

Best Practices:  
**How to effectively  
produce and promote  
your Webcast**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It's been nearly 10 years since Marshall Industries founded ENEN.com, the Education News and Entertainment Network, the first Webcasting service focused on the needs of the electronics industry. The company's flagship product, NetSeminar, incorporated live multimedia broadcasts with streaming video, audio and interactive chat technologies to create informative and stimulating presentations at a fraction of the cost associated with in-person meetings and presentations.

Today, Internet broadcasting provides a unique way to communicate more effectively with widespread engineers, customers, prospects and partners. Webcasts bring live seminars to a receptive audience when travel is not possible or cost-effective. Beyond cost and time savings, the true value of the Webcast is when the engineer gains valuable insight that contributes to the success of current or future projects.

For technology marketers, Webcasting has grown into a proven lead-generation vehicle. You can cost-effectively broadcast in-depth messages and interact with a targeted, highly qualified audience in real time. The data gathered through registration, polling, and feedback surveys can build a powerful audience profile. Marketers can use this intelligence to measure the effectiveness of your campaign and build strong relationships with key customers, partners and prospects.

CMP Electronics Group acquired the NetSeminar product name and through the years, has produced hundreds of events. The following data and recommendations are taken from recent real-life, best practices. This white paper will show you:

- What to expect when producing and promoting a Webcast
- How to improve the user experience
- How to make your event more effective as a strategic marketing tool

## WHAT TO DO FIRST: PLANNING

### ***Set clear and realistic objectives for the event***

Make sure all parties involved in the production and promotion of your Webcast become familiar with your goals and objectives. Why are you doing a Webcast? To support a new product launch? To provide in-depth training for a new or existing technology? To help position your company as a key player in a particular market? Many companies also use Web casts to measure their brand awareness.

Whatever your objective, content developers, presenters and any third-party partners (from media providers to your Webcasting services company) should be aware of your purpose from the beginning. Each party should perform his or her tasks with that goal in mind. Embed specific metrics within each process so you will be able to measure its success on clearly pre-defined and realistic goals.

It's likely you are targeting a specific audience. Make sure the registration form and your promotion reflect your target audience profile. Gather data via the registration form, polling, feedback surveys and the Question & Answer session to measure the success of your event. (For recommendations on how to optimize these tools, see "Target, qualify and measure," below.)

Also, think very carefully about the intended actions you'd like the audience to take. A Resource slide at the end of the event can lead your audience with a live link, further into your Web site for additional related information. If you want to encourage interactivity, make the presenter's email address available for further correspondence.

### ***Be realistic about the numbers...***

The success of your Webcast should not be solely based on how many people registered or attended. Other criteria, such as the quality of the registrant's demographic profile, the level of interaction, and the results of your follow-up are key factors in measuring the overall success.

Certainly the attendee numbers are important -- in fact, you should clearly state to your team, especially media partners, the metrics to shoot for. However, it is critical that you base your expectations on realistic information, taking into consideration:

- What is the size of the universe of your target audience?
- Are the NetSeminar topic and description focused on this audience? If your topic is too broad you'll get more registrants, but they won't necessarily be from your target audience. If your topic is too narrow, you may dissuade some prospects.
- Is there enough promotion to attract this audience?
- How have similar events performed in the past?

All things being equal, on average, based on hundreds of CMP Electronics Group NetSeminars, you can expect:

- 150-300+ registrations
- 25-30% of registrants will attend the live event
- 20-30% of registrants will be from outside the United States
- 40-50% of registrants will attend live and on-demand, one week after the original live broadcast.
- 20-40% additional registrants six months after the live event
- 20-25% of attendees will complete the feedback form
- Audio Cost-per-registered lead: \$40-\$20 or less
- Video Cost-per-registered lead: \$60-\$33 or less

Don't be discouraged that only 25-30% of registrants are likely to attend your live event. Research shows most people prefer to view Webcasts on their own time, preferring the convenience of on-demand viewing 24 x 7. For a large percentage of registrants, other things come up in the course of the day, and they just can't make the live time, even when email reminders are sent two hours before—this is to be expected.

