

How to Market and Sell Services with Webinars

A Quantum Leap Marketing White Paper

A Companion to the Cutting Edge Marketing Webinar Series

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The Tale of Two Services Webinars

Consider the following stories about two services Webinars.

A Services Webinar That Succeeded

A small services company wanted to successfully launch one of its core services into a new, target market.

They had a small budget, but were able to recruit a speaker well-known to the niche to talk about a topic of high importance to their target market. In addition, they were able to invite the speaker's contact list along with their own opt-in email list.

By combining the two lists, a compelling topic, and a known-speaker, the event was highly successful. Eighty-four prospects registered and 61 people attended or watched the Webinar archive. And, because of a well-planned lead conversion strategy, two proposals were generated within 48 hours of the event.

This small services business increased overall fees 22% over the next 12 months fueled by this Webinar success in the new market.

Next, let's examine a Webinar that fell short of its promise.

A Services Webinar That Failed to Meet Expectations

A mid-sized services firm had been very successful with event marketing, using trade shows and live seminars to generate sales leads and prospect appointments. But these leads were getting costlier to create. Also, trade show attendance was dwindling at the key shows for their market.

So they needed a more cost-effective way of generating leads with events.

This company tried their first Webinar using their own, internal speakers and internal email list, and also spent a significant sum of money on placing online ads and mailing post-card invitations.

The results were disappointing. The number of registrants was less than the average, live seminar. They also ran into Webinar delivery issues so that they did not create a viable recording. In the end, they gained only a handful of sales leads.

**They walked away from the experience thinking,
“Webinars don’t work for our business.”**

Webinars in professional, financial, legal, technology, or other services can successfully:

- Generate sales leads,
- Reach and influence decision-makers,
- Launch a new service, or market an existing service to a new market,
- Position your firm in the market place ahead of the competition, regardless of your size, or
- Up-sell or re-sell existing clients.

Webinars have leveled the playing field so that any services firm can appear to be the market leader.

With Webinars, any Services firm can appear to be the market leader.

What did the first firm do differently? What are the proven Webinar marketing and sales strategies the successful firm employed that any services business can use?

What are some common mistakes to avoid that were made in the second case study?

How can your firm increase fees and get new clients with Webinars?

This white paper . . .

- reveals strategies to create a winning Webinar program,
- offers proven tactics to get more leads and sales from your marketing budget, and
- discusses the increasingly important role of Webinars in marketing and selling services today.

And, by following these proven guidelines, your firm may also experience sales increases of 22% or more in a single year.

Creating a Winning Services Webinar Program

Webinars consist of visual elements delivered from your computer (such as an MS Powerpoint presentation) and most-often a teleseminar delivered through a phone bridge or through the computer speakers. Usually, attendees are in “listen-only” mode and can interact via text to respond to survey or polling questions and pose questions to the presenter(s).

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These one-to-many, online events can be designed to accomplish a diverse set of marketing objectives.

In order to build a successful Webinar Program (with a series of events and recordings) for a services organization, you must first understand the various objectives you can accomplish with Webinars. Then, it's up to you to select the right "tool (Webinar) for the job" to reach your goals.

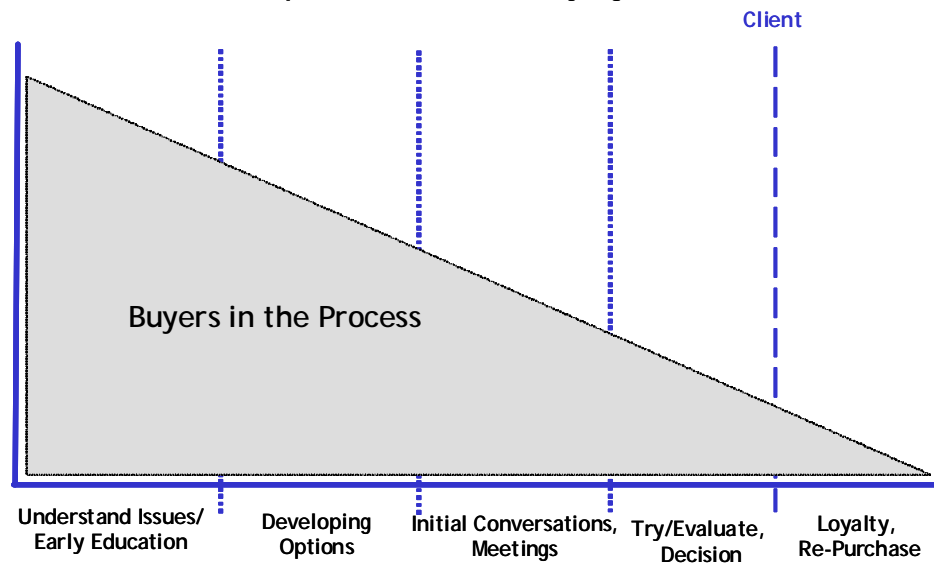
Different types of Marketing Webinars accomplish different objectives.

