



The Webinar Playbook: Game-Changing Strategies From 10 Top B2B Marketers

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Introduction

Webinars have long been considered a staple content format for lead generation at B2B organizations. Similar to in-person events, webinars draw in more quality prospects who are willing to engage on a meaningful level.

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 According to research from [InsideSales.com](https://www.insidesales.com), **73% of marketing and sales leaders said webinars are the best way to generate quality leads.**

In addition, *Demand Gen Report's 2019 Content Preferences Study* revealed that **63% of buyers said they are willing to spend 20 to 60 minutes watching webinars**, more than any other content format.

Yet, given their popularity, many companies are having a harder time getting time-starved buyers to attend live webinars and engage with the content, as they are spending more time researching purchases on their own and are looking for more relevant, contextual content. That same *Demand Gen Report* research shows that close to **three-quarters (73%) of buyers have less time to devote to researching purchase decisions**. Also, findings from *Demand Gen Report's* annual *B2B Buyer's Survey* show that **76% of buyers want content that speaks directly to their company**.

As buyer preferences evolve, a traditional webinar model (think generic slideshows complemented by a single voice on audio) may not always cut through the noise and drive the high engagement it used to.

To learn how marketers are addressing these new realities and to help the B2B community successfully reinvent their webinar strategies for modern buyers, GoToWebinar and *Demand Gen Report* interviewed 10 top influencers with various levels of webinar-creating experience and expertise. In the following pages, they offer strategic advice and new tactics for delivering webinar content that's fresh, engaging and drives results.

By bringing in interactive elements, multiple voices and even video to the mix, B2B organizations are better positioned to deliver a webinar experience that is authentic, entertaining and informative. This, in turn, can lead to greater engagement between a company and its prospects and customers, which can ultimately lead to a long-term business relationship.

Table Of Contents

- 04**
Ardath Albee, Marketing Interactions
Successfully Leveraging Webinars At Every Stage Of The Buying Process
- 06**
Lauren Alt, Outreach
Leveraging Webinars To Help Prospects Move Throughout The Funnel
- 08**
Michael Brenner, Marketing Insider Group
Developing A Monthly Webinar Series For Greater Impact
- 10**
Tina Dietz, StartSomething Creative Business Solutions
Taking A “Master Class” Approach To Webinars For One-To-One Engagement
- 12**
Andrea Fryrear, AgileSherpas
Partnering Up For Greater Reach, Incorporating Video For Entertainment
- 14**
Lauren Mead, TimeTrade
Using Webinars As A Key Touchpoint in ABM
- 16**
Sherrie Mersdorf, Evariant
Getting Maximum Value From Webinars With Content Repurposing
- 18**
Jen Spencer, SmartBug Media
Encouraging Presenters To Promote Webinars On Social With Video
- 20**
Daniel Waas, GoToWebinar
Freshening Up Traditional Webinar Models With Polls, Music & Icebreakers
- 22**
Elle Woulfe, PathFactory
Boosting Webinar Engagement With Influencer Panels & Pre-Event Q&As



Ardath Albee

CEO & B2B MARKETING STRATEGIST, MARKETING INTERACTIONS

Successfully Leveraging Webinars At Every Stage Of The Buying Process

Ardath Albee leverages webinars to gain exposure for her ideas by presenting on topics that cater to the clients and markets she serves. According to Albee, webinars can be successfully used at every stage of the buying process, including:

- **Nurture** to talk about key aspects of the problem-to-solution story;
- **Evaluation** to explain the product, sharing both pros and cons;
- **Acquisition** to host a customer panel to speak candidly about their experience with you and your product;
- **Onboarding** to show and teach customers how to use the product to their best advantage;
- **Renewal** to share how the product (and brand) will continue to be relevant in the future; and

- **ABM** as an account-specific, thought-leadership session to drive consensus and answer questions (not a sales presentation, but an exchange of expertise to showcase your value beyond the product to the prospective customer).

“I look at webinars as a pillar of content that activates a conversation.” 