CMP Electronics Group's seamless registration marketing service leverages its 690,000+ person global database by using various database and email marketing techniques, as well as voicemails, reminders, and a unique custom registration page to deliver a pre-determined number of guaranteed registrations, based on your specific budget. Seamless registration targets the audience that marketers specify and makes the process easy for the user by:

- Personalizing email invitation in HTML format that allows registrants to sign-up within the email(s)
- Pre-populating the user's profile and data streamlining the registration process. (One click registration)
- Cross-promoting the event on all of EET Network circulation subscription Websites so everyone coming into the Network will be advised of this event

A number of recent Webcasts utilizing CMP Electronics Group's new seamless registration marketing have generated larger returns and more effective results:

- 400-1,000+ registrations
- 30-35% live attendance
- 25-35% of registrants from outside the United States
- 45-55% live and on-demand attendance one week after the event
- 25-40% additional registrants six months after the live event
- Audio Cost-per-registered lead: \$37-\$25 or less
- Video Cost-per-registered lead: \$50-\$30 or less

## ***Know your target audience***

Like you, most busy engineers and technical managers don't have much extra time on their hands. So when they make the effort to attend a Webcast, they expect to take away something tangible to help them do their jobs better. Research shows most attendees elect to access a Webcast between projects or in the very early stages of product development. At this point, they are most often in search of new technology and applications and are willing to consider new suppliers. This is the optimal time for marketers to influence the decision-making process. Following are data from an assortment of CMP Electronics Group Webcasts' feedback surveys:

### **At what stage are you in your most recent design project?**

Between projects	18%
Conceptual planning	33%
Developing specs	16%
Detailed design	9%
Simulation	2%
Building prototype	6%
Testing/Debugging	8%
Release to production	8%

Webcasts attract very active and influential users, people who have enormous impact of the product and supplier selection process:

### **What is your purchase authority?**

Recommend	37%
Specify	22%
Evaluate	19%
Approve	13%
Purchase	9%

Naturally, you want to inspire the Webcast attendee to take action. Following are some activities that attendees plan to take after attending a Webcast.

**What actions do you plan to take after attending this event?** (check all that apply)

Apply what I've learned to a current or future project	44%
Visit sponsor's Website for additional info	38%
Bookmark for future reference	33%
Recommend this event to a colleague or manager	23%
Recommend, specify or purchase the technology discussed	8%
Contact a panelist	5%

You may want to use these types of questions as part of your feedback survey and to benchmark your success. However, results will likely differ based on the type of content and overall objective of your Webcast.

## ***Consider audio-only, it is easy-to-use and cost-effective***

While streaming video technology has improved greatly over the years, when planning your Webcast, you may want to consider an audio-only presentation just the same. From a registration and attendance standpoint, whether your Webcast is audio or video has very little effect, since the presentation format is rarely mentioned in the description or registration information. So the video or audio-only format is not a determining factor in who or how many people attend your event.

If your Webcast will be a single-person, product-oriented presentation, the audio-only format is more than adequate to communicate your information. In most Webcast presentation consoles, the largest area is reserved for the presentation material. Typically, there's a smaller box up at the top to display the "talking head," be it a still photo of the presenter in an audio presentation or the video stream of the in-studio presenters.

From a content perspective, video offers very little additional informational value, if all you have to show is the presenter. However, if your Webcast features an industry personality or multiple presenters, video provides a more spontaneous, personable interaction among presenters and with the viewer.

A compromise between the two formats is to pre-record the presentation in studio, for either audio or video presentations. Pre-recorded, or "mock-live" events are more expensive than audio-only events, and significantly more expensive and time consuming for video events, however you have control to fix any errors in the presentation, or misspeak by the presenter. This can deliver a more polished performance, however, you can sometimes lose the personality of the presenter in such a staged atmosphere.

