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Dec. 01, 2008

*From the Dec. 2008 Issue*

It couldn't be any easier to get a lesson: Stay in your seat, look at your computer and dial into a conference call. Welcome to webinar learning. Hassle free? Yes. Effective? That depends on whether or not you remember what you saw. Web training is a great tool, but people often underestimate the work it takes on both sides — trainer and participant — to make it meaningful and productive. There are some guidelines for getting the most out of viewing a webinar, but usually those work only if the presenter can keep your attention. That's why it is so important for leaders, trainers and presenters to think differently about using this evolving technology and to begin developing their own Best Practices for Webinar training.

**RULE #1, AS USUAL, IS TO BE PREPARED:**

- Know the tool you are using for the presentation. That means spend time learning the features with confidence. This is important: It's the difference between capturing the attention of your audience or losing them to e-mail and Instant Messenger.
- Test everything first. You know what happens when you assume it will work right the first time. See recipe for disaster.
- Avoid sessions on Mondays and Fridays. Your attendance will be lower and attrition will be higher.
- Find a quiet place from which to do your teaching; preferably one without background noise.
- The only software running on your computer should be what's needed for you to present. There's nothing quite as distracting to your viewers

as seeing previews of your incoming e-mail and those cute Instant Messages

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Keeping in mind that not every one who attends is technology savvy, please include an alternative number that is manned during your presentation so participants can call if they have any issues with the web session.

- When it's appropriate or could be helpful, plan to send notes in advance with instructions to print them for those attending the session.
- Use reminders to count down to the event. An e-mail reminder a day or two in advance is great, and a quick reminder one to two hours before the session most always will increase attendance.
- Create a welcome slide so people know they are in the right place when they log in. Part of that welcome should be information (again) on who is presenting and the phone number to log in for the audio portion.
- Best Practice for audio is teleconferencing instead of streaming audio. It is two-way, the sound quality is better and you have more flexibility on the services offered for the audio. It's a plus if you can have an attendant on the call to help with any issues. You'll also want to have the ability to mute phones during the session, record the audio, and turn off annoying announcements as people enter and exit the call.

**During the presentation include these Best Practices to assure your training success:**

- Log in 15 to 30 minutes before the start to verify that everything is working and to ensure that someone is on the web screen and audio call as attendees start to arrive.
- Start by welcoming your audience. Use this time to set expectations, including the length of the session and a review of the agenda.
- Spend a minute or two reviewing the web training tool so the audience knows how to type questions to the presenter, how to virtually "raise their hand" if they have an issue, how to print notes, how to ask questions during a Q & A session, and more.

- Keep your hands free. That means use a good headset, preferably wireless,

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- ~~Remember, there are great reasons to keep attendees awake and~~ alert by having them participate and gives you a sense of how many are engaged in the session. The more interactive, the better you will be. And polling is the best way to accomplish this. Just be sure you've given good instructions on how to answer the polling questions, and leave ample time for response.
- Use annotation tools where appropriate to highlight areas in your presentation or to draw on your screen. Using these tools also helps keep the audience focused.
- Record the session (record and play back). This allows those who may have missed the session to attend and enables those who did participate to review again at their leisure. Depending on your tools, you may need to coordinate the audio with the video for a successful replay.
- End on a high note. It could be a story or anecdote or even a well placed joke if appropriate. The point is to wrap it up nicely. That's part of the preparation and shows that you've thought it through from beginning to end. Use your tools wisely, and you will engage your audience and enhance your reputation as a tech-savvy presenter who knows his/her subject and who knows the tools that can help deliver that training so that everyone leaves a winner. |

## A CLOSER LOOK

Some of today's web seminar tools:

- **Citrix GoToMeeting & GoToWebinar** — [www.citrixonline.com](http://www.citrixonline.com);  
[www.gotomeeting.com](http://www.gotomeeting.com);  
[www.gotowebinar.com](http://www.gotowebinar.com)
- **FreeConference** — [www.freeconference.com](http://www.freeconference.com)
- **Microsoft Live Meeting** — [www.microsoft.com/livemeeting](http://www.microsoft.com/livemeeting)
- **WebEx** — [www.webex.com](http://www.webex.com)

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