For pre-event, think sharing ideas around the topic in reminder emails and short polls that will help you **orient the session to audience needs/preferences**, etc. For post-event, think written answers to the questions asked and sharing the content you’ve repurposed from the webinar itself, in addition to just sharing the link to the on-demand version. **Give [attendees] something more to keep the conversation going.** You could even develop a **nurture program around the topic to extend engagement** and provide even more ideas and insights to those interested.”



SUCCESSFULLY LEVERAGING WEBINARS AT EVERY STAGE OF THE BUYING PROCESS

Top Takeaways



Plan ahead. Think about which area of the buying journey you want to focus on with your webinar and create a strategy/format that caters to that specific stage.



Conversation is king. Share the recording along with supporting content to keep the audience engaged post-event.



Lauren Alt

DEMAND GENERATION, OUTREACH

Leveraging Webinars To Help Prospects Move Throughout The Funnel

At Outreach, Lauren Alt and her team use webinars as an educational channel to nurture prospects through most of the presale stages of the funnel.

“We’re putting our not-quite-yet qualified [leads] through email nurtures that drive people to educate themselves via webinars and on-demand webinars,” said Alt. “Ultimately, this **helps accelerate cycles** and drive new names and new deals for our sales team.”

Alt added that webinars are very helpful in attribution, in terms of giving the team the right insights into how webinars are helping prospects move throughout the funnel.

“We use a **multi-touch attribution model when we look at all marketing programs**, which means we can take action on the program and how it is related to opportunity and deal closing,” said Alt. “**That’s really important for optimizing ROI for webinars but, on the other hand, it also helps us get a sense of how educated and how knowledgeable our audience is on certain topics and things that they’re interested in.**”

Alt said it is most important to think about what the objective of your webinar program should be. Whether if it’s about driving your business or nurturing prospects that you already have through the funnel. Figuring out the right KPIs is essential in webinar creation, as well.

“**Make sure you have the right KPIs to move you in the right direction** because if you’re looking at the wrong KPIs, if you’re just looking at sheer number of leads and you’re not thinking about **what’s going to happen to them afterwards** or what the objective is after you get the leads in the door, then you might be wasting resources on your webinar program as a whole.”



LEVERAGING WEBINARS TO HELP PROSPECTS MOVE THROUGHOUT THE FUNNEL

Top Takeaways



Nurture, nurture, nurture. Fuel prospects with webinars so they can educate themselves and accelerate the cycle.



Think about the objective. Know what the goal of the webinar should be before production.



Put the right KPIs in place. Don't just look at volume of leads, but also know how you're going to engage and nurture them following the webinar.



Michael Brenner

CEO, AUTHOR & KEYNOTE SPEAKER, MARKETING INSIDER GROUP

Developing A Monthly Webinar Series For Greater Impact

Michael Brenner creates webinars on a monthly basis as a way to break up the mix of content he produces and drive deeper engagement.

“Webinars are super important to us in our nurturing efforts,” said Brenner. “The open rate on our webinar replay emails is sometimes as **high as 60%!**”

According to Brenner, one stand-alone webinar may not make as big of an impact as a series. He also believes in planning and promoting webinars around a 21-day schedule.

“One webinar rarely makes an impact. I use webinars in a monthly series, and we consider it simply a part of our content marketing strategy where everything has a frequency.” 

“We’ve tested webinar promotion and found that at least for us, **every webinar should work on a 21-day schedule.** If you try and promote too soon, your audience might just wait until it gets closer. If you wait too long, calendars get booked up. **So, we start at 21 days, followed by 14, seven and three days before.** The day before, the day of and the day after all have separate emails.”



DEVELOPING A MONTHLY WEBINAR SERIES FOR GREATER IMPACT

Top Takeaways



Mix it up. Break up your existing mix of content with a webinar to deliver information on your audience's terms.



Avoid a “one-and-done” approach. Create a series of webinars to maintain engagement.



Plan ahead. Make sure your promotion schedule doesn't overwhelm your audience.