Mock-live pre-recordings can be integrated with a live Q&A session at the end of the event, where the presenter calls in remotely to field audience questions. We strongly recommend that at least the Question and Answer session be a live event. Live events are more compelling and interactive, and come across as such even during the on-demand recording.

Following are some of the benefits of each format:

### **Audio-only benefits**

- Less expensive than live video
- Can perform remotely

### **Video/audio benefits**

- Best for conversation among presenters
- More lively, spontaneous presentation
- More polished, professional appearance
- Incorporate pre-recorded, promotional video

### Mock-live benefits

- Pre-recorded, allows for more control, ability to edit
- More flexible broadcast scheduling
- Can perform audio remotely

## Carefully consider timeframes and deliverables

Once you've developed a title and description and secured a presenter, a Webcast can be promoted and produced in as little as four to five weeks. Here's an outline of key deliverables based on working days before the event:

Webcast kick-off call:	30 working days
• Provide title and description, company logo (.jpeg or .gif)	
• Submit presenter(s) information: Name, title, biography, photo (.jpeg or .gif)	
• Determine target audience selects and custom registration questions	
• Determine if there will be any polls, incentive giveaways, a Q&A session	
Registration page ready	25 days
Start promotion	20 days
Final PowerPoint slides, script and filler questions ready	10 days
Run through event, training	5 days

## Think of your Webcast as part of a campaign, not a one-time event

This point ties in with your overall marketing plan. Is this Webcast planned to launch a new product or support existing ones? In many cases, you'll spend six to eight weeks preparing, promoting and producing your Webcast. Yet the untapped potential of a Webcast is in its shelf life, its ability to be viewed on demand at the user's preferred time and place. When planning a Webcast, take into consideration that likely more people will view the archived broadcast than live, so you should tailor some of your script and presentation content to address these user's needs. For example,

- **Provide on-demand users** with specific instructions in the presentation on how to post questions or contact you directly.
- **Post a live hyperlink** at the end of the presentation that will direct users to an email address, forum or Web page to post questions. You can even have your Webcast service provider add a special Q&A box on the live Player Console, so viewers can type in questions while watching the archive. Those emails will go directly to the presenter or an alias email address of your choosing.
- **Create your own Web page** in a prominent location on your Website. Build a landing page to link over to the Webcast provider's registration form. If you plan a series of Webcasts you may want to develop your own internal navigation, perhaps incorporating your Webcasts as part of a "Training" location on your site.
- **Build a co-branded Pavilion Page** linked to your media partner's online network. CMP Electronics Group's Pavilion pages feature your Webcast, as well as other related content from your media partners (such as news stories and tutorials) along with your own sponsored content (such as white papers, case studies and product introduction information). This Web page can have live email links to the presenter, as well as an Executive Summary of the Webcast for visitors to forward to a colleague. You could also have the Q&A session transcribed and posted as a Frequently Asked Question section on the page.

The intention of this page is to create a destination for visitors to bookmark and return to for updates and to interact with the presenter and colleagues. For an example of a Pavilion Page, see CMP's [www.eetimes.com/ns/freescale](http://www.eetimes.com/ns/freescale)

## WHAT TO DO NEXT: PROMOTION

### ***Develop a clear, concise and compelling topic and description***

When producing a Webcast, you are now in the content development business. Your topic and description must offer a compelling solution to a pressing audience need. How can you help solve their problem? Show registrants you understand their challenges and tell them what they can learn from the Webcast to help solve their problems.

In a standard media promotion package, you only have a paragraph or two to succinctly describe the event. In most cases, you have a small amount of space and time to get the reader's attention, so lead with the key benefits for the audience, use bullet points to highlight the main points.

Email invitations, or e-vites, are a major component of most promotional campaigns. Here, the HTML format has become the standard, but beware that many email filters may block graphics and certain formats, so make sure all the critical details of the event (title, date, time) are in a text format that can be read on the opening screen without the user scrolling down.

CMP's seamless registration integrates and pre-fills the registration form in the e-vite, making it easy for the user to review his profile and just click Submit.

