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A GUIDE ON

How to run a webinar

TIPS AND TRICKS GUIDE

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ICBE | HIGH CENTRE
FOR BUSINESS
EXCELLENCE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1	Lighting	7
What is it?	1	Stand or Sit	8
Meetings, Webinars and Virtual Training		Planning – Webinar	8
Rooms	2	Presentation	8
Meetings	2	Setting up the session	9
Webinars	2	Security	9
Virtual Training Rooms.....	2	Recording.....	9
Webinar Versus Virtual Meeting Room	2	Computer or Phone	10
Virtual Meeting Rooms	2	Polling	10
Equipment needed	3	Breakout Rooms	10
Attendee	3	Muting	11
Speaker	3	Sharing the Link	11
Computer	3	Registration/Promotion.....	11
Headset	4	Testing	12
Background	4	Presentation File Size.....	12
Broadband	4	Video.....	12
Etiquette and Rules	4	Moderator	12
Muting.....	4	Script.....	13
Chat.....	4	On the day checklist	13
Use of camera	5	Presenting	14
Q&A	5	Second Screen	14
Recording	5	Annotation.....	15
Comfortable with Camera	6	Feedback/ Q&A.....	15
Height of camera	6	Post Webinar	15
Eye Contact	6	Recording.....	15
Grooming	6	Website.....	16
Clothing	6	When things go WRONG	16
Posture.....	6	Weak Signal	17
Gestures.....	7	Failed Signal	17
Background	7	De-risking.....	17
		General Tips	18

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Irish Centre for Business Excellence (ICBE) has been using webinars to transfer knowledge over the past year and in the spirit of knowledge sharing we have compiled this guide to impart our experience and learnings as a service to our members.

The first challenge we faced, was the selection of which technology/platform to use. The good news is that there are many excellent tools available with reasonably similar services. The more difficult part, is finding the one that suits your objective best. We are relatively agnostic and use many different services, depending on what we want to achieve and member preferences.

- For ease of use, range of services, simplified attendee joining experience, recording, and value for money - we use Zoom
- For enhanced collaboration, file sharing, chat and task management - we use Microsoft Teams
- For enhanced security and some member preferences we use Cisco WebEx or GoToMeeting

No one tool is perfect and there is a large crossover of what each can achieve.

Our other big learning is that the technology can be mastered relatively quickly. The more difficult area is evolving a workflow and process that blends in with how the organisation works (registrations etc) and is workable across disparate teams.

We have discovered it is better to master one, and stretch each of the services to its fullest use, before making an evaluation - rather than being stretched across too many at the same time.

With that in mind, much of what we are sharing in this guide are experiences with Zoom.

However, regardless of platform used, the art of presenting, planning and having contingency plans thought out in advance are common to all.

We are discovering new tricks every day and will continue to update this guide with our new learnings.

WHAT IS IT?

Video conferencing has exploded over the last 3 months mainly as a result of physical distancing measures introduced by the government. Simply put, video conferencing allows you to communicate with other people with video, audio and text while also allowing you to share files and presentations. This makes this technology particularly useful for running webinars.

The current range of tools available are an evolution of video calling technology such as Skype and collaborative tools for sharing online content.

From early versions, they have rapidly evolved into sharing screens with supporting platforms for the planning, managing and organising.

As mentioned in the introduction there are a wide range of tools available including:

- Zoom
- Microsoft Teams
- Cisco WebEx
- GoToWebinar
- Adobe Connect

Each of these have a management dashboard or portal that allows you to set up a meeting, webinar or virtual room. Simplistically - this gives you a link that you can share with the people you want to have on the call.

MEETINGS, WEBINARS AND VIRTUAL TRAINING ROOMS

These three represent a hierarchy of services supported by a central management portal that most of the above services provide in some shape or form. The definitions vary according to level of functionality and cost.

MEETINGS

Meetings, in general, allow video conferencing, Chat, screen sharing, recording and many providers also allow polling, breakout rooms and registration. For most purposes, meetings provide most of the key functionality to run a webinar e.g. Microsoft Teams

WEBINARS

Webinars are generally for bigger groups with a focus on multiple presenters and allow for increased interaction with attendees. The definition of webinar varies but the key difference is pricing, which is justified by increased reporting and other management tools. This sometimes includes better resource sharing and some will even record people's attentiveness by monitoring if people are drifting to email or other documents while in the session. e.g. Zoom

VIRTUAL TRAINING ROOMS

Virtual Meeting Rooms also use the core functionality of being able to present slides and video conference but are generally supported by learning management-style software and allow for blended learning. For most trainers, virtual training rooms means advanced pre-training room work by attendees with enhanced interaction in the virtual training room. Rather than using the entire time sharing content the ethos is focused on discussion, exercises and polls. Breakout rooms for group exercises are commonly used in virtual training rooms e.g. GoToMeeting, Adobe Connect

WEBINAR VERSUS VIRTUAL MEETING ROOM

Webinars are mainly one-way communications (video of speaker and slides) with some interaction (either using chat or unmuting). They tend to be shorter and lend themselves to once off training opportunities. The presenter controls the session, delivers a set of slides and takes questions.