Tina Dietz

FOUNDER, STARTSOMETHING CREATIVE BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

Taking A “Master Class” Approach To Webinars For Deeper One-To-One Engagement

Tina Dietz believes webinars create a greater opportunity to gain much deeper engagement from an audience, but she is not a huge fan of the traditional audio-slide format.

Dietz has taken a unique approach to webinars by positioning them as “master classes.” In a master class, you showcase a granular topic and make the audience feel as though you’re speaking directly to them. It’s really about going deep into an area and teaching the audience something that they can take action on immediately.

This approach positions your company as an expert in the field. It can also result in your audience feeling like you are speaking directly to them and their pain points, which helps build deeper relationships.

“Sometimes it’s better to get more granular and take the master class  approach than it is to go super broad with a particular topic because everybody can do that,” said Dietz. “What are you a deep expert on? What problem do you specifically solve that can make a difference for that client or customer in one time? If you can solve one problem for a potential customer or client, then you’re likely to be able to solve more than one problem.”

“**Make sure that you’re speaking to one person**, not like you’re speaking on a stage,” she added. “It makes the conversation much more **intimate** and that’s really important when you’re reaching so many in a webinar format, because you as the speaker might feel like you’re speaking to an audience, but that listener on the other side is sitting alone. They want to know you’re speaking right to them.”



TAKING A “MASTER CLASS” APPROACH TO WEBINARS FOR DEEPER ONE-TO-ONE ENGAGEMENT

Top Takeaways



Get granular. Don't deliver webinars on broad topics. Get down to the nitty gritty on a specific point of your expertise.



Create a feeling of intimacy. Make your audience feel like you're speaking directly to them.



Andrea Fryrear

PRESIDENT & LEAD TRAINER, AGILESHERPAS

Partnering Up For Greater Reach, Incorporating Video For Entertainment

If you want to expand your reach, don't do webinars on your own. Instead, tap into the power of partnerships to draw in audiences beyond your own circle. AgileSherpas doesn't have a webinar publication cadence in-house, but they saw an opportunity to team up with external partners.

"We **find relevant partners** with webinar programs and join with them," said Andrea Fryrear. "For us the partnering approach is great because **each appearance generates hundreds of leads**, which also become new subscribers to our email list that we can qualify and nurture over time.

Additionally, Fryrear said including video in webinars has led to a higher percentage of viewers staying until the end of the session. She also suggests having a presenter draw on a white board on video to change up the experience.

"Just having another human face to look at makes the experience more enjoyable and tangible," she added. **"Adding video is a simple option for  upping your webinar game. Likewise, having co-hosts who are more conversational is great.** I don't miss the old webinar days when I just sat in my office and spoke to the wall for 30 minutes while flipping through slides."

A unique element to add to video webinars are white board presentations, where the host draws on a white board rather than showing static slides, according to Fryrear.

"I think there's a lot of opportunity to **make webinars more of a teaching opportunity** when we start incorporating video," she said. "Having a presenter drawing on a white board rather than showing static slides for instance could change the whole experience. Then you could send out shots of the board at various stages instead of slides."



PARTNERING UP FOR GREATER REACH, INCORPORATING VIDEO FOR ENTERTAINMENT

Top Takeaways



Team up. Work with your partners to present webinars together and reach audiences outside your circle.



Add video. Skip the excess of static slides and include videos and video chat conversations to give your webinars more intimate feel.



Try white boards. Another option to spice up a static slide deck is having the presenter present white board videos.



Lauren Mead

CMO, TIMETRADE

Using Webinars As A Key Touchpoint In ABM

At TimeTrade, Lauren Mead not only leverages webinars throughout the funnel, but as a key touchpoint in the company's ABM strategy as well.

“We do ABM, and we use webinars as one of the touchpoints along the ABM journey, but to make it scalable, we don't take a one-to-one approach,” said Mead. “It's one-to-many based on industry segmentation and personas. Based on a large list of our target accounts, we'll do webinars specific to that group and use that as one of the touchpoints in the nurture stream for that particular segment.”

