



Best Practices for Online Marketing Events with WebEx Event Center™

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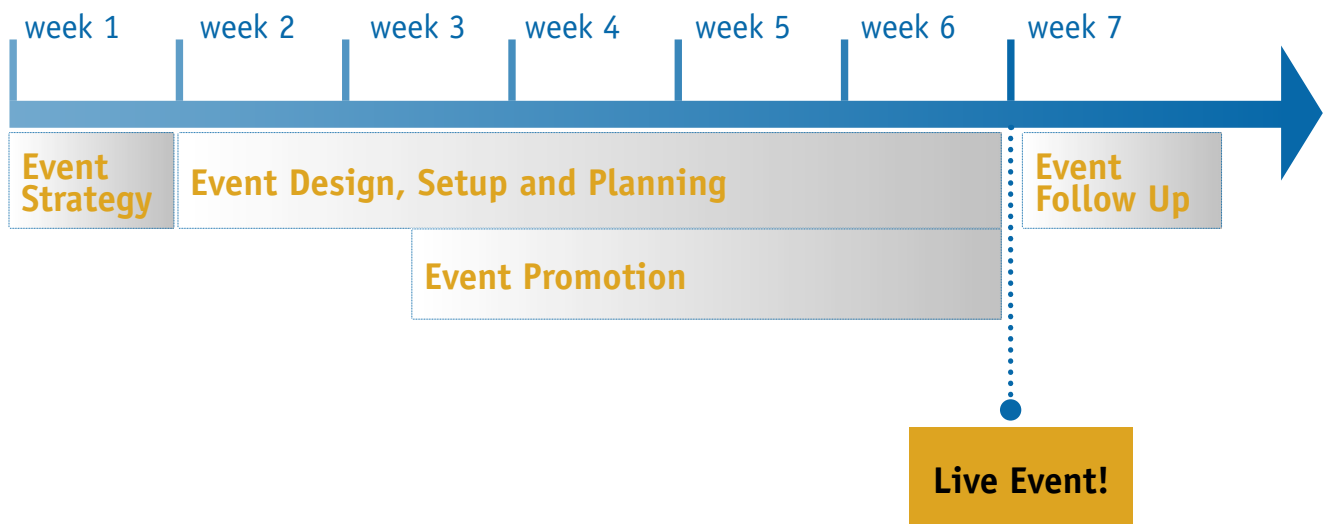
Best Practices for Online Marketing Events with WebEx Event Center™

This guide is intended to offer an outline for conducting online marketing events, with a menu of optional tips and best practices as a reference.

The steps to planning your Webex Event Center™ event require thoughtful preparation and enthusiastic execution. The goal will be to drive a dynamic marketing campaign resulting in significant attendance, an aggressive cost per lead and, ultimately, new found awareness and business opportunities created for your company.

A typical first-event timeline follows. As you conduct additional events, you will be able to reuse your forms, make faster decisions and complete setup more quickly.

In general terms, the course of action should include:



(See also: [Tips For When You're In A Hurry](#))



Event Strategy

Determine the target audience, desired response from attendees, and goal number of attendees to reach

Decide the interesting and relevant topic and speaker(s) that attract enrollment and draw attendees towards the desired response

Design event promotion campaign to reach ideal target audience

Determine amount of time necessary to define, promote, design and prepare event (6 weeks is a good start). [Select event date.](#)

Calculate required budget for promotion, content, web seminar & telephony costs, inducements and follow up

Optional: Calculate estimated Return On Investment to justify managing budget level up or down

- Optional: Revise spending plan to match revised budget
- Commit to event and proceed to next stage.