Kinds of Marketing Webinars Available to Services Firms

Different types of marketing Webinars can be used to match the broad objectives of the company while capturing prospects at various stages of the services buying cycle, and then moving them to a sale.

This chart illustrates some of the different stages of the buying process where marketing Webinars can facilitate sales. In the graphic, you will also note post-client Webinars which can be used to deepen client relationships, by providing education and updates in your market or helping you re-sell clients on additional products or services.

Steps in the Services Buying Process



This chart offers two, important insights – ones that can make the difference between success and failure with your services Webinar program.

1. The key assumption behind this chart is that today, we live in a **Permission Marketing** culture. That means that buyers of services are more in charge of the buying process than ever before. They

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want to control what information they consume, when and how they consume it, and which firms to engage.

Webinars are a great way to get “permission” from potential prospects to assertively market and sell to them.

2. Most of your prospective buyers will tend to be **Earlier in the Buying Process**. But most providers of services have not recognized this, and, therefore, they don't have a marketing strategy both to engage the majority of potential, early-stage buyers and to nurture those buyers to be clients.

Webinars are also an incredibly powerful tool to move buyers from early in the buying process toward the sale (with your firm).

Those firms that can do both will have a competitive advantage and tend to get a higher ROI on their Webinar investments and overall marketing efforts.

Here are some common types of Webinars at different stages of the buying process that you can call on, depending upon your marketing objectives.

- **Positioning or Awareness Webinars**

These Webinars are often used by firms to announce a new services offering or by existing companies looking to launch into a new market.

These Webinars can generate new leads or help qualify current leads by identifying a level of interest. They set the stage for later marketing to move the audience into the ‘serious evaluation’ stage.

- **Educational Webinars**

These Webinars are designed to teach prospects new information or help them better understand a specific set of problems and/or solutions.

For example, many services firms educate *purchasing influencers* about a problem or issue accompanied by a short introduction to their services. In this way they kindle the sales conversation with the target organization or buying unit.

- **“Service Sampling” or Demonstration Webinars**

These Webinars are designed to get the host company into serious consideration for greater complexity or higher-cost sales, or drive prospects to decisions for a simpler sales process.

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In a services sale, this often means demonstrating the outcome of using a service such as the Return-on-Investment or Total Cost of Ownership calculation. In a financial services sale, for example, one can demonstrate how a sample portfolio performs over time.

The call to action is one of the most important aspects of the Webinar.

- **Webinars Designed To Convert Prospects to Clients**

These events are characterized by a call to action at the end of the Webinar which can ask for the order, move the prospect to request a proposal, or buy a smaller services engagement such as an initial strategy or planning phase.

These initial engagements could be priced at \$995 for individuals and \$9,995 for corporations. Marketing Webinars are very appropriate to pitch these initial offerings. (Note if you are selling back to existing clients/relationships, you may be able to sell services at higher price-points through Webinars.)

Five Simple Strategy Steps to Webinar Success, Regardless of the Type of Webinar Chosen

To summarize, a simple and effective way of building a successful Webinar program for a services organization is to act on the following five steps, investigated in more detail throughout this White Paper.

1. Decide What Types of Webinar(s) to Do
2. Execute Your Webinar Marketing Plan
3. Hold Live Webinars and Market Your Recordings
4. Convert Webinar Leads to Meetings/Clients
5. Repeat What Works Best and Improve Where Possible

Now, like many things in life, bigger is generally better when it comes to Webinars. Essentially, it takes the same effort and cost to deliver a Webinar with 10 attendees or 100.

So the next section will cover how you can gain more registrants and leads from your services Webinar program.

Services Webinar Marketing Plan for More Registrants and Leads

Generally, the more members of your target audience that attend your Webinar, the more successful your Webinar will be.

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For some complex or relatively-expensive services, which have long sales cycles or large buying teams, the number of actual decision-makers who register for the Webinar may be just as important as the pure registrant total.