VIRTUAL MEETING ROOMS

These sessions need detailed planning and work best when attendees have studied something in advance allowing for the session to move to more interaction. The learning outcomes and objectives should be clarified in advance. Generally they involve the use of polls (single or multiple choice questions) and breakout rooms for group exercises. Some dovetail with a learning management solution that can incorporate testing. Fundamentally they still hinge on the presentation of material to facilitate interaction but mirror a classroom-based session better.

The lines of definition can be blurred, but for most organisations what is classified as a meeting is also suitable for running webinars and virtual rooms. For example, by additional planning, interaction, pre-session work and using the advanced breakout rooms functionality a Zoom meeting can start to look more like an virtual training room.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Thankfully there is a fairly low technology barrier to the IT requirements to run a basic webinar. As presenters become more proficient the desire for higher production values increase and this is when additional equipment may be needed.

ATTENDEE

In general, attendees receive a link or calendar invite to join a webinar. In most situations, they can join via their smart phone, landline or computer.

Their computer will need speakers so they can hear and a microphone if they wish to speak.

For most of the key platforms, attendees can join without downloading software or registering (i.e. logon via a browser); but to get increased functionality, they may need to both register for the platform and download some software. This can sometimes be as big as 30mbs and needs to be done before they can attend the webinar.

Depending on how the session is configured, they can unmute, ask questions and turn on/off their video.

SPEAKER

The speaker has some additional equipment considerations (For most platforms) you may need:

- a. Laptop/Desktop with camera and mic
- b. Stand-alone headset
- c. Virtual background
- d. Robust Broadband

COMPUTER

Most modern computers have the processing power to run a webinar. However, as the speaker will be using more functions than an attendee, some software may need to be installed. Most laptops come with web cameras that have enough definition, especially as the speaker is generally thumbnail sized when the session is in progress. However, desktop monitors do not always have cameras and a separate camera may need to be purchased. Similarly with a microphone.

From user experiences, if someone is using a laptop in a docking station with a monitor - the camera might not work; but worked fine once they undocked and used the laptop as normal.

It is a good idea to find out where your sound and display setting are on your computer, as you may need to adjust.

HEADSET

Although the microphone on a laptop can pick up the speaker's voice, it also picks up other background noises. A separate headset offers a number of advantages - from filtering out background noise to automatic muting when you take the headset off. One of the key problems that presenters run into (outside of background noise) is the microphone picking up the speaker's voice from the computer's speaker - leading to an annoying echo. Prices range from €20 for a simple wireless headset to top end wireless Plantronics headsets (€350) that have lots of inbuilt filtering, long battery life, light weight and other clever technology.

It does take time to get used to wearing a headset and prolonged usage (especially if wearing glasses) can be a bit uncomfortable. The initial configuring (knowing where the sound settings are on your computer) can be messy but most computers will default to the headset after some practice.

BACKGROUND

While attendees can turn off their web cam; speakers generally do not. Having the camera on for everyone helps with engagement and connection, which is good in current times but depends on meeting type. However for team meetings/virtual training the recommendation is to keep the camera on. It is important to have a well-lit and clear background. As most may be working from home with limited options for uncluttered backgrounds, the platforms allow you to install and use virtual backgrounds. These virtual backgrounds pick up the shape of your body and head and insert a background of your choosing behind you. However, they rely on a clear background to work properly. See below for additional guidance.

BROADBAND

As these are all cloud based services, they are only as good as your broadband connection. Most will work fine with 10mbs download and 3mbs upload speeds. As they are broadcasting video and slides and other functions, they also use a lot of broadband. Speakers need to ensure they have a stable connection and a generous usage allowance. You can test using SpeedTest (<https://www.speedtest.net>)

ETIQUETTE AND RULES

As people are still relatively new to online meetings and webinars, it is important to establish some ground rules at the start of the session. There are no hard rules and many are still evolving but it is best practice to establish the rules of engagement with the audience at the start of the presentation to avoid confusion.

MUTING

For large groups it is best to mute people at the start and to ask people to self-unmute when they wish to speak.

If attendees can unmute and you are happy to take comments/questions during the session, good practice is to ask them to call out the presenter name, their name, and their comment.

CHAT

Chat, hands up, and emojis are excellent ways to check in with the audience and allow them to ask questions or comments.

For short webinars, it is best to ask attendees to add their questions to the chat function (or Q&A function if the platform allows). However, when in full screen presentation mode you may not see these and you may need to consider using a second screen.