[See Additional Event Strategy Details](#)

Event Design, Setup & Planning

- Designate an event Host to emcee the event and a Producer to manage the technical aspects of the event. This can be the same individual.
- Establish elements for your Event Center site to include graphics, text and enrollment criteria
- Select event time (between 10:00 AM and 1:00PM Pacific generally gets the best national attendance)
- Write compelling event title and description
- Design enrollment questions (customize to include qualifying criteria)
- Option: Assign numeric weightings to each possible answer for enrollment qualifying questions to allow automatic scoring and ranking of leads
- Option: Consider creating a program of related events to promote at once (additional perceived value, mindshare and cost savings)
- Define user/attendee experience: drop-off webpage to leave attendees at after event and other touch points.
- Select and orient Host, Speaker(s), and any support Panelists
- Approve and confirm enrollees if applicable
- Develop and hone the content for the presentation itself [See How To Make Your Event Engaging](#)



- Review reports leading up to the session to be prepared for volume of attendees (remember, usually 50% of enrollees attend)
- Review event details again to ensure all preparations have been completed
- Rehearse for the event itself and practice the sequence of steps (typically 24 hours before event is best)
- Schedule and draft automated Thank-you-for-attending, and Sorry-you-couldn't-make-it e-mails
- Optional: Schedule calling campaign by sales force for 1-3 days after the event to qualified attendees and enrollees
- Optional: Create PDF version of final presentation for making available to attendees
- Assemble event-specific talk tracks and sales collaterals to assist sales reps converting attendees to purchasers
- Optional: Schedule marketing offer e-mail one week after event
- Plan how event attendee data will be parsed and quickly distributed to appropriate Salesperson (CRM –integration, batch import, manual process, etc.)

[See Additional Event Design & Setup Details](#)

Event Promotion

- Design event promotion campaign to reach ideal target audience
- Promotion usually begins 3-4 weeks prior to event
- Select combination of e-mail, home-page placements, web ads, banner ads, newsletters, direct mail, Sales invitations, PR, ad-tie-ins, and viral marketing you will use to promote event
- Specify lead-source tracking ID's to measure which sources are most effective and efficient
- Execute the campaign and drive enrollment traffic
- Send reminders (1 week and 1 hour in advance) to your enrollees
- Optional: Call enrollees the day before to orally remind them of event

[See Additional Event Promotion Details](#)



How To Make Your Event Engaging

- Design your theme so attendees' logical next step is your call to action
- Keep slide delivery to under 35 minutes to retain audience and allow time for Q&A
- Create opening marketing/theme slides to prep and engage audience before presentation begins
- Begin with clear outline of what they will gain from attending
- Conduct polls early and every 10 minutes or so to engage and retain audience
- Use slide transitions, animations and video clips to keep audience stimulated
- Offer statistics, illustrations, real-world examples and quotes to add substance
- Use more than one speaker if possible (a male and a female subconsciously attract extra attention)

[See Additional How To Make Your Event Engaging Details](#)

Day of — Holding the Web Seminar

- Review event details and follow-up campaign readiness
- Open event 30 minutes early to streamline attendees' join process
- Control and minimize last-minute changes to presentations
- Prepare Record and Playback File, polls and seed questions
- Have a great event!
- Use Annotation Tools to “draw” attention
- Have attendees submit text questions via Q&A which you'll selectively answer out loud
- Acknowledge questions submitted by attendees by immediately responding, even if with a deferral
- Save Q&A
- Save Polling answers for marketing data

[See Additional During The Event Details](#)



Post Event Follow up

- Optional: Convert Q&A into edited FAQ
- Send automatic event follow up e-mails (sorry-we-missed-you to non-attendees and thanks-for-attending to attendees)
- Export your customized event report data to disburse to your sales force, prioritizing leads with highest scores.
- Optional: Edit your event recording to remove “live” foibles and remove extraneous information that is not pertinent to on-demand format
- Post the event recording file with its own enrollment questions to gather more leads going forward
- Draw on your post event reports to continue to communicate, and convert, attendees to customers.
- Measure which lead sources yielded highest enrollment, attendance, and requests for 1:1 consultation or sales.
- Hold more events, further amortizing startup costs, and adding experience-based refinements for even better ROI

[See Additional Event Follow up Details](#)

Always consider the goals and objectives of the event as you plot, plan and execute. Let's take a closer look:





Event Strategy

Strategy begins with determining the highest-level goal. Who do you want to reach? What response do you want from them at the end of the event? How many such responses are you seeking? Do you have a specific budget number to work with, or must you request your budget once you've assessed your needs and likely ROI? What topic is relevant and interesting to your target audience?