### ***Utilize integrated marketing, it really works***

Since this online event is part of an overall campaign, you should employ integrated marketing principles to the promotion plan. Most media providers offer multimedia packages to promote your Webcast which will include emails, banners and a listing in print advertising. If you are interested in doing your own or an additional media buy, primarily focus on online media tools such as email, banners and newsletter promotions, however, be aware that print advertising can influence up to 25% of all registrations.

If you have enough time and budget, you may want to test your promotion on general search engines, such as Google's AdWords, though many electronics industry information sites also offer cost-per-click options.

Promotion by you, the sponsor, will be a significant added boost to drive attendance before, during and after the event. Once the registration page has been created, leverage existing marketing tactics such as:

- Your own Website—As mentioned before, posting a mention in a prominent location on your Website and creating your own Webcast landing page that links to the registration page is a great way to promote this event to customers, prospects and partners that visit your site.
- Print ads—Include a mention of the Webcast on existing relevant creative.
- Email newsletters, email and direct mail—Get the word out to your own lists. Provide a link for recipients to forward to a colleague.

Budget a percentage of your promotion for post-event promotion. At least 20% of your marketing spend for this program should be reserved for post-event promotion such as print ads, banners, email blasts, Google AdWords or keyword searches. You could either drive people to the registration page or directly to the afore-mentioned Pavilion page.

Whether you are planning to do your own promotion through multiple media providers or purchase a package, *make sure each initiative can be tracked and measured separately*, from each size banner creative to each link on your Website to each email blast.

## ***Leverage your most powerful brand***

When promoting your Webcast, lead with the most recognizable brand you have. In many cases, the audience may not be as familiar with your company brand as they are the product, technology or solution you will be addressing.

If your presenter or panel member is a recognizable industry expert, feature him or her prominently, otherwise concentrate on the technology or business issues and solutions you offer.

A number of companies co-brand their event with partners, either third-party technology providers or distributors. This is a good way to extend your reach to other audiences and possibly defray some costs among the other participants.

## ***Offer relevant incentives to attract higher-quality attendees***

Incentives are a powerful tool to drive registration, attendance and interest in your event. Yet only about 10% of all Webcasts offer an incentive. Perhaps you don't have the time and resources to coordinate distribution, but it would certainly set your event apart for all others. If your objective is to gather leads, a chance to win an iPod or the gadget-of-the-day, will surely boost registration.

But if you're looking to drive attendance and learn more about your audience, make eligibility for your prize contingent on the attendee completing the feedback survey at the end of the event. The feedback survey provides you an opportunity to further qualify attendees by asking more in-depth questions than on the registration form. For instance, here you may want to know the size, scope and volume of their current project, their authority or influence in the project, what stage in product development their current project is, etc.

If your objective is trying to sell a particular product, you should offer development kits, code, demo CDs, discounts or other benefits so the user can try your product/service. If you have a limited supply of such incentives, make it further contingent on the user completing the feedback survey at the end of the event.

## WHAT TO DO NEXT: PRODUCTION

### *Preparing your presentation*

A standard Webcast is 60 minutes long. In real time, that goes pretty quickly. Following is an outline of a typical Webcast:

- 11:00** Welcome/Opening remarks by moderator
- 11:05** Presentation by presenter and 1-2 polling questions (optional)
- 11:35** Feedback survey delivered to further qualify viewers
- 11:40** Live question and answer session
- Noon** Closing remarks and direction to resource slide with Call to Action

You'd be best served preparing 5-10 questions and answers for the Q&A session, to re-emphasize key points of the presentation. Worst case, you could use these questions as filler if the audience does not submit enough questions. However, that is very rare. In fact, on average, the presenter will not have enough time to answer 10-20% of all questions submitted.

Depending on the complexity of the presentation, you may want to devote more time to the presentation and consider a 90-minute event to accommodate all attendee questions. This will cost more, but may better serve the users' needs.