Attendees can send messages to the entire group or private messages. Note the host may be able to see all messages sent and text files of them are available afterward.

If using webinars/online meetings with the same group, you should consider doing a tech check session where you can explain all the different functionalities rather than people struggling with it on the first day.

For example with Zoom and Microsoft Teams you need to hover your mouse over the screen to reveal Chat and other functionality. This is not always immediately obvious.

USE OF CAMERA

For smaller groups, the use of web cameras can increase interaction and give the presenter a good indication of interest. The choice to use the camera is the attendee's choice and not everyone is comfortable with them. It should not be forced upon attendees. There may be other reasons why they choose not to use them. Most platforms will highlight the person speaking so you can match to the thumbnails. When you are sharing a screen (presentation), the video images turn into thumbnails automatically.

It is ok to turn off the camera when in session especially if there something distracting happening in the background. The video panel then gets replaced with the default, which is normally the persons initials or a photo of them if they have added one in their settings.

Q&A

Some presenters are happy to take questions throughout a presentation, but some find it very distracting and can lose their train of thought. For short presentations, Q&A is best left to the end. For longer presentations, you might consider allowing questions as they arise, or even better, stop and ask if people have any questions as you progress. This is more manageable with smaller groups. In most instances, people add questions via Chat but if you are comfortable with people asking them during the session, agree a protocol. This can range from people putting their hands up (some platforms have this as a function) or asking that they call out the presenters name, followed by their own and then the comment or question.

RECORDING

Most platforms allow you to record sessions so you can share with the group afterwards. Recording is either locally on your computer or for paid platforms saved in the cloud as part of your package. Once saved, it can be edited and shared on YouTube/Vimeo, embedded on a website and through social media.

It is important to let people know the session is being recorded, especially if they reveal confidential information or ask questions and may be uncomfortable with it being shared publicly.

COMFORTABLE WITH CAMERA

Most people are initially uncomfortable being in front of camera. This is generally overcome with practice but with some additional planning you can ensure the group gets the best version of you.

The best presenters view webinars as a production and maximise the following:

HEIGHT OF CAMERA

This is one of the most common mistakes presenters make. Only viewing part of your face, looking up someone's nostrils or down on their head can be off-putting to attendees.

You want them to focus on the content. If using a laptop on a desk, raise it up using a few books to ensure your eye line is looking directly at the camera.

EYE CONTACT

"Eyes are the window to the soul". Roving eyes or staring at the side of the screen can lead to the misperception of disinterest or worse lack of trust. Strong solid eye contact can really engage people. This is difficult to achieve in the real world and even more so when you might not see any of the attendees. In addition, there are many things to remember as you navigate your slides. One simple trick is to move the thumbnail image of yourself and any attendees to the top of your screen as your eyes will normally gravitate to moving images. Other tricks include pinning a piece of paper behind the webcam telling you look there or a picture of someone smiling.

None of the attendees will be aware of this but rather witness you giving them confident reassuring eye contact.

GROOMING

As in the real world basic grooming is important. You may be at home but brushed hair, clean face and shaved/groomed beard can help portray a more professional image.

CLOTHING

For business webinars, there is a general expectation that the presenter will be wearing a shirt/semi-formal workwear rather than an AC/DC t-shirt. The good news is that web cameras do not generally pick up anything from the waist down so you can still look professional with a shirt/blouse and shorts.

POSTURE

An ergonomic and comfortable chair is important – to avoid injury but also to make sure your posture is upright. Delivering webinars from a couch means you are generally sitting back in a hunched over position rather than leaning into the screen. People pick up nonverbal cues from your posture and if you are slouched in a chair it can impact on their perception of your webinar.

Positioning yourself at a slightly angle to the camera (one shoulder slightly closer) can also give the increased perception of engagement – almost like leaning in to the audience.

GESTURES

Moving too much on camera can be disconcerting to attendees especially if the broadband connection is slow. On the other hand, a completely static speaker with only their lips moving can be less engaging. If you use your hands to emphasise something - be deliberate about it and avoid moving too fast.

It is also good to practice tilting your head as a subtle gesture for emphasis.

Similarly with facial expressions. Smiling or raising eyebrows to frowning or looking quizzical can all add extra humanity to your presentation and are picked up at a deep emotional level.

However these all need practice – both to be authentic but also as it is an unnatural thing to do without seeing other people.

Unconscious gestures like touching your nose, pulling an ear or twisting hair ends can appear amplified in an on screen webinar. In a webinar where you cannot see other people, it is easy to forget that people are looking at you.