Select a date.

There are several important factors. Avoid holidays, and the days immediately preceding them. Mondays and Fridays average lower attendance than Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Avoid times your target audience is generally unavailable (e.g., end of month for Finance, August for education professionals, etc.). Events held in the last two weeks of your quarter typically receive less Sales support, because their focus then is usually closing business rather than prospecting. Events held early in the quarter have a better chance to raise sales in that quarter.

Your event promotion campaign needs to take into account the methods of promotion you will use. Banner ads, placements on your corporate home page, mentions in newsletters, press releases, and partner co-marketing can all be very cost-effective means of driving attendance. Their response rates are hard to calculate, unless you use lead source tracking ID's.

How many invitations should you send?

E-mail campaigns are frequently used to promote web seminars. There are some common assumptions about response rates, enrollment rates, attendance rates and lead ratios you'll consider when deciding how many invitations to send to reach a certain audience size goal

- Your response rate will vary depending on a variety of factors including the:
- Richness of your purchased or owned e-mail list
- Use of unsolicited lists versus known leads
- Resonance of your event title and description to your target audience
- Quality of your invitation copy
- Ability of your invitation to get past spam filters



- Appeal of your brand and any guest speakers
- Amount of advanced notice you provide your invitees
- Time and day of the week your event is scheduled at
- Ease of filling out your enrollment form

In general you get a better response rate from lists of people who already know your organization than from “cold” lists you buy or rent from 3rd parties. The following numbers assume a “cold” list.

If you make reasonable efforts to account for the above, on average you can assume you need to send 100 invitations for each enrollee. Typically 40-60% of enrollees will attend. Typically 5-15% of attendees will qualify as “A” (likely to buy soon) leads. A similar fraction will also qualify as “B” (interested but with a less urgent need) leads. A lesser percentage of those who enroll but do not attend will likely qualify as “A” and “B” leads, as well. Your sales conversion rate is highly dependent on your product offering, marketplace and sales team. That said, 15% is a common rate. A gross assumption suggests you’ll close 1-5 sales per 10,000 e-mail invitations. There are many steps you can take to optimize these ratios for your unique situation. Your results may vary.

You are also likely to gain value from attendance by prospects that are already in the sales pipeline. Leads who do not buy can be further cultivated in later marketing programs. There may be mindshare benefits for all who receive your invitations, or attend. There may be viral marketing and referral benefits as well.

If you need to estimate the cost and likely ROI for your event, WebEx offers a calculator and your account rep will be happy to consult with you on ways to enhance your ROI. Many of the techniques in this guide are designed to increase your total effect (gain) and efficiently manage your expenses (costs), thus improving your ROI.

Now you can make tactical decisions about how to achieve those results.

Event Design and Setup

First it is important to think about how you want to structure your enrollment page. What information is essential for you to gather prior to the event (name, address, e-mail, etc.) and what data is a “nice to have” but not as necessary-- in other words, optional. As your enrollment page is established, consider the objective of the event and what you’re looking to gather. Several of your qualifying questions will be very important to determining the quality of each lead. You have the option to assign a score to each possible enrollment answer at the time you create your enrollment page. These scores can then be automatically tallied and ranked in reports to help you quickly route the hottest leads to your Sales team. With the help of your producer, this page will be created.

Furthermore, think about how you want the description page to read and how you will describe the Webinar. From a marketing perspective, it is important that the reader is intrigued with the content and needs to be soft sold into wanting to attend. Make sure to select either a logo or a featured picture of the presenter to post in concert with the written text. Consider adding eye-catching fonts and active HTML links within the body of the description itself. You will also want to think about a URL dump,



launched post enrollment, which reinforces your messaging and provides further brand impressions.