Here are 5 core elements of a basic Webinar marketing plan.

1. List and Media Selection

The Webinar marketing plan foundation starts with identifying the list or media that effectively reaches your target market. This can include your own in-house list, direct mail or email lists, partner/speaker/affiliate lists, and external media, websites, or lists.

Most importantly, the list should contain a high percentage of individuals who are potential buyers or influencers for your products or services. Resist the temptation to use easily-available media or lists when they don't match-up with the target market for your specific Webinar. A little extra investment in list development will pay off in response and attendance.

A typical services Webinar will see 90% or more of its registrants come from an opt-in email list, so the most important part of your marketing plan will be to use, or rent, a responsive, email list of your target audience.

2. Communications Plan

Select communication vehicles and the timing of the delivery of your messages to maximize the reach and impact with your chosen target list or media.

Seek to get your Webinar invitation in front of as many members of your target audience as possible working within the budget available.

Consider multiple forms of contact outside of emails such as online advertising, telemarketing, or direct mail postcards. Multiple media and contacts can increase your rate of success and awareness of your event.

The general rule is the majority of registrants will occur within 10 days of your Webinar. The heart of a communications plan could include an email to your in-house list 7 days and 2 days before the Webinar.

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If you have outside speakers or co-sponsors for the event, they could follow this timing as well to their own lists.

And, don't forget to promote links to the live event and recording in newsletters and on your own, speaker, and partner websites as well. *Don't be surprised if you get a 20% lift in registrations with this simple tactic.*

When considering the best way to expand your Webinar audience, it is by expanding your email invitation list and those that see your invitation.

Here are 7 easy ways to extend your reach and potentially multiply Webinar registration.

Remember to email your core lists multiple times for your Webinar.

1. Consider Using an Outside Speaker with an Email List
2. Consider Bringing In a Co-Sponsor with an Email List
3. Test and Tweak Subject Lines to Improve Open Rates
4. Time the Email to Get Opened – Usually in the Morning Tuesday through Thursday
5. Consider Renting Email Lists or Placements in Third-Party Newsletters
6. Email Your Target Lists Multiple Times
7. Ideally the "From" Name of the Email will be Familiar to Your Target Audience

3. The Invitation Email (and Postcard) Copy Itself

Getting your message out through your Webinar invitation email requires writing promotional copy that highlights the title, timing, speaker, and primary benefits of attending your presentation. For marketing and selling intangible services through Webinars, it is especially important to paint a vivid picture with words of the benefits of attending.

For online marketing copy, call your prospects to action (urgently) by having them click on a direct link to the registration page, also known as the web registration form.

Remember a strong registration form will target 50%+ conversion to registrants. A weak form or cumbersome registration process will net conversion rates as low as 10% or less.

Caution: Stay away from registration processes or Webinar platforms that require more than one step or click to get to your Webinar landing page. This will significantly lower your Webinar registrant and attendance numbers.

(Note: The GotoWebinar technology platform used by QLM for its Cutting Edge Marketing Webinar Series offers both high conversion rates and also automated and effective Webinar reminders.)

4. Timing and Delivery

The timing of the delivery of your Webinar is vital to maximize registrations. So much so, that it should be considered in the strategy phase of planning your Webinars.

When should you hold your event?

Simply, when your target market is most likely available. For business audiences this is usually mid-week, mid-day. For an audience such as individuals buying financial services this may be early evening, at 7:00 pm.

How long should your marketing event be?

Generally, free marketing Webinars will last between 30 and 60 minutes. Since the average Webinar attendee will tend to join the Webinar about 5 minutes after the start time, plan your content for either 25 or 55 minutes.

Should you always record the live Webinar?

Yes.

And, make sure your Webinar recording is available to all registrants 12 to 24 hours after the event. Also, consider promoting the availability of the recording to your entire invitation list the week after the live Webinar to take advantage of awareness built-up before the live event.

5. Your Reminder Sequence

The most common way to take registrations for marketing Webinars is through an online registration form. In short (as discussed above) make it easy for your busy, target audience to register for the event.

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You are not done marketing the event just because your prospects register. After all, your Webinar will have a much bigger impact if 60%+ of registrants attend versus 25% or below. (Put a reminder sequence in your registrant-to-attendee marketing plan.) Be sure you get the maximum attendance possible from your registration pool by sending reminder emails with the Webinar details.

Consider use of an auto-responder which sends a confirmation to the registrant immediately, along with one email 24 hours ahead of the event and another email 3 hours before the event. This sequence can significantly increase your attendance rate.

