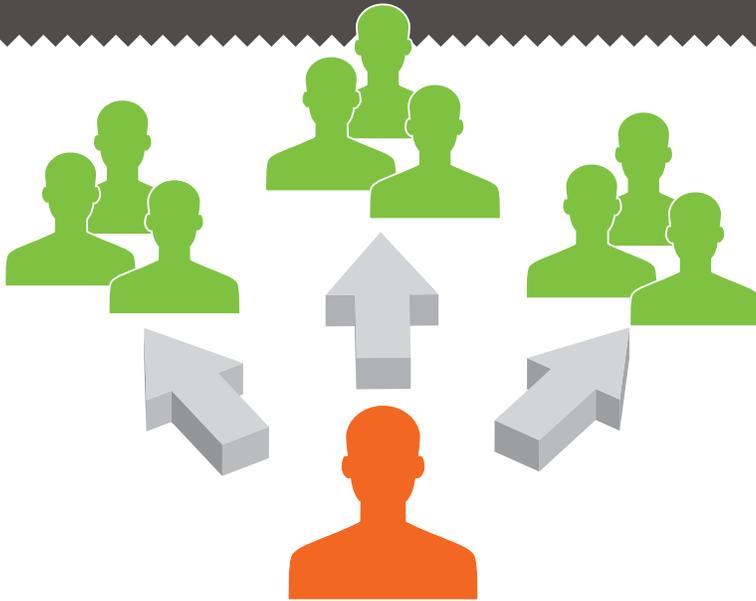
Which is a shame, because webinars offer B2C marketers a lot of upside that can enhance – even bolster – their other marketing tactics. Even YouTube.

FOUR WAYS

WEBINARS CAN BENEFIT B2C MARKETERS

FIRST WAY WEBINARS CAN BENEFIT B2C MARKETERS:

REACH A LARGER AUDIENCE



B2C is a volume game whose goal is to convert shoppers into buyers in the highest numbers possible, as fast as possible, and continuously. This is why aggressive, impressions-based tactics work: bulk emails, promotions and coupons, and eye-candy packaging and displays.

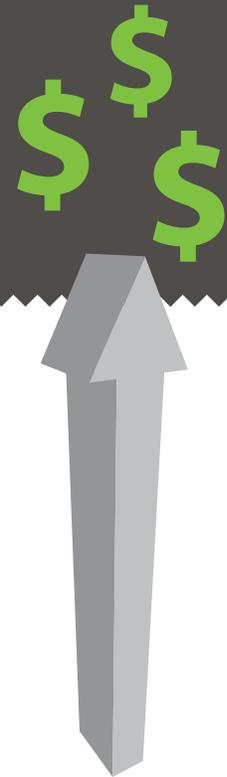
By their very (virtual) nature, webinars are great vehicles for reaching target audiences – from prospects, leads, and customers to thought leaders, investors, and employees – on a grand, even global, scale.

Most webinars last about an hour. That's a ton of visibility and reach in a mere 60 minutes.

Which leads to #2 ...

SECOND WAY WEBINARS CAN BENEFIT B2C MARKETERS:

INCREASE REVENUE



Ever watched an infomercial? You know the ones: 2 a.m. on a Tuesday, colorful pitchmen and women, great-looking sets, thoroughly demo'd products, money-saving immediacy, studio audiences that ooh and aah, clear calls to action.

Whether they're clever or cringe-worthy, whether you love 'em or hate 'em, they're a multi-billion dollar industry because they (1) tap into emotions and (2) reach millions of people.

If you think about webinars as being really great infomercials that are live (and can later be served on-demand) and allow real-time audience participation, they become pretty compelling deliverables with very real short- and long-term revenue potential.