You will be able to setup the enrollment to allow for either instant approval or a “pre-approval” review. WebEx Event Center lets you establish criteria for automatic approval (e.g., plan to buy = “In the next 30 days”) or automatic rejection (e.g., e-mail address contains “competitor.com”). This can reduce your labor and turn around time on approvals. Based on your preference, the reporting functions built within Event Center will allow you to manage the process and ensure that prospects and attendees are properly educated on how to engage.

During this time, too, you should be assembling, and preparing, your presentation. WebEx will offer some best of breed suggestions as the goal will be to make a dynamic and engaging presentation. Consider how polling and other related features will blend into the flow of the meeting. Also, determine the protocol for the Webinar as it pertains to Q & A-- will questions be interspersed or all at the end (at the end is easier). Scripting the presentation will ensure a tight Webinar that keeps the attention of the audience.

Leading up to the event, rehearsals will be instrumental as well. With that said, there will be a formal rehearsal with your producer prior to the actual “show-date.” We will also position an effective “reminder” campaign as a means to keep the event fresh in the attendee’s mind and drive attendance.

Some of the WebEx Event Center Pre-Event tools include:

- You can easily design and post the event description and information to get visitors to your web site excited.
- Event Center includes complete event enrollment with host defined, required and non-required fields. You may customize the questions asked to attendees. You may assign weighted numeric values to specific answers to enable automatic lead scoring of qualified leads.
- Enrollment reports can be generated and you, as the host, have the option to "approve" or "reject" those that enroll or allow for blanket approval to events.
- Host controlled automated e-mails provide connection information and reminders to attendees that can be fully customized.
- Viral marketing tools have been established to encourage attendees to invite other interested friends to the event.
- Following complete enrollment, prospects are brought to your designated URL "landing page" to reinforce the marketing message.

How To Make Your Event Engaging

You will have many creative choices to make in writing your seminar. As you consider them, keep in mind some of the practical craft techniques that seem to consistently help engage the audience and deliver them to a desired state at the end of the presentation.

Design your theme as a question, for which the logical answer is your call to action. The call to action is the next step you want them to take, to walk down the path towards making a purchase. You are alerting your audience to a problem or opportunity. If you inspire them to want to act on this information,



what is the obvious action you would take if you were them? What concrete steps should they take? Is your call to action one of the first steps they will want to take? How can you design a call to action and an interesting seminar that compliment each other in this way?

Sample calls to action include:

- Request a one-to-one consultation with one of our experts today!
- Contact an account rep to see how others in your industry have succeeded with _____!
- Use our online cost-savings calculator to see how much you can save!
- Order by the end of the month and save 30%!
- Call today for a free trial/demo/sample!

It is helpful to outline at the beginning the valuable, interesting and compelling benefits to the audience of sitting through the entire seminar. Include some tempting nuggets, and some strong examples of the valuable information they will gain near the outset to establish that your seminar is worthwhile.

Conduct polls early and intermittently. A popular technique is to poll the audience after the 2nd or 3rd slide to find out what their area of greatest interest is. This has many benefits. It hints at the multiple values of the presentation. It lets audience members see what each other are interested in. Most importantly, it prompts them to interact and lets you assure them that you will tailor your comments to their preferences. This can be a very powerful way to engage them through an online medium. Additional polls throughout continue to reaffirm their engagement, and add value by making the live audience part of the show.

Use slide transitions and animations to keep the audience stimulated. It is important to take advantage of rich multimedia functions to visually stimulate the audience, since they do not have a speaker's physical presence or stage to visually engage them. It is helpful to put a picture of the presenter on the intro slide, and perhaps even on a top corner of each slide to let the audience associate a face with the voice.

Offer statistics, illustrations, real-world examples and quotes to add substance. The more credibly and concretely you can make your case, the fewer audience members will be left sitting on the fence. Real-world examples are particularly valuable for helping audience members absorb and assimilate abstract concepts. Examples often help the audience relate to the content as well. Illustrating data graphically, with a very clean minimalist approach tends to help audiences comprehend it quickly and comfortably.