Optionally, you might want to deploy a reminder phone call or fax within 24 hours of the event.

It is a given that your marketing plan will be more successful if your content is a big draw to your audience. So how do you create content that helps to attract your target audience?

Make sure your topic helps sell the Webinar for you.

[Winning Services Webinar Marketing -- Creating a Topic That Sells the Event For You](#)

Most of all, consider that the number one rule taught in speech class is: "Know your audience."

Your Webinar will have the most impact and create the best results for you if your topic of the Webinar is interesting, informative, timely, and provides value to the audience.

A financial services company, for example, may create a Webinar with the goal of educating individual investors on how they can experience the "Ideal Retirement." A marketing services firm may highlight how businesses can get "More Leads with Less Effort." An IT services firm may create a Webinar topic around "Delivering Better Functionality at Lower cost."

Ultimately, your audience will decide if your topic is compelling and worthwhile.

One way to "stack the deck in your favor" is to survey your target audience before the event to find out what problems or topics are most likely to get their attention and attendance. These surveys can also be an excellent source of content, to be included in your presentation.

Winning Services Webinar Marketing -- Getting the Tactics Right While Avoiding the Common Pitfalls

About once a week, I get a call or email from one of my newsletter subscribers which says, "We followed your basic Webinar marketing strategies, and the event went well, but the attendance was below what we expected it to be."

Inevitably, they missed a key step or two. When you do a "post-op" analysis on a Webinar marketing plan which didn't "fill-the-room," here are the most likely causes for the poor showing. Better yet, use these pitfalls as a checklist to review your Webinar strategy and plans BEFORE the event.

1. Your Webinar Topic Did Not Draw the Target Market Like a Magnet
2. The Content of the Webinar Did Not Offer Fodder to "Sell the Sizzle" of the Event
3. Your invitation List Was Small, or There Were Few Potential Buyers on the List
4. Your Registration Form/Process Made it Hard to Register
5. The Timing of the Webinar, or a Weak Reminder Sequence, Lowered Attendance

Avoid these common mistakes and see your Webinar attendance rise!

Now, knowing how to attract your audience is only part of the equation, so let's discuss key techniques to turn that interest into desire for your services and sales.

Driving More Services Fees with Webinars – The Easy Way

While many services marketers and professionals think "filling-the-room" is the hard part of getting new clients from Webinars, this is but one milestone in converting Webinar attendees to clients in bunches.

There is nothing worse than getting tens, hundreds, and sometimes a thousand or more Webinar attendees at your Webinar and then seeing little sales activity or results afterward.

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While entire books can, and have been, written on “platform selling,” here are three, critical steps to selling more from every one of your services Webinars.

Make Sure Your Buyers Are in the “Room”

“A buyer, is a buyer, is a buyer.” Make sure you have buyers in the “room.”

One of today’s top Marketing gurus, Dan Kennedy, has a great expression, “A buyer is a buyer, is a buyer.”

Get buyers into your virtual Webinar room and a lot of the job of selling is done. But if there are no buyers or members of a buying team at the Webinar, even the best sales pitch or Webinar content will have little impact on your fees.

So make sure your potential buyers are in the room, largely with the help of the strategies outlined in this White Paper.

Develop The Right Sales Pitch So Your Presentation Does Not Go Flat

Many say that you should not sell at a Webinar. This is simply not true.

Think about it! In the marketing process we are all “selling” in one form or another almost all the time, but we may not think of it as selling because we may not ask for an “order” with every marketing event or communication.

What a Webinar really needs to be clear on, and what creates sales, is a specific next step your prospect should take.

Don’t be bashful about presenting your “next step” and allow enough time in your Webinar to do the job well.

For example, once you educate your prospects on an issue or problem, or position your firm as an expert, plan what you want prospects to do at the end of the Webinar.

Will they review a sales letter, download more information, or request a no-obligation consultation or analysis?

Does your firm have a low-cost, planning or strategy service which is really just a way of getting new clients to sample your services in the hopes of creating a larger relationship?

Whatever is being “sold” at the event, make it clear. And devote the necessary time to articulate the benefits of taking the next step.

Shortening the Sales Cycle with Automated Conversion

An estimated 70% of services Webinar leads do not get the proper follow-up.

There is a common axiom in business marketing which says that 70% of business sales leads do not get the proper follow-up. Our experience indicates that this is true for services Webinars as well.

