

**ENGAGE!**  
**HOW TO AVOID THE SEVEN SINS OF  
LIVE, ONLINE PRESENTATIONS**

A 1080 Group Paper  
Prepared for Citrix Online

August 2009

## WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

Despite agreement that in-person communication remains the most influential way to train, market, and sell, too often the costs outweigh the benefits. Live, online presentations bridge that gap.

Online presentations in web-based seminars (i.e., “Webinars”) connect presenters and audiences from their desktops anywhere in the world in real time, increasing the reach of key messages while reducing travel costs. But the opportunity of using this medium for communication brings with it an important question:

*How do presenters deliver powerful, engaging presentations to audiences not sitting directly in front of them?*

To understand how presenters are rising to meet this challenge, 1080 Group, LLC conducted both quantitative and qualitative research in May-June 2009, surveying more than 600 professionals about how to plan, design, and deliver effective online presentations.

The findings demonstrate that using Webinars has become a mainstream business practice, that companies intend to continue to grow their use of them, and that presenters can effectively reach remote audiences but need to avoid some common mistakes.

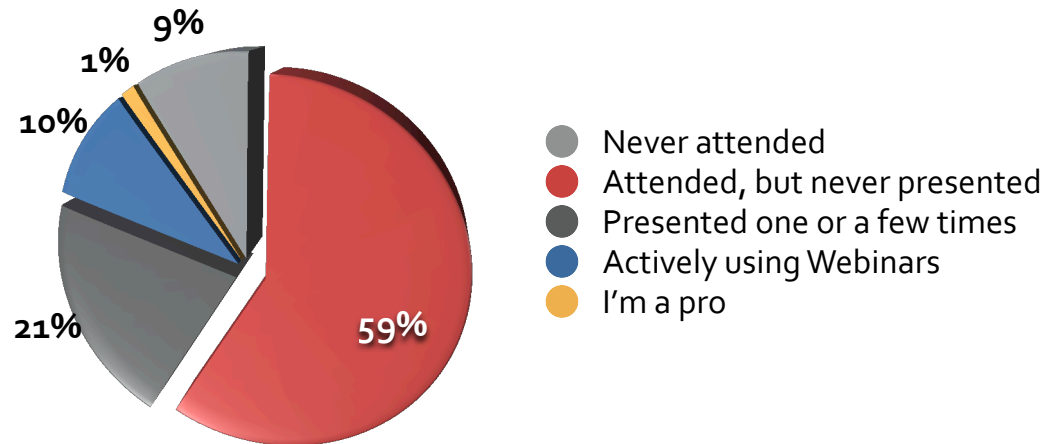
This paper will help online presenters “step up their game” toward more successful events by delivering:

- Highlights of findings from the research conducted
- Seven critical mistakes made when presenting online – and how to avoid them
- A reference checklist for presenters preparing to present at a Webinar

## PRESENTERS EXPECT TO CONTINUE GROWING USE OF ONLINE PRESENTATIONS

### Webinars Have Reached the Tipping Point

Among respondents surveyed, 91% have attended a Webinar, and in the next six months they expect to grow their own use of Webinars by 14.8%, from an average of 2.1 per month to 5.2 per month.



*Nine out of ten respondents have attended a Webinar, and 35% of those have made one or more online presentations*

### Why use Webinars?

- Save cost of travel
- Save time away from other duties
- Add visual to a conference call
- Save inconvenience of travel

1080 Group research  
May, June 2009

Respondents at all levels of experience with attending or using Webinars agreed that saving travel costs was the top benefit (see sidebar). However, a review of the responses of the most experienced Webinar presenters indicates that they agree with the first benefit, but they rank secondary benefits more highly:

- Saves cost of travel
- Helps us reach audiences we would not otherwise reach
- Allows us to train more employees or customers

### Takeaway

Webinars are no longer a novelty used by a few early adopters. For anyone who needs to reach an audience with a message, this trend likely changes the question from "Should I present using Webinars?" to "When I present using Webinars, what am I going to do?"