On the other hand, some questions not answered during the broadcast give you a great opportunity to follow up with the questioner after the event on a personal level. We *strongly recommend* that you respond to all legitimate questions and tell attendees during the presentation that if their question is not answered during the broadcast, someone will follow up within 24 hours.

We recommend that you position the Feedback survey just before the Question and Answer session to ensure greater response. Have the moderator read the questions and multiple choice answers to reinforce participation. It should only take a minute or two.

The final Resource slide of your presentation should provide a live link to your Website for more information or an email address to solicit more feedback.

When developing your PowerPoint presentation, it's perfectly legitimate to repurpose pre-existing content from a prior presentation, seminar or workshop. However, it is crucial that you tailor the Webcast content to any variation in your target audience, to the specific needs of that audience, and realize that the Webcast is an online, interactive event as opposed to a face-to-face presentation.

### *Slide design — the basics*

The following guidelines will help you optimize your presentation for the Internet. Most PowerPoint presentations are converted into static images, either GIFs or JPEGs, which participants will download and view as part of the presentation.

The conversion process reduces the resolution and size of your images. While users have the option to enlarge the slides (from 432x324 to 640x480) we *strongly recommend* that presenters proof their presentations at 50% view within PowerPoint before submitting them for conversion to test for clarity and legibility. You should take these steps to maximize the legibility and impact of your presentation:

- Be sure your presentation has a 4:3 aspect ratio (The default PowerPoint template is 10"x7.5".)

- Use larger type than you normally would when creating PowerPoint presentations to be shown to an in-person audience.
- Use more simple design elements and solid color blocks than you normally would use.
- As a general guideline, AVOID using:
  - Small type (17 point type and smaller is too small)
  - Embellished type (type with shadows, bevels or special effects)
  - Textured or gradient backgrounds
  - Sounds, music or voice narration
  - Animations
- If you are considering slide transitions (also known as animated slide builds), be sure to break all animations into separate slides. All builds, or animations, must be expressed as individual slides in a sequence.
  - Embedded Excel files
  - Embedded audio, video or Flash

### ***Slide design – best practices***

- Keep it simple. Simple design helps you communicate your message to the audience.
- Be consistent. Use a master style for the whole presentation.
- Choose two font families and a color palette then use them consistently throughout your slide presentation.
- Know the limits of the medium. View your slides in PowerPoint at 50% to simulate the experience your users will have.
- Select colors and graphics that match or complement your corporate identity.
- Use bold elements. Use solid colors in your slides instead of gradients and textures.
- Use contrast. Dark type on a light background is more legible than dark type on a background with a midrange tone. Use contrast to improve legibility.
- Use your own slide templates. PowerPoint default templates are not recommended, because they contain gradients, textures and so on, that do not convert properly.
- Be concise. Limit the amount of information displayed on each slide. It's often more effective to break complex slides into a short series of slides.
- Avoid redundancy. Consider removing branding elements from the slides as they are often reproduced in the presentation console interface.
- Consider including a title slide at the beginning of the presentation that will act as a holding slide during the live event. It will be displayed in the interface as attendees enter the presentation.
- All inserted images should be optimized before embedding them into the slide presentation to avoid unnecessarily large files.

### ***Manage the key players on your team***

Most Webcast service providers will assign a project manager to help coordinate the various deliverables and the overall timeline of your event. You will need to rely on these key roles to make your event a success:

- **Project manager**—As your primary point of contact with the Webcast provider, the project manager outlines all deliverables to keep the event on track. This person will set up an introductory kick-off call and can answer all technical and logistical questions. Some project managers are also the liaison with your primary media provider, coordinating all promotional activities as well.
- **Presenter**—Few speakers have video/TV experience. The ideal candidate is a person with an engaging personality, comfortable talking with people, but should also have the technical experience to answer audience questions. Your personal project manager will work with him or her in advance to make each speaker feels comfortable with the Webcast format, beginning with the planning calls, right down to the technical run-through. You can always put a more technical person in for the Q&A session - on camera or over the phone or you can have a techie screening questions in the Q&A.

