Tech Savvy

Cool Tools for Cool Things
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CKI
Circle K International

Presenting a Webinar

Webinars are "web seminars," (think workshops but online). Typically, a webinar will have several presenters, many viewers and a way for presenters to speak to those viewers. Screen sharing protocol, or the ability for one person to share his or her computer screen with others, has also become standard for most webinar programs.

Typical webinars last about an hour, devoting 45-50 minute to a presentation (ideally on one topic) and about 10 minutes for questions and answers. Most webinars are organized so that the presenters are able to speak and viewers ask questions by typing them.

A webinar has the potential to be a very informative medium through which you can share information, exchange ideas and provide tips. However, as with anything, the success of a webinar is heavily dependent on its preparations. Here are some steps to making sure you run a successful webinar!

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Scheduling

While you are technically allowed to hold a webinar every day, it may lose its effect. It is relatively standard to hold at least one webinar a month. There are benefits to holding webinars on certain days at certain times. Here are some of the most optimal and least optimal examples:

Optimal
- **Weekend**: People are usually free at this time and are able to attend if they have nothing else to do. Make sure that if you choose to do it in a weekend it does not conflict with one of your other events.
- **Weekday Afternoons/Evenings**: College students are usually more available during the afternoon and weekends. And, if your webinar covers several time zones (as CKI does), afternoons and evenings are usually safer.

Not Optimal
- **Weekend Evenings**: Let's be honest, college students are probably hanging out with their friends on Saturday evenings and will likely not be inclined to attend a webinar.
- **Mornings**: Most students grumble about attending a mandatory class at 8AM, so you can probably rule out an 8AM webinar.

Scripting

I cannot emphasize how important it is to pre-plan, or script, your webinar. This is especially true if a webinar has multiple presenters (more than 2) because presenters should know when they are starting and who continues the webinar after their segment is done. This prevents any timely hiccups and also makes sure that people are not repeating the same information.

Typically, in scripting a webinar, the presenters should discuss what **topics** the webinar should cover, and then should decide in what order those topics should be discussed. For example, in a service project webinar, it might be a good idea to organize service project ideas by size (or cost). In a recruitment and retention webinar, you will likely discuss recruitment before retention (you need to recruit members before you retain them)!

After topics are decided, split up the topics amongst the presenters. Make it as even as possible, so that everyone has some time to speak. Also, make sure that **every presenter** has this script or schedule, and that **every presenter is scripting their own topic**. When presenters speak, they should already know the direction of their topic. Even a basic outline of tips will be useful.

In most cases, there will be a "main" presenter (kind of like the chair of the webinar), who will introduce presenters, welcome viewers to the webinar and take questions. Having someone "lead" the webinar is useful if people forget when they are supposed to speak.

Using "Tech"

Webinars are notoriously known for "technical difficulties." This includes, but is not limited to:
- Missing or laggy presentations
- Difficulty hearing one or many individuals
- People randomly disconnecting
- Fuzzy background noise
- Various functions not working

However, these issues are really easy to solve with some simple planning.

SCREEN SHARING ISSUES
First, there should be **one person designated to handle the webinar**. He or she should have a good sense of time and should also be responsible for timing each section. This person is, ultimately, responsible for showing the powerpoint (with that screen sharing option) and for flipping slides. This person **must** have a **consistent internet connection** and a computer that is **capable of presenting**.

To share a screen, most computers (mac and pc) will have to download a screen sharing plugin, so the individual should make sure that is **already installed on the computer**. Nothing is more frustrating than waiting for someone to download a program while the webinar is already in session. Not sure if you have that plugin? Try it out in a free webinar program (like anymeeting.com) before running the webinar.

VOLUME AND AUDIO ISSUES
All presenters should be using **headphones**. This prevents any noise from the speakers from going into the microphone. Using headphones is especially relevant if the presenter is using a microphone that is embedded into the computer (aka: most laptops).

Keep cellphones, tablets and other tech away from the microphone. This ensures as little "fuzzy noise" as possible. If you need your cellphone by your side, leave it on the opposite side of your laptop, away from your microphone.

Playtest the volume of your microphone. Most programs will allow you to hear your own microphone, so you know if it's too soft or two loud.

Practice before you present. We will go into this further, but this is simply the easiest way to avoid issues.

DISCONNECTING ISSUES
Ultimately, no internet connection is perfect. That is something you will just have to work around. The best thing you could do is make sure you are in a location with a consistent connection. Plugged internet connections tend to be more reliable than wireless ones, so if you have a very "sketchy" wireless connection, try to plug it in.

Speaking
One of the most frustrating parts of a webinar is not being able to understand the presenter. A powerpoint will be helpful, but a powerpoint should have **the very basics**. Presenters should be talking a **lot more** than the slide.

In fact, reading from the slide is one of the most disastrous things you can do during a webinar. Avoid it. Put as little information on your slides. Leave the details on your notecards (which you should be using when you are speaking).

Enunciation and volume tend to be two of the largest issues in speaking. Therefore:
- Always make sure your mic works
- Speak naturally. You do not need to put down every word before you say it. Notecards with bulletpoints and details will help you figure out what to say, but your words should come from the heart.
- When you are not speaking, mute your own mic so that other presenters could be heard clearly.

- Enunciate the end of your words. So, when you say, "student," actually make the "t" sound at the end. When you say, "Recruited," separate the vowels to "Re-crui-t-ed."
- When people get nervous, it's typical to speak faster (not slower). So make sure you are breathing between your words. If you know this is something you especially struggle with, write the word "BREATH" on your notecards. Give yourself space to pause.
- Smile. People can hear if you're excited to speak about a topic. Smiling before you speak and after you finish will give your voice an optimistic tone.

Remember, people who are listening in **want you to success**. They are not calling in with hopes that you will do poorly. If you're energetic, that will flow through your voice!

Practice Makes Perfect
Schedule your presenters so that everyone arrives at the webinar at least a half hour to hour early. That way, you can run through your script before the "actual webinar." You can test out any technical hiccups, make sure that all the functions work, and deal with any disconnection errors. It's much harder to "deal" with those technical difficulties after your viewers have arrived.

Optimally, presenters should practice once during the week before the webinar and once right before the webinar. That way, every presenter knows what the other presenter is talking about, and you guys are able bounce off of each other.

Critically Important Tips
1) One option to avoiding "issues," is to ask a non-presenter (like another CKI member) attend a test run of the webinar as a "viewer" to make sure everything is running smoothly on the viewer's end.
2) Publicity is crucial to the success of a webinar. Promote early and promote often!
3) Plan for questions ahead of time. Brainstorm different questions so that you guys are prepared.
4) Presenters who finish speaking should introduce the next presenter. That way, no presenter is caught off guard.
5) If you *are* experiencing technical difficulties, apologize and move on or try to engage the audience while those technical difficulties are occurring. For example, if one presenter accidentally disconnects, skip to the next topic or stall with some CKI fun facts.

Webinars may seem daunting originally, but they can be really fun! Webinars are a great way to engage an audience, despite distance. If you're excited about the webinar, you will make others excited about the webinar too! Best of luck, and I can't wait to attend your stunning webinars

Yours in Service, Leadership & Fellowship,

Josephine Lukito
International President