*“The key is engagement, and engagement is talking with an audience, not just at them.”*

Bettina Davis  
Former Sr. Training  
Manager,  
Intel Corporation

### “Ease of Use” Cited as Top Success Factor

Survey respondents were shown a list of 17 different items spanning four presentation categories: content, design, delivery, and logistics. Asked to rate each item in terms of importance to the success of a Webinar, the top four success factors overall were:

- Ease of use when joining or participating
- Quality of the presenter(s) speaking voice or delivery
- Clarity of the message and/or call to action in the presentation
- Invitation and/or registration page copy that accurately describes the content of the Webinar

### Takeaway

Technology is an enabler, making it possible to gain the benefits of Webinars. But it shouldn't get in the way of effective communication. The essentials of effective presentations still include delivering content that is understandable, beneficial, and accurately communicated.

### Top Growth Area: “Keeping Attendees Engaged”

Of respondents with experience presenting at Webinars, “keeping attendees engaged” emerged as their top concern. When asked to rate how prepared they feel to succeed using Webinars (versus presenting in-person), these same presenters ranked themselves with the lowest preparedness.

Further exploring the data, presenters who identified themselves as very experienced at presenting with Webinars rated themselves the highest in their preparedness with engaging online audiences.

### Takeaway

All agree that Webinars offer many benefits, but presenters with the most experience at presenting online are the most comfortable engaging remote audiences. Engaging a remote audience requires practice, and the greatest reward will go to those making an effort.

## HOW TO AVOID THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS OF LIVE, ONLINE PRESENTATIONS

To accomplish your objective with a live, online presentation, it is imperative to understand the essential elements of success. This section identifies critical, but avoidable, mistakes, along with practical steps to take to accelerate your Webinar mastery.

### Before Your Online Presentation

#### Mistake #1: Not investing in the success of your online presentation

Nearly half of respondents indicated they spend more time on in-person presentations than online presentations. Yet when asked to compare their

preparedness for both, they rated “interacting in an engaging way” and “slide design” as the places they’re least prepared when it comes to online presentations.

These same respondents ranked “saves time away from other duties” second only to saving travel costs.

With the most experienced online presenters experiencing the highest level of benefit, it appears that investing the time saved elsewhere into expanding one’s professional skills would pay rich dividends.

#### Take Action

- Remember that the online medium transforms how messages are delivered and received
- Adopt a perspective of “adapting to a new communications environment”
- Invest time saved elsewhere in yourself and your audience

## Planning Your Online Presentation

### Mistake #2: Not getting clear on what motivates your audience

Understandably, a frequently asked question is “How do I get people to attend?” Greater attendance often means more opportunity to impart the knowledge or skills that help you reach goals.

When asked to consider online presentations from an audience’s point of view, respondents sent presenters a clear message concerning content, with the top two success factors for online presentations being:

- “Clarity of the message and/or call to action in the presentation”
- “Invitation or registration page copy that accurately describes the content of the Webinar”

Invitees are most likely to attend and engage when they know the answer to “What is in it for me?” If you don’t know what their motivations are, you won’t be able to create messages that compel them to action.

#### Take Action

- Identify the audience you want or need to attract
- Identify the pains or problems that audience is most likely to take action to solve
- Develop a clear proposition based on what your audience wants to hear, balanced with what you have to say

“The best events are those that deliver actionable insights. Clearly explain how your event will help solve a problem—and then deliver on that promise—and attendees will beat a path to your door.”

Tim Kopp  
Chief Marketing Officer,  
ExactTarget

*“Because of what we know about the limits of working memory, presenters today have to make fewer, more important points and find more engaging ways to present them.”*

Cliff Atkinson, author  
*Beyond Bullet Points*

### Mistake #3: Failing to hone the focus of your presentation

Presenters sometimes have a tendency to “squeeze it all in.” Research confirms that this is counter-productive.

When respondents were asked to identify from an audience’s perspective that which is most annoying about a presenter’s content, their top concerns were:

- “Presenter tries to cover too much”
- “Presenter deviates from the message”

Influencing change only happens when presenters impart knowledge and skills that get into the audience’s long-term memory. But short-term memory limits how much can be remembered and absorbed at a time.