BACKGROUND

As referenced above, what people see behind you is important. You can either choose a plain background or curate a background that helps with the image you are trying to portray e.g. bookshelf of business books. The background should be uncluttered and avoid using domestic associated items in the backgrounds (kitchen, tv, un-ironed clothes etc). At a minimum you should look at your background objectively – see what the viewer sees. You control this and the best presenters approach it the same as a TV production company with each item in the background having a purpose.

For those who do not have the luxury of a dedicated office with clear walls, most platforms allow you to use a virtual background. For these to work effectively you need to have a plain background as the algorithms that power these can have difficulty working out where your head stops and a light switch is.

These problems can be overcome by purchasing a green screen. As most people do not wear green, it allows the software to accurately pick up your outline. These come in a variety of options from cloth-based stretched over an assembled frame, a plain green board or for working from home - a pop up stand.

Rather than use the default virtual background (desert scenes) you should consider using your logo, office or an image related to your slides.

LIGHTING

In a poorly lit environment, the speaker can be difficult to see and can pixelate. Some people report this as appearing like a blurred out character in Crime Watch. This can be distracting to attendees and makes it very difficult for them to see visual cues like facial expression.

Normally, poor lighting is due to people positioning themselves with a window at their back or side or a strong overhead light. The best position is to have a window in front of you, which means you are front lit by natural light.

If you cannot change your position and have a window to your back or side (if in the evening); then close the shades and use a desk lamp. Play around with the position to avoid shadows on your face.

Frequently just pulling the blinds and using overhead light can improve the lighting dramatically.

Instead of a regular lamp, consider buying a ring light. A ring light is a simple lighting tool that is commonly used for beauty shots, portraits, and macro photography. This creates an attractive 'catch light' on your eyes while emitting even, diffused lighting that helps eliminate shadows. These are available online for €10-20 euro and can even plug in to your usb connection on your computer.

STAND OR SIT

Most people sit when presenting webinars but you could also consider standing. This takes two forms:

Elevating your laptop to a standing height using an 'Adjustable standing desk riser' and presenting at the normal distance to the computer so you can control slide transition. For those viewing, they may not be able to tell that you are presenting standing up.

This sometimes makes it easier to bring movement into your presentation and removes the temptation to slouch in your chair. It can also help avoid backaches on long calls.

An alternative version is to stand away from the computer so that attendees see more of your body (and room). In order for this to work, you will need to use a wireless head set or a wired directional microphone and also to have a remote control to move your slides on. This can make the presentation feel more like presenting at a conference but takes more confidence and preparation to get right.

PLANNING – WEBINAR

For a 30-minute webinar, you should allow for 2 hours preparation (excluding slide preparation time), especially if doing for the first time. A full day virtual classroom could take upwards of 4 days to properly plan the session and create the material. You also need to allocate time for setting up the webinar details and sharing/managing registrations. On the plus side, you have avoided travel time to a venue.

PRESENTATION

Many of the same guidelines for a real world presentation still hold for virtual presentations and webinars covering:

- Understanding your audience
- WIIFT – What's in it for them
- Limiting the amount of on screen text
- Lots of images
- Number of slides/transitions etc
- Use of polls and exercises
- Engagement
- Using quotes
- Clear opening/clear agenda and wrap up at the end

In a virtual environment, (webinar or virtual training room) the lack of cues (facial expressions, engagement) means you can over or under run on timing very easily. Many people presenting for the first time frequently let the introductions overrun leaving very little time for the real meat of the presentation.

For longer webinars, it is good practice to check in with your audience and keep everyone up to date on what stage of the webinar you have reached. Good practice is to regularly review progress and ask for questions.

In virtual learning environments, best practice is to share material with the group before the session so that they arrive with certain reading or tasks done. Done right this will take the emphasis off using the time to purely talk at the groups (non-stop) and rather synopsis, debate, explore learnings along with an expanded Q&A. Time should be taken to design all parts of the presentation rather than just focusing on the slides. Frequently virtual learning sessions are more about shared learnings; with the presenter acting more as a facilitator to encourage people to learn from each other.

For shorter webinars, it is best to avoid 'boiling the ocean'. By planning the timing of each slide you can keep the focus on the important areas. A format of 5-6 key takeaways with 2 slides for context and one slide for wrap-up works well. Remember each slide might take between 2-5 minutes so for a 30 minute webinar you are looking at around 10 slides.

One of the big advantages of webinars is that you can break a large topic up into bite-sized pieces easier than if you were traveling to a venue. Delivering a course in a physical venue makes it uneconomical to deliver anything less than a half/full day. When you remove the travel restriction, it frees you up to deliver small bites more regularly.

SETTING UP THE SESSION

Most webinar platforms work in a similar way. You enter the title of the webinar, the details, the date, start time and duration - which generates a link to share or sends a calendar invite.

SECURITY

Due to security precautions, most platforms have Set Password as default. This helps to reduce the possibility of 'zoom bombing' whereby an uninvited guest attempts to take over your webinar.

