BEST PRACTICE FOR HOSTING

DIGITAL EVENTS

University of Melbourne Advancement

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WEBINAR DEFINITION

Short for web-based seminar, a webinar is a presentation, lecture, workshop or seminar that is held digitally using video conferencing software. A key feature of a webinar is its interactive elements and the ability to give, receive and discuss information in real-time.

BENEFITS
- Real-time engagement
- Put a face to a name – more human than audio only
- Understand attendee behaviour (analytics)
- Accessibility of production equipment (eg: webcam, microphone)
- Output is a more qualified audience/lead to nurture

50% simply use a webcam to record video—so don't be put off by a perceived need to use expensive cameras or equipment.

68% say that webinars help tie their marketing activity to revenue.

SOFTWARE

Zoom is the University's preferred software for webinars. There are alternative software options that can be explored such as GoToWebinar however the downside is that these platforms are not supported by the University which poses an issue if technical problems occur.

ZOOM WEBINAR LICENSES

Any staff member can apply for a free webinar license. Visit this page for details of how to submit a Service Request.

We would recommend having the license associated with a shared mailbox rather than a personal mailbox, as this will enable more than one staff member to review communications relating to your webinars.

If more than 500 participants are expected in a webinar, you will need to obtain a license.

- Webinar 500 (500 max participants)
- Webinar 1000 (1000 max participants)
- Large Meeting 500 (500 max participants)

Licenses can be quite costly. University Business Services can help obtain one if required and have experience in running webinars with more than 500 participants. Please contact Business Services to request a license and get support on how to run larger webinars.

ZOOM FUNCTIONS

Zoom webinar software has the following functionalities which have proven to be beneficial in the events which have been run so far, but your event requirements will help you to determine whether Zoom has the functionality to deliver/ support your events and their objectives.

- Take unlimited registrations for your event
- Customizable registration form
- Allows for different online event formats, interview style, panel discussion
- Sends automatic reminders for your event
- Facilitates rehearsals prior to the live event (practice sessions)
- Supports up to 500 online attendees
- Attendee tracking, including length of time viewed
- Provide audio and video recordings of the live event
- Exportable registration and attendee lists that then can be uploaded into Encompass and/or recorded in Advance
- Interactive features to make events more engaging such as on-screen presentations, polls, live chat and Q&A functions
- Sends automatic post event surveys at the conclusion of the event

USEFUL LINKS FOR ZOOM WEBINAR TRAINING
- All webinar training resources – everything from scheduling a webinar, running practice session to using engagement functions like polls during your event.
- Getting started – video tutorials
- Online event best practice – A Zoom Success Guide
- Best practice for hosting a digital event how to choose - meeting VS webinar for your event

FORMATS

Webinars can be held in various formats, depending on the topic, the number of panelists and level of engagement required. The below are some common industry recommended formats to consider:

Coffee Talk
- **What:** An informal, unscripted chat between 2-3 people
- **Duration:** 20-30 minutes
- **Recording Format:** Audio or video, but video is a better option here
- **Slides:** No slides necessary

Fireside Chat
- **What:** An informal, yet structured, conversation between a moderator and 1-2 guests.
- **Duration:** 30-45 minutes
- **Recording Format:** Audio or video, but video is a better option here
- **Slides:** No slides necessary

Subject Matter Expert Presentation
- **What:** A traditional presentation where a speaker presents new research, industry trends, their

experiences or other related topics to the audience. Customers, internal experts and industry subject-matter experts are great for these sessions.

- **Duration:** 45-60 minutes
- **Recording Format:** Audio or video
- **Slides:** Presentation slides are needed

Panel Webinar
- **What:** A structured webinar led by a moderator who is accompanied by 2-3 panelists, typically subject-matter experts. Opening up the conversation to audience Q/A is great way to fuel discussions.
- **Duration:** 45-60 minutes
- **Recording Format:** Audio or video, video is often preferred
- **Slides:** Presentation slides are typically needed

TIPS FOR RUNNING A WEBINAR

- **Schedule a dry run.** Do this a few days before, especially if there's a few people involved, who will talk when etc.
- **Test your connection.** If possible, hardwire your connection to improve quality and reliability.
- **Test audio or video.** Do a quick check before your event begins.
- **Minimise background noise.** Consider using a wired headset such as headphone or earphones.
- **Dress to impress.** Remember, you're on camera.
- **Use a background.** Use the virtual background feature or a branded UoM background (if available)
- **Set expectations**. It's important to give direction to the attendees, for example let them know that the event is being recorded, when and where they should send questions etc.
- **Disable chat.** If you plan to run a Q&A, disable the chat feature so that questions come through on the Q&A only so you have one single source of truth.
- **Break the ice**. Use a poll right at the start as an icebreaker and to get everyone engaged.
- **Start on time.** Like a normal event, people are still giving up their time to attend so be punctual.
- Don't call it a 'webinar' if you don't have to
- Outline the outcomes / expectations of the online event in the promotional copy
- Outline the audience in the promotional copy
- The title should be a clear reflection of what the topic or theme is
- Aim for shorter, snappier content - 30 to 45 minutes in duration