Simply by avoiding this mistake you will naturally get more sales from every event.

For example, when I was head of marketing at a small firm with weekly Webinars, we had a small, inside sales force. We made sure all Webinar registrants had a link to the Webinar recording along with a free evaluation offer, and were turned over to sales within 24 hours of the event. Inside sales would then generally both call and email all prospects within 48 hours of the event and do additional follow-ups according to a profile of the target individual and his or her level of interest indicated at the Webinar.

Many of today's CRM systems, like Infusionsoft used by QLM, allow for more automated conversion sequences which you can employ again and again with your Webinar registrants.

Perhaps, a sequence of 10 touches over 21 days after the event with a combination of 7 emails, 2 sales calls, and 1 longer-format direct mail sales letter will *boost your Webinar lead conversion to clients from well below 5% to well above 10%*. This type of improvement would not be unusual and is very exciting because you have already sunk almost all your marketing costs and effort into the event.

The next section will highlight key recommendations to put the ideas shared in this White Paper into practice. These tips will help you get more leads and sales from your next services Webinar.

Five Key Recommendations for Services Marketers

Recent QLM surveys have revealed that more services organizations than ever before are planning Webinars over the next year. That means the competition is increasing for the attention of your prospects with these types of offers.

Thus, it is critical to understand and use best practices that leading services organizations of all types and sizes have found profitable.

Key Recommendations for Success with Services Webinars

Some key recommendations for marketing success with services Webinars are:

1. Build Your Email List of Your Target Buyers – Permission Marketing is not just for building an opt-in, email list, although that is a big part of it. Getting prospects onto your list at different stages of the information gathering or buying process will open the door to many more potential buyers and help you build a large marketing list.

Email marketing offers a fast, cheap, and effective way to reach prospects, clients, or influencers. Those services firms that build and cultivate a relatively large email list will lower their cost of conversion and be able to create sales quickly through aggressive email marketing campaigns.

2. Match Your Webinar(s) to Your Specific Marketing or Sales Objective(s) – Generally, the narrower the objectives for a Webinar the more likely it is to succeed. Those services businesses that are able to be disciplined about matching their Webinar Programs to their objectives, and focus on topics and marketing plans that will get the attention of their target audience (potential buyers for their services) will greatly increase the odds of success.

3. (Make and) Deliver on the Big Promise of Your Webinar – Often services Webinars fail to achieve their objectives because they don't try to make an impact with the topic and marketing, or the content fails to match the level of effective marketing. Those services Webinars that both *make and deliver on* the "big promise" of the Webinar have the potential to be blockbuster events.

4. Think "Lead-to-Sales" Conversion – Services companies in general can be guilty of not wanting to "bother" prospects, figuring they will follow-up and set appointments on their own if they are interested in a service. In today's busy world where your prospects are likely exposed to a minimum of 3,000 advertising messages per day, this is simply not true.

A multi-step, follow-up plan can help your organization cut through the daily clutter and win business away from competitors!

5. Use Recordings as You Build Your Program – One of the many benefits of Webinars is their ability to be easily recorded and marketed online through email, website, and web marketing. Take advantage of this potential asset for months, or even years, after the live Webinar, and your organization will generate 20% or more leads and fees from a single Webinar program.

Summary

More services organizations than ever before are taking advantage of online marketing technologies such as Webinars. Organizations are also increasing the average number of Webinars they hold.

Webinars are allowing marketers to reach more prospects and deliver more, qualified leads to sales.

This White Paper has presented some insights into how to get more leads and sales from your own services Webinars.

Try some of the best practices put forth here and reap the rewards in your own organization!

How to Market and Sell Services with Webinars

About Citrix Online

Citrix Online, a division of Citrix Systems, Inc., is a leading provider of easy-to-use, on-demand applications for Web conferencing and collaboration. Its award-winning services include GoToMeeting Corporate, a complete collaboration solution that satisfies all Web conferencing needs ranging from large Webinars to small online meetings.

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About the Author

Bob Hanson is the President of lead generation and conversion consultancy Quantum Leap Marketing and creator of the Must-See Webinars™ success system. He has also published a recent guide to online lead generation, the "What's Working Now in B-to-B Lead Generation Guide: Success with New Media: Webinars and Google Ads."

To get a free chapter of the guide, "How to Create an On Demand Webinar Program," or to request a no-obligation, webinar success consultation, email Bob at bhanson@qlmarketing.com or call 617-901-6886.

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