If you wish to add further control and security to your webinar, you can set it for registered attendees only.

This extra functionality means that instead of sharing a link to the actual webinar you share a registration link, which you can customise. You can auto-approve people or manually vet the list of people who indicate interest. Once approved, (via the webinar portal) attendees receive a link to the webinar. The downside of this is that the platform may force people to register with them rather than attend as a guest (where they simply click a link to attend). This means a trade-off of extra control over who attends against simplicity.

You can also set the waiting room as default - which means you manually admit people with an alert flashing up on the screen once you have started the meeting. This can sometimes be confusing as people may not have set up the account to reveal their real name. It also adds a bit of time as people arrive late. This is where having a moderator for your webinar can be very useful, (see below) as they can moderate while you focus on the presentation.

RECORDING

Recording the webinar means you can share it with attendees after the event. You need to select this when setting up the webinar.

The options are generally to record locally to your computer or if you have a paid subscription to save in the cloud as part of your account. These files can be quite large so you will need to delete unwanted ones to stay within your package limits.

COMPUTER OR PHONE

The default for most platforms only allow attendees to connect to the webinar via their smart phone or computer. The paid account offers the option to include a dial in phone number. This can really help attendees who have problems with the sound on their computer or who are happy to just listen as they may be on the move or unable to connect to the visual version. The default phone numbers are generally American numbers but you have find local number (generally a Dublin number) through a drop down screen. Make sure you set the local number to be first one seen in the invite by dragging up.

A tech check will reveal if people can't use audio and visual due to connection/computer issues. In an office environment this is overcome by organising an onsite private meeting room where an individual or group can view the presentation.

POLLING

Polling via simple single answer or multiple answer questions is a great way to increase engagement. Using polls at the start can check the experience people have with the subject area and using them during the presentation can offer discussion areas or test that people have understood what you are covering. It also gives you a break from one way communication. However, you need to think about these in advance and set them up. In Zoom, it is as simple as adding the questions at the bottom of the meeting set up page. This is not always set up by default and you may need to turn on polls in the settings. Similarly with breakout rooms - which is covered later. Once turned on in the setting section, they will appear as options in the set up section and in the actual webinar. Practice your narrative around what the poll results tell you about the topic/group rather than just calling out the result. In Zoom, the host launches the poll, is the only person who sees the process, and is the one who shares. Use the time when people are filling out answers to explain the question and options fully. Finally, make sure you stop sharing the results when finished as they can obscure the slides. These polls should be set up in advance as part of the meeting set up but if you intend to use the same Zoom poll for different meetings you can save the original as a template and just re-use it.

There are many options for running external polls from <http://www.slido.com> to <https://www.mentimeter.com>

BREAKOUT ROOMS

For longer webinars, where you have time to allow for a group exercise, the breakout room function is a really good way of allowing attendees to implement what they have learnt and also to socialise with other attendees.

Within Zoom, (once you have turned on in settings) you can split the group into different rooms. You select the number of rooms (which automatically calculates the amount of people in each room) and can set to automatically or manually allocate people. It is best to unmute everyone first just in case people have problems with self-muting. You also need to be very clear about the instructions of what the group and each person needs to do. It is good practice to get people to nominate roles from time keeper to notetaker/rapporteur. Once you set up the rooms, each attendee receives a prompt to join the room. As the host you can move from one room to another. If co-hosting or moderating you can manually move the host from one room to another.

You can also send out room-wide messages to keep people on track of what they should be doing and advancing them through the exercise. Timing is also key. The selected exercise should allow the group to complete it within 10 minutes. When you close the breakout rooms, each room shows a count down from 60 seconds.

Allowing the group to share their findings (through one nominated person) after the breakout room exercise can be very valuable, but you need to factor this into your timing and allow for 2-5 minutes per room as you might discuss/probe some of their learnings.

By default, rooms are numbered but you can change them to names if required.

MUTING

As people can tend to talk over each other or be working in busy backgrounds, it is best to set everyone as muted when they join the meeting. You can unmute during the meeting. For large groups, most presenters keep everyone muted until the end, advising people to input questions via the chat function. Background noise can completely ruin a webinar.

If you suddenly hear lots of background noise from someone unmuting, stop and ask people to make sure they have self-muted. Alternatively open the attendee window. Most platforms highlight the person speaking/making noise so it makes it easy to mute the right person.

SHARING THE LINK

Each package differs slightly on this. With Microsoft Teams, you set up the meeting in a calendar and add the email addresses of the people you are inviting (you can also generate a link to share). With Zoom, it generates a set of joining instructions including all the key details – link, password (if included), dial in numbers, date etc. This is generally shared by email to the registered attendees. Always double check the details before you send out. A common mistake is PM time instead of AM.

