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Webinar Marketing: From Novel to Normal Q&A with Melanie Turek, Frost & Sullivan VP of Research

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Webinar marketing is now customary, and it took only a few years to go from novel to normal. That's because the insights webinar data provides are valuable and unmatched by other mainstream marketing tactics. In this brief, Citrix GoToWebinar posed some questions about webinar market trends and technologies to Frost & Sullivan's vice president of research, Melanie Turek.

Do webinar registrants prefer more specific webinars or more general ones?

Now that webinars are no longer a novelty and participants are no longer trying to figure out the technology, attendees are looking for specific information, relevant content and presentations that are focused and valuable for their specific business, industry or job function. They want and expect information that is targeted directly toward them and their jobs.

Webinar participants are looking for very specific data, and the webinar platform makes that very easy to provide—much more so than an in-person event, which is designed for as broad an audience as possible and where attendance is based only on geographic location. With webinars, you still get a large audience, but that audience is targeted too, so they are looking for information that is very specific to what they do every day.

One way webinar hosts can make sure they are providing the specific information their attendees want is to use the registration page to ask registrants questions about their pain points and successes. When a webinar host knows the level of detail or specific topics the audience is curious about, it helps webinar producers provide the most tailored and beneficial content.

What is the most effective webinar length today?

Today, webinar participants are looking for much shorter events, typically in the 30-minute range. Historically, it was very common for webinars to last about an hour. Today, if people are looking for more specific content, they are also looking to get that information in as little time as possible. A common structure of a webinar today is that the presenter will speak for approximately 15-20 minutes and then lead a short, interactive question and answer session.

We have noted that if you give webinar participants back 20-30 minutes of their day and communicate to them in an efficient and targeted manner, they really appreciate it. And if some questions don't get answered in the course of the event, webinar hosts can take the opportunity to follow up with that contact in a relevant and meaningful way.

How has the market responded to the launch of Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) between webinar platforms and marketing automation software?

The market has been very receptive and enthusiastic overall. This is something marketers really want. Many organizations use marketing automation software to put discipline around how they handle their marketing campaigns. Now they can use APIs to apply the same rules and processes to their Web events.

APIs let organizations take webinar data, whether it's from the registration or from the webinar event itself, and put that into their marketing automation platform. This helps ensure that data is being properly accounted for and used in follow-up activities according to the company's own processes, which ultimately increases the success and ROI around their marketing initiatives.

APIs make that integration really easy. In the process, they decrease the amount of manual data entry and help eliminate errors while saving marketers time along the way.

Given the prevalence of mobile devices and video, what's next in terms of webinar functionality?

Mobility is significantly impacting webinars today, specifically with the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) trend and the Consumerization of IT. People are using their own mobile devices for work both inside and outside of the office, and they want to be able to attend webinars wherever they are via those devices. Webinar hosts must be aware that people may be attending their webinar from a mobile device, and they expect the experience to be exactly what they would get if they were in the office, a seamless and high-quality one.

Video content is also rapidly becoming an important factor in webinar presentations as many people are pursuing information through sources such as YouTube, live video conversations and presentations. People now use online video to search for answers and to learn new things, and for a lot of people, video content resonates better than a slide presentation because video is visual, engaging and often involves storytelling too.

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