LESSONS FROM 1,000 WEBINARS:
AN INSIDE LOOK AT INFORMA'S WEBINAR ENGINE

TIM STARK, SENIOR DIRECTOR, GLOBAL DIGITAL EVENTS, INFORMA

THE BIG IDEA

Regardless of whether you produce 1 or 1,000 webinars, and regardless of the purpose of your webinars, a few simple ideas are critical to success:

- Deliver **compelling educational content** (not a sales pitch) to attract and engage your audience
- To execute flawlessly, have a clear, **well-defined workflow** and use a preparation checklist
- Use modern **tools**—like polls, surveys, and video—to engage attendees
- **Measure everything**—including operations, marketing, and lead generation—to be able to analyze what is working and how each webinar is performing

CONTEXT

Tim Stark, senior director of global digital events at Informa, is a webinar Jedi. He started producing webinars more than 17 years ago. His team produces about 1,000 webinars per year. He has learned a lot along the way. Tim joined Neal Amsden, ON24's vice president of demand generation, on an ON24 webinar (see replay) to share webinar best practices.
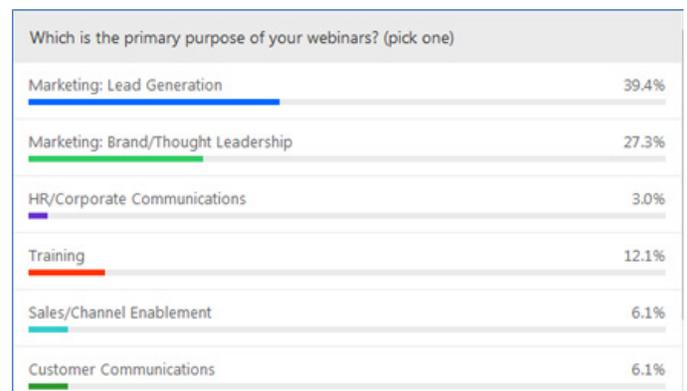
ABOUT INFORMA ENGAGE

Informa is one of the world's largest B2B knowledge and events businesses. Informa has hundreds of media brands, websites, and trade shows/conferences.

Informa Engage is the marketing services division within Informa. Informa Engage supports all of Informa's verticals and brands. Within Informa Engage, the digital events team—led by Tim, with several digital event coordinators—executes the company's digital events.

WHY WEBINARS?

Most of Informa Engage's webinars are sponsored webinars, with a primary purpose of lead generation.

Among participants in this ON24 webinar, a poll found that the main purposes of webinars are lead generation and thought leadership. Webinars are also used for training, sales/channel enablement, customer communication, and HR/corporate communications.

Which is the primary purpose of your webinars? (pick one)	
Marketing: Lead Generation	39.4%
Marketing: Brand/Thought Leadership	27.3%
HR/Corporate Communications	3.0%
Training	12.1%
Sales/Channel Enablement	6.1%
Customer Communications	6.1%

Source: Real-time survey of participants during ON24 webinar

After starting with just 13 webinars in 2001, Informa Engage conducted almost 600 webinars in 2015 and roughly 1,000 in 2018. This growth shows that Informa Engage's sponsored webinars are providing significant value to Informa's customers.

EXECUTING 1,000 WEBINARS

Having executed thousands of webinars—including up to 120 in one month—Tim shared keys to executing webinars at scale while maintaining quality. Six key success factors are:
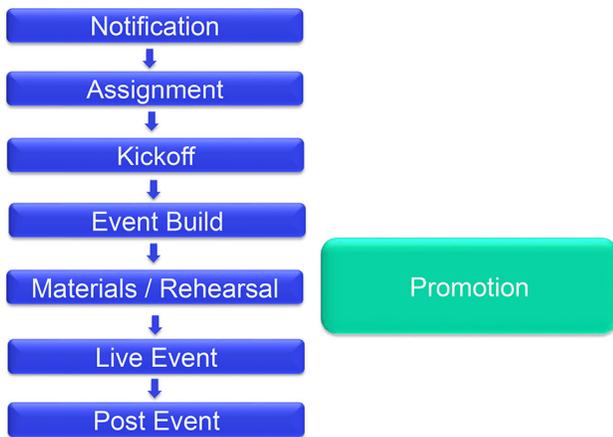
1. Dedicated Team Members

Informa Engage's digital event coordinators are assigned to specific markets. By focusing on specific markets they develop knowledge about the market and develop relationships with the people at each brand. This structure helps Informa Engage scale.

Click here for the replay of the ON24 webinar.
Webinar brief created by BullsEye Resources. www.bullseyeresources.com

2. An End-to-End Workflow

Informa Engage's workflow, shown below, works at any scale. When a webinar is scheduled, there is an automated notification process. The webinar is assigned to a coordinator who creates a detailed production schedule. This is followed by a kickoff call with the client to walk through the entire process, which is typically six to eight weeks.