For Mead, webinars are one of the highest conversion lead-gen efforts TimeTrade does. Mead explained, “Webinar attendees have shown a **high-level of interest**. They not only show interest in the topic, but then they make the effort to attend, engage with us, and hear the content. Naturally, they have a much higher conversion rate than say someone who just downloaded a white paper and never even read it.”

Mead added that webinars provide greater intelligence on target accounts, so she recommends measuring how long attendees engage with the content, tracking the questions they ask or whether they engaged with other assets included in the webinar materials. This will help you gauge levels of interest.



USING WEBINARS AS A KEY TOUCHPOINT IN ABM

Top Takeaways



Fuel ABM. Create webinar content that's specific to your target accounts' needs to boost conversions.



Track engagement. Measure levels of interest by noting how your audience engaged with the webinar and supporting assets. Then, prioritize the ones with the greatest interest.

Sherrie Mersdorf



VP OF MARKETING, EVARIANT

Getting Maximum Value From Webinars With Content Repurposing

With careful planning and a content-repurposing strategy, even small teams can execute a webinar that drives value long after the live event ends. For Sherrie Mersdorf and her small team, it's all about getting the maximum value from webinars with additional formats, which makes them a key influence in their revenue pipeline.

 **"We average more than one webinar per product per month," she said. "Given our small team, it's extremely important to ensure we see the maximum benefit for the level of effort.** For us, that means truly **thinking through the alignment of the content and topic with our key messages**, as well as how we can **leverage the content to create new formats.**"

Because webinars require a lot of effort and investment for Evariant's small team, Mersdorf said they make sure to get maximum value and utility by creating short, stand-alone audio clips from the webinar itself that are about one- to five-minutes long.

"While it does take some planning to ensure the recording has **good sound bites** that are short and can stand alone from the rest of the presentation, they are extremely helpful to embed in blogs and nurtures, use in follow-ups to discovery discussions, and improve engagement on social media and web personalization," said Mersdorf. "The commitment to consume the sound bite is low but **offers an opportunity to binge** — and isn't that what we all want for our campaigns and content?"



GETTING MAXIMUM VALUE FROM WEBINARS WITH CONTENT REPURPOSING

Top Takeaways



Get creative with repurposing. Webinars can be cut down into short audio or video clips to use in blogs and on social media



Brainstorm repurposed content in advance. Plan additional content in advance so you can ensure you have everything you need to maximize your webinar's value.



Jen Spencer

VP OF SALES & MARKETING, SMARTBUG MEDIA

Encouraging Presenters To Promote Webinars On Social With Video

At SmartBug Media, Jen Spencer and her team host educational webinars on a monthly basis and have found that the most successful webinars are served at the awareness or consideration stage of the buyer's journey.

To boost promotion, Spencer asks presenters to record brief videos (no more than 30 to 45 seconds) that showcase helpful insights for potential registrants with their unique voice and energy.

"This is a **valuable marketing tool for emails and social media posts promoting webinars,**" said Spencer. "If you're having the presenter record

that video, go ahead and ask for just one more and have them record a follow-up video that can be sent to those who did register. Then email that video to registrants to encourage them to attend online.

"Our preference is to provide a highly relevant experience for attendees," she continued. "For that reason, you'll see SmartBug webinars focused on a very specific need in a very specific vertical." For example, we recently hosted a webinar on how financial services organizations are humanizing their marketing efforts by using video.



ENCOURAGING PRESENTERS TO PROMOTE WEBINARS ON SOCIAL WITH VIDEO

Top Takeaways



Focus on specific needs and verticals.

Tailor your webinars to niche audiences.



Use video for promotions.

Ask presenters to record short videos for social and email promos.



Vet presenters. Make sure your speakers can keep an audience engaged and entertained.



Daniel Waas

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, GOTOWEBINAR

Freshening Up Traditional Webinar Models With Polls, Music & Icebreakers

Today's webinar content creators are putting a fresh spin on the traditional slide/audio format by incorporating interactive elements into their events to generate greater engagement from and deeper understanding of their audiences. According to Daniel Waas, polls are a great way to both increase engagement and get to know where prospects are in their buying journey – information they can later send to sales.