REGISTRATION/PROMOTION

There are many different way to handle registration. As mentioned earlier, you can handle registration via the webinar portal but some organisations prefer to handle via a form on their website. In this instance, companies post the event on their website with a link for a registration form. The most common is Contact Form 7 if your website is using WordPress. In order to ensure people know about your webinar, you will need to promote it. If offering to a select group of people that you have permission to contact, (take care of GDPR guidelines) then email is still the first port of call. You could also consider promoting via social media/messaging if you wish to cast the net wider. Be aware that if you promote via social media that you will need some way of screening out unwanted attendees before you send out the final joining instructions.

Once you have a list of registered attendees, simply send the joining instructions a day beforehand, making sure they are password protected.

You should advertise at least week ahead of the event.

TESTING

Delivering any presentation can be daunting and last minute glitches can throw you off quite easily. The best advice is to test and retest. Thankfully, most platforms allow to test using the same link as the webinar/meeting.

The best way to test, is to send the link to someone you know so you can test and experience what it is like when you are in full screen mode. You also need to gauge their experience as an attendee. Items to check include:

- They can hear and see you ok (see earlier guidance on setting the scene)
- Sharing your screen so the person can see your presentation (in full screen)
- Run through your introduction
- Test your timing
- Check you know how to mute/unmute

Other key areas to test are knowing how to stop sharing your screen and having the right files open so you can easily find them.

PRESENTATION FILE SIZE

As you are using a live broadband connection, you should ensure that your presentation is not overly large file size. For short webinars - up to 10 slides - the file size is normally OK (around 10 mbs) but it depends on your connection. Lots of images is one of the biggest offenders. You can shrink these images using online shrink or reducer websites such as <https://compressjpeg.com> or <https://www.clipcompress.com/ppt-compress/>

If the presentation file size is too big, it may freeze on screen, resulting in embarrassing pauses while you try to restart. If your deck is very large and it is a long webinar, consider breaking into smaller separate files and use the time, when you select and share the new deck, as a mini break for attendees.

You may need to check with your IT department about access to files and always take care if using for confidential documents as people may be able to screen save.

VIDEO

The use of video can be invaluable to illustrate complex topics and show things visually, in addition to being entertaining and a break from the presenter. However, they should be used sparingly as you are encouraging people to sit back and it can be hard to get them to re-engage.

The main options around video are to embed (be careful with size) which adds more certainty and can be set to autoplay or linking to it, which means opening another screen and using more broadband. It is important to test as sound quality/volume can be problematic.

MODERATOR

As there are many moving parts to a webinar, it is useful to have a co-host or a moderator who can handle the introductions, moderate any queries, act as a bouncing board for comments and call out the questions. When you are in full screen mode, you may not be able to view comments.

A moderator can be invaluable for letting you know if sound etc works - especially if you are running video. A good moderator can also help with engagement, offering their opinions and thoughts on questions you may ask. Frequently, all it takes is one person to share thoughts to break the ice.

Most moderators communicate with attendees via Chat encouraging questions, giving instructions and also running the polls. If you are using a waiting room, they can grant access to late attendees.

You should practice with the moderator to make sure you are both in synch on timings of polls and especially around the etiquette during the introductions. In most instances, the moderator will be the 'host'.

SCRIPT

Whether you are using a moderator or not, it is good practice to write a script for your webinar. Some presenters do this for their entire presentation but at a minimum your introductory script should cover:

- Welcome
- Name of presenter/s
- Summary of biography (three sentences – experience, academic)
- Topic area and summary of areas to be covered
- Ground rules and etiquette
- If being recorded or not
- Contingency – should the broadband fail or temporarily break up

You should also script the end of the webinar - making sure to thank all relevant parties, those who attended, next steps (if slides, video, reports are being made available) and details of any future programs/items of interest.

ON THE DAY CHECKLIST

- Start the meeting 30 minutes ahead of the start time to test the technology and screen sharing
- Check broadband signal
- Sign in with 5-10 minutes ahead – avoid being late
- Share your presentation with the first Welcome slide on screen (some webinars you may prefer to start without a slide and in gallery view so everyone can see each other and say hello as they enter)
- Keep an eye on waiting room and people looking to enter
- Welcome everyone and ask them if they can hear you and see slides
- Start at the exact Start Time
- Call out the introduction script
- Deliver your presentation
- If running polls, call out and explain the question context as people answer. Share the results and discuss the significance of the result.
- Stop periodically and ask if anyone has any questions
- Monitor chat
- If using breakout rooms; be very specific with instructions of what people will experience and the task to be done. Drop into each room to check for any problems or clarifications.
- Have a glass of lukewarm water ready
- Take a comfort break beforehand
- Have a list of commonly asked questions ready
- Check the names of attendees and have in front of you
- Close all other unneeded applications especially email and turn off notifications

- Use phone as time keeper
- Line up some areas to chat about with attendees who are early
- Check recording is on
- Make sure your phone is on silent, face down or on timer
- If presenting from home, make sure everyone knows when you are live and when you finish
- Make sure no one else is using broadband while you are presenting

With short webinars with a lot of attendees, it is not feasible to let attendees introduce themselves. With smaller groups it can really help with engagement. However you should keep to basic details and ask them about challenges they face so the introductions are valuable. You should plan how you will respond to valuable contributions/questions they ask. Keep it to a maximum of 10 minutes asking each attendee to keep their introduction to less than 30-40 seconds.