In addition to pre- and post-presentation sales spikes, webinars can boost your sales streams by:

- **Generating leads.** Webinars are registration-gated. Meaning people who register are already somewhat pre-qualified as potential customers interested in your products and services. For B2C companies with sales teams, this is gold.
- **Building your mailing list.** Even more than B2B, mailing lists are holy grails for B2C marketers, driving as much as 30%-50% of revenues. (Note that exact percentages hinge on each company's email attribution model ... a different topic for a different day.) The takeaway is that webinar registration means opt-in names that are not only receptive to your products, they can be immediately marketed to. Depending on the nature of your webinar, you may be able pinpoint specific interests and segment these list additions so you can deliver more highly personalized messaging.
- **Improving employee productivity.** This isn't directly related to sales, but it IS related to revenue by way of budgetary savings. For companies with geographically dispersed staff, webinars are wonderful tactics for easily and efficiently communicating business-critical information to internal teams in one fell swoop. This saves incremental budget from several buckets, including resource time, travel, and duplication of effort. It also underscores consistent messaging across disparate groups and helps keep departments in step, increasing efficiency and productivity.

And increased revenue dovetails nicely into #3 ...

THIRD WAY WEBINARS CAN BENEFIT B2C MARKETERS:

ESTABLISH BRAND TRUST AND LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS

Both B2B and B2C buyers have the same desire: to trust what they're buying. This includes trust in the brand, the product, the salesperson, the service, the support, the expertise, the quality.

Webinars give B2C marketers a prime mechanism for helping audiences get to know their brand on a personal level, thanks to their interactive nature – real time conversations with experts, product and service demonstrations, Q&A sections for addressing live audience concerns and questions. A webinar helps your brand look warm, real, and authentic.

The more customers get to know you, the more likely they are to trust you, buy from you, and become repeat, loyal customers.

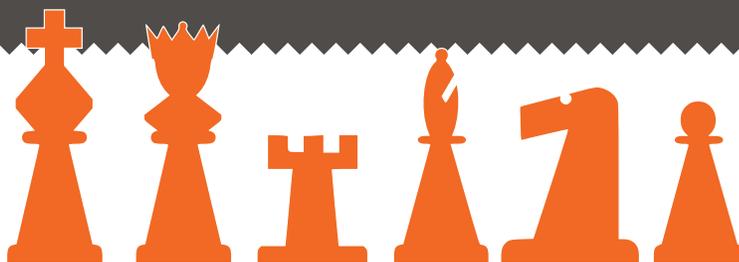
Which brings us to #4, creating a virtuous circle ...



FOURTH WAY WEBINARS CAN BENEFIT B2C MARKETERS:

IMPROVE AND EXPAND YOUR CONTENT MARKETING

Content is still king (and queen and rook), particularly when it comes to eCommerce, where customers are increasingly on the hunt to find meaningful signals from the cacophony of cyber noise. And the “signals” are pieces of quality content that deliver value.



Say hello to the webinar.

Thanks to technology, webinars are essentially videos: They open up a birthday box of opportunities that support your content marketing plans, deliver value, drive visits, drive sales, and generally don't require additional budget.

In a nutshell: Repurpose.

When it comes to content, the perpetual challenge is keeping the pipeline filled for your distribution channels. At 60 minutes and chock full of visuals, audio, and most likely a few interesting questions from participants, a single webinar can be broken into all kinds of content:

- Break your webinar topics down into a series of blog posts
- Break the webinar itself into shorter video vignettes for your resources page or nurture campaigns
- Turn the presentation into an eBook
- Create separate, deeper-dive papers from the topics covered
- Tweet memorable quotes
- Post the webinar on your website and gate it to get more opt-in names; email the opportunity to your list
- Post it on YouTube and Vimeo

And that's for starters.

Additionally, get inspiration from the questions and comments given by your attendees. This includes the ones you answer during the webinar, the ones you don't have time to answer, and the ones you may receive via email later. They all can be valuable at uncovering gaps in your content and informing next steps.

B2C WEBINAR IDEAS



If the benefits have intrigued you (or at least suspended your urge to close this book), a reasonable next request would be some “for instances” on how webinars could be used in the B2C world.