ENGAGE & INTERACT

Here are some ideas on how to make your webinar / online event more engaging:
- **Include a PowerPoint presentation for the background**
  Keep them primarily to imagery, with limited text

- **Include polls**
  Ask the audience questions at the start or throughout. Get quick, real-time insights from your audience.

- **Include pre-recorded video**
  Short clips will help to break up the presentation. Roughly 38% of all webinars in 2019 featured some type of video (eg: studio video, webcam, video clips, screenshare)

- **Enable the Q&A feature**
  Using Q&A during a webinar is one of the most popular engagement tools. Establish rules with the audience whether they can submit questions throughout or there will be a designated timeframe towards the end of the event.
  You can set the webinar up so that questions are only visible when they have been vetted and selected to be answered.
  It's advisable to have a staff member dedicated to moderating questions and/or chat

- **Include a downloadable worksheet**
  Attendees can complete / take notes on throughout the discussion

- **Include calls to action at the end of the event**
  Keep it to a maximum of three, and include laddering opportunities if applicable

- **Get feedback**
  While your audience is actively engaged, include a link to a survey at the end of the session to acquire feedback.

81% Q&A   **70%** Resources for download   **37%** Surveys

21% Social   **22%** Polling   **11%** Group chat
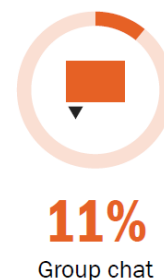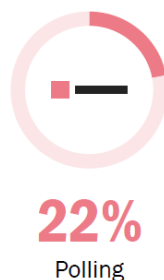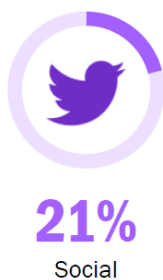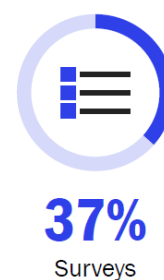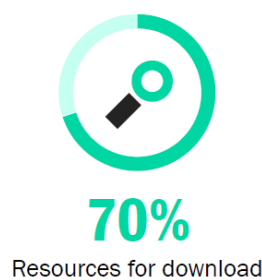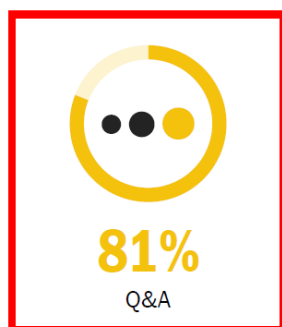
INFORMATION FOR YOUR EVENT PANELISTS

Ensure that you make time prior to the event to test your speakers' setups prior to the event, at least during the pre-webinar practice session. You may wish to actually set up individual trial sessions with each speaker.

Ensure your participants have a good setup, including:

- **A stable internet connection**
  Ideally wired broadband connection, or a strong wireless connection (Wi-Fi or 4G)

- **Speakers and microphone**
  Headphones or a headset are beneficial

- **A decent webcam**
  They should ensure that they have selected HD webcam in the Zoom settings

- **Good lighting**

- **Uncluttered background**

Click here for complete technical specifications

PROMOTING THE EVENT

According to research from GoToWebinar, you should start promoting your webinar at least four weeks in advance and keep promoting up to the big day.

EMAIL
- 55% of companies using webinars promote them through email
- Mid-week promotional emails perform the best
- Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday are the strongest performers, accounting for (65%) of registrations

SOCIAL

Use social media to extend the reach of your digital event. An event listing can be set up to be displayed organically on the University Alumni Facebook page however, to gain additional reach we recommend boosting the event with a minimum budget of $500 per post. Due to Facebook's algorithms, organic reach is minimal and paid spend is much more effective to gain reach and scale.

Speak to the Advancement Marketing & Communication team for further information and guidance on how to promote your event through social media channels.

REMINDER EMAILS

Reminder emails are also helpful. Consider sending "Don't Miss Out" or "Seats Are Filling Up" emails as the day gets closer.

Whilst the Zoom Webinar software has the functionality to send registrants automatic reminders prior to the event (as you determine: one week, one day, one hour before), it is strongly encouraged that you don't solely rely on these to get your audience to the live event. These auto reminders often end up in recipients spam or junk folders.