PRESENTING

The process of sharing your presentation is very simple. Hover over the screen, press share, find the right thumb nail of your presentation and share. It may take a few seconds to connect. By default it appears as preview. Switch it to presentation/full screen mode.

Note sometimes you may need to change the security preferences on your computer before you can share files.

Move your thumbnail image to under the webcam to help with eye contact.

Use gestures and voice intonation to maintain interest.

If it's a small class consider asking people about themselves and their challenges/what they hope to get from the course. If a big group, use a poll.

Presenting to a computer web cam can feel very artificial and you can forget that there may be a sizeable amount of people watching you. You need to visualise the audience as though they were in a room in front of you.

Pauses and silence can be powerful tools to catch people's attention. However silence on a webinar – even for a few seconds, for example if you are distracted by something like phone ringing or someone entering your room, can feel like a very long time for attendees. Similarly participants can't see what you are doing so fill the silence by telling them what is happening e.g. 'I'm just going to send you to breakout rooms now etc'. This helps to avoid downtime where people are wondering what is happening.

SECOND SCREEN

When you are in full presentation mode, you may not be able to see other functions such as Chat. Some presenters operate with two screen – one with the presentation that attendees see and the other with chat or speaker notes. However you need to be careful you are selecting the right screen and test well in advance. You also need to make sure that the screen you are presenting to is the one with the web camera so it doesn't appear like you are looking at something else.

A related issue occurs when you are demonstrating something that pops up additional windows. Zoom picks up one window at a time so the new window you are talking about might not be visible to the attendees.

ANNOTATION

It is useful to be able to underline text or bring people's attention to certain parts of your presentation. This can be done by using annotations. This appears in the bottom corner of the screen with the mouse or track board used to control the movement or drawing. In general, it ranges from highlight, pens, arrows, laser pointer to inserting text but this depends on your version of the presentation software – Microsoft or other.

You should practice this in advance as some software versions make you clear annotations before you go to the next slide while some carry the annotations from previous screen .

This function is particularly valuable for webinars versus real life classroom as it's easy to do with your mouse.

FEEDBACK/ Q&A

Getting feedback is always difficult after an event although many people add to the Chat. Having a short poll at the end makes it easier to capture immediate feedback rather than following up with an email survey.

It can be disheartening when you receive no questions and continually asking if people have questions is unlikely to help. Consider having questions ready that you or the moderator will ask. If you are also the moderator, phrase it along the lines of 'Many people often ask me about...'.

Remember many people will have back-to-back calls and will need to leave as soon as you have finished presenting, so the absence of questions might be driven by their schedule. Share your email or contact details just in case people have questions they might be uncomfortable sharing in front of others.

Engagement can take many forms and ranges from attendees turning on their video, unmuting and sharing comments to use of emojis and Chat. Not everyone is comfortable engaging and this is not always a reflection on the quality of the webinar. Plan easy and simple ways for people to engage from polls, to simple Chat answers.

As discussed earlier, make sure you thank all involved for their time after you have finished the Q&A.

POST WEBINAR

Webinars generate very valuable content in a digital form that makes it easy to share. You can decide if you want there to be a digital footprint (website post etc) and what that looks like. Many attendees request slides, some need to leave early and it offers good marketing opportunities.

RECORDING

Most webinar providers allow you to record the session, with paid accounts saving in the cloud. Some also allow you to link to the recording. However there will almost always be gaps and pauses at the start (at least 10 minutes if you logged in early and have not paused the recording).

Video editing can take time but trimming the video (most video players have this built in) will allow you to start the video at your welcome address. More sophisticated video editing will allow you add music and logos at the start and end of your video and also to edit out any parts, but this may also increase the file size significantly.

You will first need to download the video. A 30-minute webinar can generate a reasonably large file size (70-100mbs) so make sure you have a generous broadband allowance.

When you are happy with the video, one option is to upload to YouTube, Vimeo or other video services. Generally, you can set to public, listed or private. Public means it will be visible on your channel, listed means only people with the link can view, and private means only you as the channel owner can see. If you select as private, you might not be able to embed on your website. If hosting on YouTube or Vimeo, make sure you fill out all the details – description, language, date etc

Once you have it hosted on a video channel, you can use the link to embed it in your website.