Informa Engage then builds the event in ON24, collects materials from presenters, and works with a user marketing team to promote the webinar.

END TO END WORKFLOW

Notification
↓
Assignment
↓
Kickoff
↓
Event Build
↓
Materials / Rehearsal   Promotion
↓
Live Event
↓
Post Event

© 2018 ON24, Inc.

After the live event is planned, it is then produced. Following the event, Informa Engage gathers metrics for internal and external clients and cleans up the event for the on-demand phase. On-demand viewership has increased significantly for Informa Engage.

> "It doesn't matter if you do 13, 582, or 1,000 webinars. The processes are the same. These processes have allowed us to scale this business while maintaining the quality that our brands, and more importantly that our clients, expect."
>
> **Tim Stark, Informa Engage**

3. Engaging, Educational Content

In Tim Stark's experience, the foundation of a successful webinar is top-notch educational material. If the content is unique, relevant, and educational, it is possible to attract and engage the audience.

Education is different from information. Information can easily be found on a website. Education goes beyond information; it is thought leadership conveyed by experts. Educational content that works well includes customer case studies, exclusive research, and live discussions among experts.

> "Content is king. Your goal is to educate."
>
> **Tim Stark, Informa Engage**

Relevant content builds trust with the audience, as the audience knows that your content provides value. Avoid a bait and switch where you promise educational content and then provide a commercial. This erodes trust and makes it much harder to build an audience.

TIP: ENGAGE PARTICIPANTS DURING COUNTDOWN
Informa Engage shows a countdown slide each minute for the five minutes before a webinar starts. In addition to counting down the minutes, the countdown slides provide important housekeeping details.

LIVE in 5 minutes

4. Effective Promotion

The starting point for effective promotion is relevant educational content; without relevant content, even the best promotions will struggle to attract registrants. For Informa Engage, email is the biggest driver of registrations, along with registrations from company websites, third parties, and partnerships. To track which tactics are most effective, use reference codes for every piece of marketing.

Click here for the replay of the ON24 webinar.
Webinar brief created by BullsEye Resources. www.bullseyeresources.com

5. An Engaging Experience

Don't just lecture with a PowerPoint. Instead, engage your audience through stories. Tools that can help boost engagement (which are provided as part of the ON24 platform) include:

- **Polls** – a good poll can take a webinar to the next level. Polls are used by 70% of participants on this webinar.

- **Resources** – like special supplemental information.

- **Social/gamification** – Twitter is Informa Engage's highest performing social tool. A tip: have someone not presenting send tweets during the webinar.

- **Video** – used in a growing number of webinars, including this one (see Tim and Neal below).
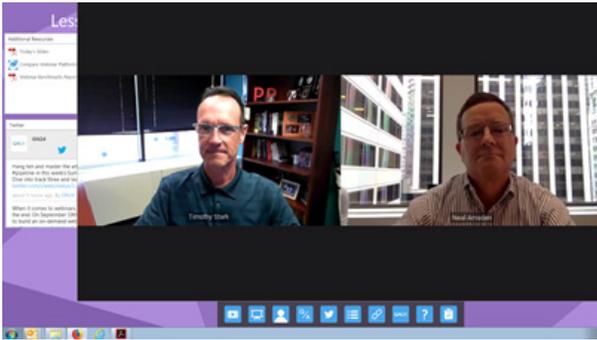
- **ON24's idea tool** – this tool is a way for participants to ask questions and engage in online discussions with other participants during a webinar, creating a sort of real-time community. Tim referred to this as like a Reddit for a webinar.

> "Having a video component of your webinar makes it more interesting."
>
> Neal Amsden, ON24

Stark, who has used the ON24 platform for 17 years, sees the tools provided as important in enabling his team to produce 1,000 webinars per year.

6. Analytics

Informa Engage analyzes the operational details associated with its webinars along with how well each webinar performs in generating leads for clients.

- **Operational details** that Informa Engage tracks include dates of kickoff calls and dress rehearsals, as well as when various promotional emails were sent, with which subject lines.

> "The more details that you can track . . . the better off it's going to be to improve your processes every quarter, every year."
>
> Tim Stark, Informa Engage

- **In analyzing lead generation**, Informa Engage speaks with each client to understand how they define a quality lead. This might include a registrant's title or the level of engagement when they attend a webinar. Informa Engage then focuses all efforts—including the content and promotion—on delivering the audience and leads that the client wants. Sophisticated analytical tools make this possible.

TIP: EXTEND THE WEBINAR
Informa Engage gives sponsors the ability to extend a webinar's reach through post-webinar content, such as this summary, that conveys a webinar's key takeaways.

LEARN MORE

- About ON24
- About Informa Engage
- About BullsEye Resources