In general, a 30-35 minute presentation length is optimum for marketing seminars. If the seminar is too short, attendees may not feel they've received a substantial value. If the presentation is too long, you may not retain as much of the audience through to your call to action at the end. Or, the audience may be so saturated and fatigued that they feel less vigorous about responding to your call to action. It is generally ideal to leave at least 10 minutes reserved for Q&A after the presentation and initial statement of the call to action.



Planning Post-Event Follow Up

If there is any single place event managers tend to miss out on the opportunity to maximize their event's effectiveness or ROI, it is in proactively planning and executing post-event follow up. Post-event follow up is where attendance is converted into a desired action, typically a purchase.

Common follow up activities include:

Sending a "Thank you" e-mail the next day. This may include an edited copy of the Q&A as an added value to attendees. It may include a URL to the event recording, for those who wish to review. It may include a survey on attendee satisfaction with the event and potential interest in receiving a 1:1 consultation. It may include a call to action. It may include a link to a landing page that offers them a promotional incentive to purchase, or evaluate. Many of these elements can be drafted and staged in advance, to facilitate faster post-event response, while the event experience is fresh in attendees' minds.

You may opt to have a calling campaign scheduled for 1-7 days following the event. You will need to plan for how to export the event data from Event Center into a standard format, which you can then import into a CRM system, or manually sort and distribute leads. This follow up will be more successful if you have created talk-tracks and appropriate qualifying questions for your sales team to use, extending on the event content.

A week later, you may want to send a second follow up e-mail to attendees, touting a special promotion or offer for those who attended your event.

Event Promotion

Event promotion is crucial to your overall success. You will have a variety of tools to choose from, and constraints to counterbalance. Your limiting factor may be a small target population, in which case you may opt to use multiple techniques focusing on that target to get the highest possible yield. Or, your limiting factor may be budget, in which case you may opt to use only the lowest cost promotion techniques targeting the easiest to reach prospects. Whatever your parameters, the following tips are intended to help you manage and achieve your goals.

Events frequently use some combination of the following promotional vehicles:

- Home page placements
- E-mail invitations
- Newsletters
- Banner ads
- Direct mail
- Personal sales rep invitations
- Public relations
- Ad-tie-ins
- Viral marketing



There are some techniques that may help you leverage other programs' budgets synergistically. If you have an ad campaign under way, request a mention, a bullet, an extra insert, or anything else that provides exposure to your event at little or no incremental cost. If you are conducting PR activities, add this event to your list of "news" to tout. If you are co-presenting with a partner or industry expert, consider what promotional activities and mailing lists they can contribute. Are there public interest groups, online forums, or professional associations that might be amenable to publishing an announcement about the "training" or "discussion" on a topic their membership finds interesting?

If you are sending invitations via rented or purchased unsolicited lists, you should be aware of several current challenges. List brokers are adding restrictions (to cope with new liability laws), which may affect your terms and conditions. Spam filters increasingly block e-mails with too much HTML, too much text, and key words such as, "Free, Promotion, Special Offer, Sale, ..." and such. You should test your invitation through several spam filters to see that they generally get through. On the bright side, some lists are coming down in cost, and may offer more value.

Whether you are working with a purchased e-mail list that covers your demographic requirements, or from a database of registered users, it is important to script an engaging e-mail, possibly coupled with HTML graphics, for a pre-event invitation. Within the content of the e-mail should be an easy mechanism for the reader to enroll in the Web seminar, preferably an active "Register" link within the body that is the call to action. The landing page can be setup to default to your enrollment page within WebEx.

Of course, whenever possible, make sure that the event is part of your marketing message as you prepare for the event. For example, add an active link to the home page of your web site that brings the viewer directly to the descriptive/enrollment page. Equally, make sure that internally you are promoting the event on your homepage and driving traffic to the enrollment page. Letters, direct mail, brochures and other related Marcom pieces should all make note of the event-- if even by a sticker affixed to the materials being sent out. Needless to say, your respective sales force should be promoting the session and making sure that as many people enroll, and come, to the event. The net/net, the more you can do the better.