After identifying the challenges that motivate your audience, it is imperative to focus on the few key points that will have greatest impact. Webinar software uniquely enables online presenters to continue listening and learning, honing that focus as the audience registers and participates.

#### Take Action

- Ask, “If the audience only remembers a few key points, what should they be?”
- Cut out what doesn’t clearly support those key points
- Use registration, polls, surveys, and other tools to sharpen your focus

## Designing Your Online Presentation

### Mistake #4: Thinking in words instead of ideas and images

Audiences will remember your key points more effectively if there is emotional impact. Since the change of ‘environment’ increases the importance of your presentation slides, you will optimize the impact of your presentation when you optimize its visual impact.

Images have the capability to induce emotion, tell a story, or illustrate a point more quickly and effectively than words – assuming they are relevant. When surveyed about design, the top success factor identified by respondents was “use of relevant images.”

Thinking visually, however, doesn’t have to mean everything is an image. Charts or diagrams may serve the same function.

The proposition remains the same: showing, versus telling, to make a point increases understanding and impact.

#### Take Action

- Identify what the point you are making means to the audience
- Brainstorm possible images or graphics that engage the audience visually, tell your story, and improve your impact
- Choose images or graphics that are easily grasped and persuasive

“As an experienced distance educator, I know that interaction is a key factor in motivation. As a participant, if I know in advance I'll have a chance to get a real question answered by the presenter, I'm far more likely to attend the live event.”

Lynn Serafinn,  
MAED, CPCC, Coach  
and best-selling  
author of *The Garden  
of the Soul: Lessons  
from Four Flowers  
that Unearth the Self*

Winner: Microsoft UK  
Innovative Teacher of  
the Year Award (2005)

### Mistake #5: Producing an “online slide show”

In online presentations, the focal point of the audience shifts from you at the front of the room to their computer desktops. Improving the visual impact of your presentation is important, but focusing only on great slides misses an opportunity to turn viewers into active participants.

An audience engaged with audio-visual content is more likely to retain the information than from a lecture alone, and those engaged with some type of activity are even more likely to remember.

Webinar software includes tools that accommodate different styles of bringing an audience into the discussion. When approached intentionally, polls, Q&A, chat, surveys, hand-up indicators, and attention indicators enable online presenters to engage, dialogue, and “keep an eye on” their remote audiences.

#### Take Action

- Think through how you engage an audience when in person and map those activities to a new set of tools
- Identify changes and new opportunities
- Increase the frequency of interaction over what you would deliver face-to-face

Mapping Presentation Tools and Skills	
In Person	Live Webinar
Projector	Desktop sharing, web tours
Whiteboard	Annotation and drawing tools
Keeping an eye on your audience	Attentiveness indicator, hand-up indicator, question manager
Audience feedback or group discussion	Audio: phone/VoIP Written: Q&A, chat
“Show of hands” from audience	Hand-up indicator, polls
Collaboration	Chat, Q&A, shared whiteboard, shared desktops, shared keyboard and mouse controls
Handouts	Document sharing

*“Don't READ your presentation. It's tempting, because the audience can't actually SEE you. But still your voice will have a flat, toneless quality that will turn your audience off.”*

**Ann Handley**  
Chief Content Officer,  
MarketingProfs

## Delivering Your Online Presentation

### Mistake #6: Not presenting to people

When it comes to presentation delivery, the overwhelming annoyances of respondents were:

- “Presenter reads what is on the slides”
- “Presenter reads a script”

The clear message to online presenters: *“Talk with me.”*

In person we more naturally look at our audience and occasionally glance at our notes. Online, we don't have the audience in front of us, perhaps increasing the likelihood of staring at the slide and reading what is on it.

The solution is to learn a new way to keep your eye on your audience. Like a pilot who learns to fly both by instinct and by instruments, successful online presenters connect with their audiences by learning to use the feedback tools available in Webinar solutions – and responding in real-time to cues from the audience.

#### Take Action

- Value authenticity over perfection
- Connect with real audience members by making “eye contact” with feedback tools

### Mistake #7: Forgetting your virtual “body language”

After “ease of use,” the second highest rated success factor overall was “quality of the speaker's voice or delivery.”

