

The Webinar Experiences Survey Results

By: LearningWare, Inc.

November 12th, 2009, LearningWare sent out a survey to a large database of (mostly) trainers--asking them basic questions about their experiences within webinars. Some of the results we got were expected, others were unexpected in scope, while others completely surprised us.

Let's take a look at some selected results:

In the last year have webinars replaced in-person meetings?

Answer	0%	100%	Response Ratio
Yes			37.7 %
No			34.4 %
Not really, we do the same number of each			26.1 %
No Response(s)			1.6 %
Totals			100%

It's not surprising that webinars have replaced in-person meetings. Not only is webinar technology growing--and it will naturally gain new adopters--but it's also an economical, efficient choice in an economy where budgets are tight and companies are becoming more globalized.

What is the best thing about webinars?

Answer	0%	100%	Response Ratio
Being in a meeting at your desk			34.4 %
Saving money on travel expenses			31.4 %
Utilizing collaboration tools such as whiteboards			4.9 %
Not having to pay attention			<1 %
Bringing people together from around the world			24.8 %
No Response(s)			3.6 %
Totals			100%

This seems to support the reasons for using more webinars: attendees can be at their desks, saving money on travel, while bringing people together from around the world.

Please rate the importance of the following issues associated with webinars.

1 = Major issue, 2 = Minor issue, 3 = Not an issue

Answer	1	2	3	Rating Score*
Not knowing what attendees are doing				2.0
Little to no interaction				1.7
Boring presentations				1.6
Technical problems (getting disconnected, audio issues, etc)				1.7
Decreased attendee content retention				2.0

*The Rating Score is the weighted average calculated by dividing the sum of all weighted ratings by the number of total responses.

Respondents ranked the following issues (each issue ranked individually) on a scale from 1-3. A "1" meant that the issue was a MAJOR issue--where a "3" was not an issue at all. All of the items were at least minor issues--with little to no interaction, technical problems and boring presentations ranking as the most major issues.

Stat Shots

- 80% of survey respondents use webinars for training.
- 20% use webinars for marketing and communications events.
- 33% attend webinars 2-4 times per month.
- 30% host webinars monthly or quarterly.
- 48% never *host* webinars.
- 34% say that the best thing about webinars is being in a meeting at their desk.
- 31% say that the best thing about webinars is saving money on travel.
- 38% say that webinars have replaced in-person meetings.

But not knowing what attendees are doing--a "minor" issue--might be more critical than previously thought:

During a webinar, have you ever... Please select all that apply.

Answer	0%	100%	Response Ratio
Checked your email			80.1 %
Gone to the bathroom			35.4 %
Played solitaire, minesweeper or freecell			7.0 %
Left your desk for any reason			51.3 %
Gone on Facebook, Twitter or any other social media			7.0 %
Muted the call to have other conversations			67.3 %
Worked on other projects			65.3 %

Here's where results got interesting. While fewer people played computer games or visited social networking sites than expected, a whopping 80% checked their email during a webinar (not unexpected, but unexpectedly high), 65% worked on other projects and 67% muted the call to have other conversations. But perhaps most shocking: 51% left their desks and 35% went to the bathroom! So participants in a webinar were not even *there*.

The next statistic, then, is not surprising at all:

Do you think webinar training is as effective as classroom training?

Answer	0%	100%	Response Ratio
Yes			41.3 %
No			55.6 %
No Response(s)			2.9 %
Totals			100%

55% believe that webinar training is not as effective as classroom training. And boy, did this question ever get people talking. We included a section for elaboration, and here is what some survey takers said:

It may be more efficient and the cost savings may result in additional training taking place over the span of a given year, but there is something lost in the interaction between facilitator and participant. Gauging participant interest and retention, along with maintaining their attention, is extremely difficult.

If used the right way. Interaction and design are key. Without interaction, you lose participants. Designing a webinar so participants stay engaged is challenging, but necessary.

So what could make webinars better?

What could make webinars better? Please select all that apply.

Answer	0%	100%	Response Ratio
More interaction			82.4 %
Better presentations			59.3 %
More time for collaboration or breakout sessions			33.4 %
Engaging competition among teams			34.4 %
Not doing webinars anymore			2.4 %
Other			5.8 %

Are webinars as effective as in-person training?

"I think it can be, if the moderator is engaging enough and if the content is appropriately targeted."

"No, it's too tempting to multi-task and not pay attention."

"Nothing is better than face to face."

"In some cases. I do not believe it should replace classroom training completely, but rather augment it."

"You can engage audience participation better in a classroom training environment."

"The audience is not as engaged."

"It can be but depends on the interaction level and ability of the facilitator."

"I feel that done correctly it can be as effective as classroom training, but it is easier to lose your audience if it is just so-so."

"It can be if used with interactive tools that force others to pay attention and respond."

With a whopping 82% of people responding that more interaction would make a webinar better--the call to action is clear. But are people currently using the sparse interaction tools available to them?

During a webinar, how often do you use or participate in polling or collaboration tools (i.e. whiteboards or breakout sessions) in webinars?

Answer	0%	100%	Response Ratio
In every webinar			11.9 %
In some, but not all webinars			38.4 %
We have, but only once or twice			18.5 %
Never			28.4 %
No Response(s)			2.6 %
Totals			100%

Only 11% are using interactive tools in every webinar--with a whopping near-30% NEVER using interactive tools.

Summary

While we suspected that accountability and attention were lacking in webinars, we were surprised at the extent that our suspicions were correct. It's clear that webinars are here to stay--as companies continue to globalize and do more on a smaller budget. It's also clear that action needs to be taken to keep webinars engaging and make them as effective as a face-to-face meeting (all while people are sitting in front of one of the biggest sources of distraction: their computers).

For full survey results, visit www.learningware.com/WebinarSurveyResults.html.

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