Whichever promotional vehicles you use, each should include a unique tracking ID as part of its HTML link to the event enrollment page. This will allow you to analyze which promotional vehicles are getting the greatest response. You may opt to "double down" on the winners even before the event to boost attendance above your goal. As you continue to market to this target audience over time, this information can help you get more leads, more efficiently.

Reminders for registrants are an important part of delivering the largest audience to your web seminar. Statistically, reminders e-mailed 24 hours and 1 hour in advance of the event seem to have the greatest benefit. For some event topics and audiences, it may make financial sense for you to leave telephone reminders a day or two in advance of the event. Yes, this includes extra cost and time. The benefit is generally that it adds an extra psychological dimension, which seems to make a noticeable increase in attendance rates. If you're short on cycles, there are some firms to whom you can outsource this task.



During the Event

During the event, day-of, your producer, is on hand to assist. With live-operator hosted telephony services, your customers will be greeted and will receive information on the timing and protocol for the session. From there, you will deliver your presentation. A recording will be made.

Some of the WebEx in-event tools include:

- The ability to share PowerPoint, applications, web pages, streaming media, desktops and so forth.
- Event Center is highly scalable. Some rich media features may reduce the maximum advisable audience size. Consult with your account representative to determine the configuration of features and scalability that is right for your event.
- Enhanced polling and Q & A.
- Use Annotation Tools
- URL pushing is a featured option.
- Live-Operator Assisted "Concierge Style" Teleconferencing services is available.
- Technical and Event Support available via WebEx with a dedicated Support line just for Event Center customers.
- Integrated Record and Playback tools-- record the entire event click for click for archiving and more lead generation!
- Upon completion of the event, a URL "landing page" can be established where clients are dropped.

Post-Event Follow Up

Following the event, you should have a few key objectives; disseminating leads, spurring Sales team follow up, leveraging the event recording, and executing follow-up communications to your enrollment list.

First and foremost, is using the information and data derived to direct your Sales team to follow up with the most-primed opportunities. You will want to sort the information as quickly as possible and deliver it to your Sales team. Typically this means grading the leads and sorting them by territory or whatever other criteria your organization uses to divide leads. Hopefully, at the time you created your enrollment form, you assigned numeric values to favorable answers to qualifying questions, so that now you can automatically score and rank attendees by lead quality. If you have tested how you will export the event data from Event Center, and import it into your CRM system, it should be a quick and straightforward process to distribute the qualified leads to your ready and waiting sales force. If you are sorting and distributing leads manually, you should have the appropriate Sales and/or Marketing resources scheduled to act as soon as the event is concluded.



Generally, several reinforcing communications to your Sales team will help them understand their role and opportunity in the event follow up process. By providing a talk track, synopsis of the event, and tips for hooking this type of buyer, you improve the chances they will focus effectively on these leads when they are still hot. You may want to speak to them as a whole, speak personally with their managers, book time on their schedules for calling these particular leads, arrange spiffs for the first or most successful follow up, send them an explanation e-mail, and a reminder after the event.

In addition, you want to effectively position and promote access to the recorded file of the session via e-mails and other avenues. (Remember, leads generated from this mechanism are extremely valuable and help to expand the exposure of the event.) You also have the discretion to edit the recording prior to posting.

A targeted campaign of “thank you’s” and “sorry we missed you” e-mails will be executed to those that attended and those that enrolled, but missed the event-- respectively. With ongoing reporting tools monitoring those that access the record and playback files, you can continue to derive leads. Moreover, by effectively using the automated e-mail functions, communication with those that enrolled and those that enrolled and attended is easy.

A week after the event, you may opt to send a second, more aggressive offer to spur activity after attendees have had time to digest your content. It is another casting of the net to reach attendees. This is typically done via your existing Marketing automation system.

You have some additional options for getting more value from your online event. You may opt to repeat the event. If your event was successful, why not promote it to new target lists? You will be able to reuse or repurpose most of the work you have done, thus amortizing your investment and improving your ROI. If your initial event did not generate the audience numbers you’d hoped for, you can make experience-based adjustments, implement more “best practices,” and recoup your investment on the second performance. If you promote your event recording via various vehicles, you can gain additional value for nominal cost.