Conversely, after the top annoyances mentioned previously (reading slides or scripts), respondents noted “presenter does not vary in pitch and tempo” as the next most annoying delivery trait.

The audience might not see you in-person, but they still have an audio-visual experience based on what you deliver. The solution – and your opportunity to increase your impact – is not only to avoid a monotone delivery, but also to give the audience a connection with visual movement.

#### Take Action

- Rehearse, record, and listen to yourself. Webinar solutions make record/playback push-button easy to self-assess
- Use annotation tools and pointers to give visual direction



## THE BOTTOM LINE

Only 6% of over 600 survey respondents said their budget increased in recent months, while 74% of survey respondents noted their budgets have decreased or “stayed the same, but there is pressure to reduce.” Given this, the rapid growth of using Webinars to connect with prospects, customers, trainees, and employees is not surprising.

And the message they send to presenters at live, online events is universal: *“I can be engaged, even if I’m not sitting right in front of you.”*

### Plan audience-centricity

You will attract and engage an audience when you create a compelling value for them on their terms. Become crystal clear about what motivates them, hone the focus of your message, and deliver exactly what you promise.

### Design experientially

Remember that the online medium transforms how a message is delivered and received. With a little learning and planning, Webinars can deliver a powerful audio-visual connection. Think visually to connect emotionally, and design interactivity into your presentation to turn audiences into active participants.

### Deliver authentically

Audiences know if you’re communicating *at* them or *with* them. Use the tools in your Webinar solution to keep an eye on your audience and monitor their attention. Keep them engaged with virtual body language, combining your Webinar tools with your most powerful asset, your authentic voice.

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### About 1080 Group, LLC

Roger Courville is the author of *The Virtual Presenter’s Handbook* and sought-after speaker on improving productivity using live online communications. Roger is the principal at 1080 Group, LLC, an independent training and consulting firm that helps companies learn and optimize online presentations and Web seminars, and his real-world expertise is backed by that of the seasoned professionals at 1080 Group – who together have worked with hundreds of clients on thousands of events involving more than a million event attendees.

### Additional 1080 Group Resources

[www.TheVirtualPresenter.com](http://www.TheVirtualPresenter.com) - Roger’s blog and book site

[www.WebSeminarTips.com](http://www.WebSeminarTips.com) - Web seminar production tips

[www.WebSeminarToolkit.com](http://www.WebSeminarToolkit.com) - tools for Web seminar producers

[www.twitter.com/1080Group](https://www.twitter.com/1080Group) - Roger on Twitter

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# ONLINE PRESENTATION CHECKLIST

Keep this checklist as a reference.

 Step	Key Questions
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Identify your target audience and the pains they are most likely to take action to solve</b>	Who is your ideal audience? What are their wants, needs, or desires? Which pains or opportunities for success will motivate them to take action?
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Develop a clear proposition</b>	Will the audience understand clearly what you will be helping them achieve? Will these propositions communicate effectively in the invitation or on the Webinar registration page?
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Identify a few key, memorable points</b>	If the audience only remembers one or a few key ideas, what will they be? Are there registration questions, polls, or surveys that can help you sharpen your focus before or during the Webinar?
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Design your slides by thinking visually</b>	What is the key point you are making on a slide? What images, graphics, or charts would help to make that point? Is the image easily grasped and persuasive?
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Design an audio-visual experience for the audience</b>	Have you thought through how you would engage an audience when in-person? Have you identified what forms of engagement do not translate to the online environment? What elements transform? What new opportunities does the online environment give you that were not possible in-person? How could you increase the frequency of interactivity to keep your online audience more engaged?
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Deliver your presentation to people, not to your computer</b>	Are you committed to the idea that your audience values your authenticity more than your perfection? Have you rehearsed your presentation so that you are not tempted to read what is on the slides? What Webinar tools will you use to “keep an eye on” your audience?
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Remember your virtual body language</b>	Are you speaking naturally, as you would to a trusted colleague? Have you identified which tools (e.g., annotations, pointers, highlighters, etc.) you feel most comfortable with so you can direct your audience’s attention?

For additional ideas about effective online presentations, visit [www.TheVirtualPresenter.com](http://www.TheVirtualPresenter.com)