“We use **poll questions** throughout the webinars to **segment the audience** further,” said Waas. “We ask questions like, how advanced are you? Where's your program at? What are you struggling with? These are all data points, and we can **arm the sales team** with these insights to use in their follow-up. It helps them **make a connection and have a meaningful conversation** about something on the customer's mind.”

Polls also give viewers an opportunity to really interact with companies and share their pain points, which can also help the webinar presenters to cater their content on a more granular, one-to-one level.

“Anytime you give someone on the webinar an opportunity to lean in,  it increases their engagement, it makes them stay on longer, makes them more attentive and receptive to what you're talking about,” said Waas.

“We encourage simple things like **hand-raising**, or I'll ask people to just **respond with a quick yay or nay**. Sometimes I will start with a poll to try and understand where they're at, like, ‘are you a beginner or intermediate?’ Then, I can tailor the content to the audience. That helps both in terms of **segmenting who they are, and in the webinar delivery.**”

Other ways of generating more engagement from audiences include fun icebreaker-type questions (i.e. “What's your favorite TV show?” to kick off a webinar about video) in the beginning of the session and even incorporating music into the presentation to add a little fun.

“Usually, we start about five minutes before the hour, let people in and start greeting them by name. We **put the icebreaker up** and start **having a little bit of fun**. We've also recently started **playing music**. I usually have some kind of intro song and I always change it up. **That just sets a different tone.** People know that this is not going to be the standard event.”



FRESHENING UP TRADITIONAL WEBINAR MODELS WITH POLLS, MUSIC & ICEBREAKERS

Top Takeaways



Add polls. Get to know your audience by including polls throughout the webinar.



Have some fun. Include music and fun icebreaker questions to freshen up traditional webinar formats and keep viewers engaged.



Elle Woulfe

VP OF MARKETING, PATHFACTORY

Boosting Webinar Engagement With Influencer Panels & Pre-Event Q&As

Webinars are central to PathFactory's marketing mix; the company uses them at every stage of the funnel. Woulfe said the team normally produces anywhere from three to five top-of-funnel webinars per quarter, and two to three customer webinars.

“We love [webinars] because they really allow buyers to have more personal experiences with our brand,” said Woulfe. “They can also be a very effective educational tool for conveying complex information.”

One of the most successful PathFactory webinars was called “**The Great Gate Debate**,” where the company brought marketers and experts together to discuss the use of gates and forms in B2B marketing.

“Everyone was on camera, so it played more as an organic discussion — no slides required,” said Woulfe. “Having the audience **contribute their questions via live chat** helped them feel like they were part of the action.

“Forms tend to be a contentious topic in marketing, so we ran with that idea and built a ton of content around the ‘to form or not to form’ debate leading up to the webinar for promotion and to build awareness around the topic.

Working with co-marketing partners helped us cast a pretty wide net to promote our webinar to a wider network.”

According to Woulfe, virtual panels — if done well — can be dynamic and expose the audience to many points of view in a genuine way. While the team sometimes uses polls within webinars, Woulfe believes taking questions is an even better way to get the audience involved.

“We do this via live chat during the webinar. Another approach is to **take audience questions before the webinar**,” said Woulfe. “We do this by incorporating questions from behind the registration form. This way, audience members can submit their questions before the panel even begins. The benefits to this were three-fold: it gives us a **better idea of why people want to attend the webinar**, it gives the speakers time to **prepare thoughtful answers**, and it **increases the likelihood of the audience member showing up** to the webinar to find out the answer to their question.

“We use webinars to **tell stories** and generally try to **keep the content fun and engaging**. You will rarely see us present slides with lots of words and bulleted lists.”



BOOSTING WEBINAR ENGAGEMENT WITH INFLUENCER PANELS & PRE-EVENT Q&AS

Top Takeaways



Less slides, more voices. Create panel-style webinars and invite influencers to speak on camera.



Pre-event Q&As. Reach out to registrants before the webinar to hear what pain points they're looking to solve. Then, fuel your webinar content with solutions.



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