Fair enough. Here’s a short list of use cases to spur some cogitation and strategy:

Outdoor company

- The best tents for the terrain and the season – how to pack them, assemble them, and what makes each a good option
- Rock climbing for beginners, including the training, equipment, dangers, resources
- How to choose a running shoe
- How to purify water on the trail

Apparel company

- How to choose the right hat for your face
- Solids, stripes, or prints? How to choose what to wear
- Seven memorable ways to use a scarf

Bike company

- Bike maintenance series
- Best practices for training in high altitudes
- How to maintain bike tires for safety and longer wear

Healthcare company

- Is gastric bypass right for you?
- Celiac? How to uncover hidden dangers on food labels
- Ask the Doctor: an open forum on acid reflux

Food company

- Demonstrations on any facet of cooking or baking tips and tricks and techniques
- The hidden calories in restaurant meals and how to avoid them
- Take a tip from Julia: Three basic techniques using a bain-marie

Electronics company

- How to choose the best entertainment system for your lifestyle
- A primer on perceptual computing technologies
- Getting started with the MotoX

Crafting

- Welding for beginners
- Show me: How to build a picture frame
- Flower arranging in the Japanese manner
- Make a clock from practically anything

ENSURE WEBINAR SUCCESS

Like most everything else, creating successful webinars comes down to good preparation. Obviously there are a lot of dependent factors, including the topic, audience, business type, and technology platform. But there are key elements that are consistent for effective webinars.



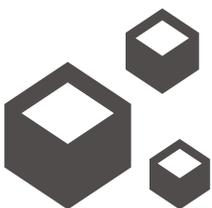
- **Get top-notch speakers.** We've all attended them: presentations that quickly become big snores due to unengaged, disengaged, or otherwise non-dynamic speakers who don't capture our attention. Choose your speakers wisely, be they C-level rock stars, product experts, actors, or comedians. Make sure they're polished and engaging.



- **Promote the event.** Use every channel that makes sense to best reach your audience. You may also consider offering incentives such as credits or certifications, discounts, or chances to win something.



- **Be well prepared.** This is the "measure twice, cut once" philosophy. Comb your presentation for typos, grammar mistakes, alignment, and spacing issues. Double check your facts, figures, and math. Anticipate what will be asked and have answers at the ready. Craft seed questions to get the Q&A portion started. Make sure the operational stuff is tested and ready to go: recording equipment, microphones, cameras, lighting, no background noise.



- **Have the right infrastructure.** Webinars (webcasts, web events ...) can now be pretty easily managed on a host of platforms, some free, some not. The most effective platforms are [marketing automation](#) because they provide all of the tools in a single solution, including email, web forms, visitor tracking, social push, database integration, segmentation, data tracking, and reporting.

WHAT'S IT COST?

Generally not as much as you think.

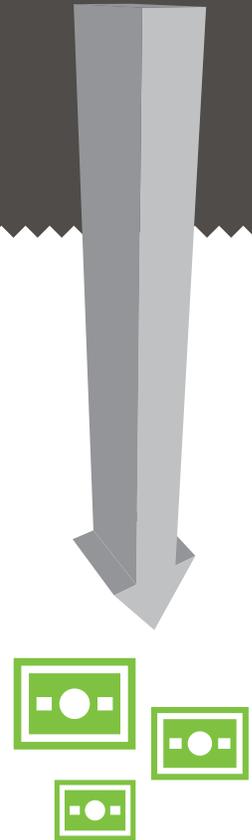
To be sure, there are some solutions that are pretty expensive, but these usually include the whole enchilada of services: campaign materials and creative, promotional placement and management, full registration management (often with the guarantee of a pre-negotiated number of registrants), pre- and post- communications, full webinar platform management and hosting, and data collection.

There are also many free or low-cost services that can make sense for smaller companies, or companies with deep in-house marketing capabilities and the resources for manual tasks.

The effectiveness of webinars, particularly when coupled with the long-term value opportunities that even one webinar brings, usually pencils out to a low upfront cost – and a great ROI.

A worthy part of the marketing mix.

Although webinars may not be the #1 powerhouse tactic for B2C sales, they're worthy of inclusion in the marketing mix. As one retail marketer puts it, webinars are “another leg of the B2C marketing stool” ... one that can deliver a targeted audience – and a sizable payoff.



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About Act-On Software

Act-On Software is a marketing automation company delivering innovation that empowers marketers to do the best work of their careers. Act-On is the only integrated workspace to address the needs of the customer experience, from brand awareness and demand generation, to retention and loyalty. With Act-On, marketers can drive better business outcomes and see higher customer lifetime value. The Act-On platform provides marketers with power they can actually use, without the need for a dedicated IT resource.

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