- **Announcer**—The announcer introduces the broadcast and presenter to the audience. Typically he or she is a professional voiceover narrator who will provide instructions for the audience on how to use the Webcast console, submit questions, answer any polls and complete the feedback form. In most cases the announcer will read the audience questions to the presenter to answer.
- **Slide controller**—We recommend that your Webcast provider control the slides. The presenter should be focused on their presentation. You can identify in the script and cue exactly when to go to the next slide.
- **Q&A screener**—Questions from the audience may be submitted within the first few minutes of the broadcast. Most Webcast providers offer a Web-based tool to review, prioritize and edit all incoming questions. We recommend that the presenter remain focused on the slides and that someone else from your team familiar with the content field the questions and prioritize them for the announcer to ask the presenter. Don't over-filter or pre-prepare all the questions, it can give the Webcast an infomercial flavor, which is a turn-off.

## ***Target, qualify and measure***

Throughout the broadcast, you can continuously learn more about the audience. Registration information, polling, feedback surveys and even the Q&A session offer a great means to build a robust profile of each attendee. Make sure you tailor these tools to reflect your ideal target audience to better qualify your audience and measure the success of your event:

**Registration form:** Economy and ease-of-use are paramount for the user when registering for a Webcast. At first glance, a shorter registration form is most inviting to users, however you do have a chance to learn more than the standard contact information. First you must decide if some of the traditional fields are absolutely necessary. For instance, the "mail address," "fax number," or even "phone number" fields may not be necessary, depending on your methods of follow up.

If you seek a significant international audience, make sure your Webcast service provider's form accommodates a wide variety of countries and all the appropriate fields.

**Polling:** Gauge the opinions of your audience on a specific point of the presentation by utilizing polling technology, where users respond to a single or multiple-choice question. Make sure your question is relevant to the flow of the presentation and adds value to you as well when you share the results with the audience. It is best to hold the results until the end of the event. We do not recommend more than two polls per hour unless you have a short presentation or are willing to sacrifice time from the Question & Answer session.

**Feedback survey:** This is typically implemented just before the Q&A session, to further qualify the audience. Here are a few suggestions:

- Do you plan to use this technology for your next or future project?
- What other vendors are you working with or considering for future projects?
- When is your estimated production start?
- What is the estimated production volume?

Also, here's an opportunity to ask open-ended questions, such as:

- What other topics would you like to learn about?
- What is your biggest design challenge?

And while Web casts are such an effective lead generation tool, you can also measure aspects of awareness and brand effectiveness, especially when part of a series, such as:

- How has the information you learned today changed your perception of our products and services?

This is also good opportunity to learn how attendees rate the quality of the content, presenters and overall presentation. Gauge the usefulness, depth of information and effectiveness of the presentation against previous or future events.

**Q&A session:** The question and answer session of your Webcast is another chance to learn more about the audience. Whether your presenter has time to answer all the questions or not, here you will learn your audience's foremost concerns and challenges by the questions they pose. Unanswered questions during the Webcast are a perfect opportunity to follow up with the attendee. As mentioned before, you should build in a means for on-demand users to submit questions directly to the presenter or offer an alias mailbox that will gather the queries.

Most Webcast reporting tools will allow you to match the user profile to their poll and feedback survey responses, as well as the questions they asked in the Q&A session. You can export this data as an HTML or Excel spreadsheet and perform searches and sorts on all aspects of data and behavior. This level of detail provides you with an unprecedented knowledge base to measure the success of the event, your return on investment, and build relationships with hundreds of key prospects.

## About the Author

Steve Paul, principal of On Target Marketing of Newton, Mass., has more than 20 years' marketing and editorial experience in business-to-business media, with more than a decade in Interactive Marketing. Steve was previously the marketing director of CMP Electronics Group's print and online properties, primarily the *EETimes* Network. Previously, he was director of Interactive Marketing at TechOnLine, an e-Learning and Webcast service provider and marketing director of EDN Worldwide, involved in the launch of EDN Access in 1995.

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