To avoid registrants from dropping off due to missed reminders (with unique event links), plan to send a reminder email using SWIFT, and highlighting within the message the importance of retrieving their reminder emails that contain the unique URL so that they can join the event live. You should also consider sending and SMS reminder for the event.

We have seen significant increase in registration to attendance conversion after implementing a reminder using SWIFT.

BRANDING AND CUSTOMISATION

The registration form can be customised with your event or program branding. It is recommended that you keep the registration form to the fields you really need because, unlike an Encompass registration form, it isn't possible to prepopulate the data for the registrant may discourage some registrants.

We recommend the following fields: *(with the first 4 being compulsory)*
- Alumni ID (custom field)
- First Name
- Last Name
- Email address
- Mobile phone number (enables you to send an SMS reminder)
- Question for the guest speaker / panel
You can make this as specific as you like to your event or discussion

Providing the opportunity to submit questions in Advance will:
- Assist you in developing the discussion brief for your panelists, based on the actual interests of your audience
- Help your guest speaker or panelists to prepare
- Give the registrant a sense of investment / engagement prior to the event

POST EVENT COMMUNICATION

EMAIL

The Zoom Webinar software also has the functionality to send automatic post event emails in which you can include an evaluation survey.

The benefit of this is that it's an automatic and instant message at the end of the event and a separate message can be crafted to attendees and absentees. The issue is that, like the pre-event reminder emails, these emails might end up in the recipients' spam or junk box. It is therefore recommended that the post event email is also sent through SWIFT. This message can be crafted ahead of time so that it's ready to send very shortly after the conclusion of event, simply download the attendee list from Zoom and upload into the Swift mailing list.

SURVEYS

Surveys should be kept short, three to five questions, and should always include a Net Promoter Score question to assist in assessing the success of the event.

We have seen significant increase in survey responses when we offered an incentive such a chance to win an alumni merchandise pack.

TRACKING

Currently the best method Advancement has to track activity around digital events is by using tracking links (also know as UTMs). Tracking links can show who clicked an RSVP link in an email communication and can also be picked up through our website analytics platform (Google Analytics) for any website registration activity.

Zoom also has the capability to generate tracking links to track event registrations.

For more information please contact the Advancement Marketing & Comms team.

MEASURING PERFORMANCE

Anyone that sets up and hosts a Zoom webinar should be able to access a report through their Zoom account
here.

There is an option to download reports directly from Zoom that show webinar analytics for:
- Registration
- Attendees
- Performance
- Q&A and Polls

Data from the Zoom attendee report will show registered addresses of those that attended the event. This can be cross-referenced and imported back into Advance & Encompass. Please speak to the Alumni Relations team for further information.

SWIFT can also provide a report to provide additional analytics about any email communication and promotion of the event.

REGISTRATION TO ATTENDEE CONVERSION RATE

Registrations may be the first measure of success; however, we need to look at the conversion rate to gauge its true effectiveness.
- **What:** Number of attendees/number of registrations x 100
- **Industry Benchmark:** A conversion rate between 35% and 45% is typically considered to be good.

The Advancement Office has hosted several online webinars since 2017 with between 50 and 500 registrations for each event. **The average conversion rate of Advancement webinars is currently 28%.**

The conversion rate of Advancement webinars to date has varied from one event to the next. For example*:*
- Ask Alumni Live: 6 tips for Post Uni Success had a conversion rate of 34%
- Alumni Career Compass: Entertainment Law had a high rate of 57%
- Conversely, Alumni Career Compass: Crafting the Now, Designing the Future and Ask Alumni in China both had conversation rates of only 13%.

Email reminders the day before, and SMS reminders on the day of the event are good ways to encourage more registrants to attend. Zoom also includes an add to calendar option in its automated confirmation / reminder emails, which registrants should be encouraged to use.

AVERAGE ATTENDEE RATE
- **What:** The number of people that attended the webinar
- **Benchmark:** 41% of webinars in 2019 attracted at least 100 attendees. The attendance rate for webinars with 100 to 199 attendees jumped to 51%.

AVERAGE VIEWING TIME
The optimal webinar viewing time depends on the topic, content, audience and program's goals.
- **What:** How long the attendees stayed watching the webinar
- **Benchmark:** In 2019, the average viewing time for webinars was 56 minutes.

POST-LIVE REGISTRATIONS
- **What:** The number of people that register to access the on-demand version of the event.

ON-DEMAND VIEWS
- **What:** The number of people that view the on-demand version

ON-DEMAND AVERAGE VIEW TIME
- On-demand webinars are a prime opportunity to give your content long term viability.
- **What:** The average time that people view the on-demand version
- **Benchmark:** In 2019, the on-demand viewing time averaged at 38 minutes.