Your event can provide additional value in even more ways. You can save the event creation details for repurposing later. This will give you a starting template of your best practices and customized look and feel, to more quickly set up your next event. Event Center’s “Copy From” feature further leverages your investment in conducting high-powered online marketing events.

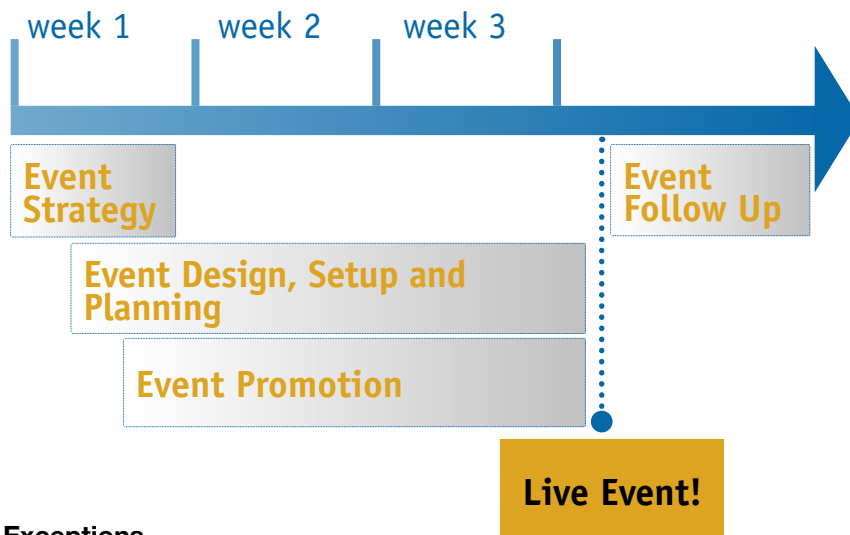
Some of the WebEx post event tools include:

- Create complete customized event reports via a wizard with the click of a mouse — enrollment, attendance, etc.
- WebEx Event and Account Managers available to review and discuss event.
- Ability to administer and post your recorded files, capture viewers’ lead data, and continue the “life” of the Webinar!
- WebEx Record and Playback editor so you can perfect your presentation.
- Enrollment questions for your recorded event, so you can continue gathering leads at virtually no cost.
- Compare yields from various lead source tracking ID’s to improve future promotional yields.



Appendix: Tips For When You're In A Hurry

Depending on your circumstances, you may need to conduct an event on less than the 6 weeks notice envisioned in the outline on page one of this guide. Following is a series of short cuts and exceptions to the typical event time line. In general, the more experienced you are at conducting online marketing events, the faster you can determine your strategy, setup your event, and initiate promotion.



Exceptions

- If you are repeating an event you have satisfactorily conducted before, you can essentially jump to designing your promotion and initiating your promotional campaign. This can reduce lead-time to about 3 weeks.
- If you are promoting an event to a “friendly” audience (e.g., customers, partners, association members who know you, etc.) you may get by on less than 3 weeks promotion time. Bear in mind though, most people book their calendar 1+ weeks ahead, so the less lead-time you give, the less likely it is that they are available.
- If you are repurposing the setup details of a previous event, you can compress the design & setup phase.
- If you are planning a series of related events as a single program, they can share a single strategy phase, design & setup phase, and event promotion phase. The events themselves can be days or even hours apart.

Short Lead-Time Tips:

- Favor promotional vehicles where you have control over how soon your message is delivered, to minimize lag between event creation and event promotion.
- Be realistic about your resources. If you don't have the cycles to optimize every part of the event process, focus on your areas of greatest strength and where you get the highest yield of attendees.



- Divide and conquer. If you can recruit creative or logistical talent from any group in your organization that stands to gain from a successful event, you may be able to race through the strategy and setup phases more quickly.
- Bring in a hired gun. WebEx Production Services may be able to help you achieve your goals on a short lead-time and ensure a smooth experience for your speakers and attendees.



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