WEBSITE

Attendees invariably look for slides after a presentation. In the physical world this was done with printed handouts. In the virtual world, the requirement for follow up can be done via a website post. Sites that are run on WordPress makes this particularly easy.

A good structure for the posts is:

- Image representing the webinar (screenshot)
- embedded video post (may need a video player plugin)
- short synopsis of the webinar
- embedded presentation as a pdf
- additional resources

Most trainers turn their presentations into pdfs when sharing so they are harder to edit. However, this can sometimes increase the file size. Before sharing on a website, these should be reduced by firstly selecting export and reducing file size option. You may also need to reduce further by using online services such as <https://pdfcompressor.com> or similar. If you are using WordPress, a pdf embedder plugin will allow people to only browse the slides on the site, but you can also allow it to be downloaded.

If you are creating an image, make sure it is the correct size dimensions and a small size. Online services like www.canva.com make this process very simple.

Good quality content can significantly improve your website's search engine visibility. However pdfs are not automatically optimised, hence the importance of a supporting article. Also some people prefer to read a summary before they commit to watching a video or pdf presentation.

You can set the post as password protected or public before sharing with the attendees, or promoting through social media and other channels. Some organisation only post on their internal portals.

WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

All videoconferencing tools have the same weakness and single point of failure – namely your internet connection. Even with stable connections, the pure volume of people using internet connections can result in low speeds – this is commonly called contention.

It is unlikely you will never experience an issue. Rather than wait for it to happen – normally at the worst possible time – plan for the eventuality. Depending on your risk profile, there are various steps you can take to reduce the risk and increase redundancy.

As many people are remote working, there is more patience for failed connections but this is limited goodwill.

WEAK SIGNAL

If your signal is weak, then the video and voice will stutter and break up making it difficult to understand. Frequently this can be short-lived. The following may help:

1. Stop presenting
2. Communicate via Chat with the group
3. Apologise and ask people to wait for the connection to re-establish
4. Turn off video
5. Switch to preview mode on your presentation
6. Consider presenting without video and slides – essentially an audio call
7. Consider rerecording and sending to people after the webinar

FAILED SIGNAL

If your connection fails completely or if the signal goes so weak you may be disconnected from the webinar - for the attendees you will have simply disappeared. The meeting may still be motion (depending on how it was configured). The host function might also be automatically allocated to another person on the call. If your connection does come back on:

1. Re-join the meeting
2. Apologise, explain what happened and let people know your plan should it happen again

If the connection does not restore try to reconnect using:

1. Mobile app version (however you might only be able to join and not present)
2. Use a separate mobile dongle (from a different provider)
3. Use the audio connection which is normally a local (Dublin) number and phone-in to let attendees know what is going on.
4. If you can connect by audio only and the group is amenable to it, consider presenting by using your voice alone (you will see the presentation but they will not), allow for increased Q&A (have a list of probing questions ready) and follow up with a separately recorded version of the webinar.

In the worst-case scenario and you cannot continue, offer another date to rerun or prerecord and share with those who registered.

DE-RISKING

You can take some preparatory steps to reduce the risk of a failed webinar.

1. Check your speed before the webinar so you will know if there are any issues – you can prepare the group in advance if it reporting as weak. SpeedTest <https://www.speedtest.net> is one of the most commonly used ones.

2. Draw up a failure plan and tell people at the start of the call.
3. Make sure no one else is using the broadband or anything else is being downloaded while you are running the webinar.
4. Contact your service provider letting them know you really need stable broadband – they can sometimes tweak your connection. Make sure you report all broadband service issues.
5. Have the conferencing app downloaded on your phone and join using 3G signal.
6. Make sure your presentation is as small as possible (file size wise) and always compress images.
7. Consider buying a prepaid broadband dongle from a different provider than you use. Make sure to test and passwords are handy/memorised rather than trying to set up in crisis mode.
8. If possible have someone else from your team on the call who can either pick up the presentation or at least explain what has happened.
9. Avoid predictably busy broadband times. Historically between 9pm-11pm were the most congested times for the internet.
10. If you have a mobile phone that allows tethering or hotspot, have this ready to go if connection fails.
11. Have the audio only number ready if you need to dial in.
12. Close all unneeded applications on your computer and turn off alerts.

GENERAL TIPS

- Set up a Zoom account. Most people attend Zoom sessions as guests – accessing the meeting via a browser link. In addition to increased functionality, you can also update your profile with a photo so that when in meetings, people still see what you look like - even if you have the camera turned off.
- Change your name. Many people's names on Zoom are numbers & initials. This can be off-putting and in some instances make it difficult to gain access to rooms as the organiser tries to identify you.
- Zoom also gives you the option to download audio only. This could be used as podcast material.

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