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28 Web Conference Training Tips

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Companies and organizations today use web conferencing in many aspects of their organizations—to conduct meetings, collaborate on projects, demonstrate products and services, and more. Learning to use web conferencing technology is pretty easy, but there is a lot more to training via web conference than just putting on a headset, dialing up an audio-conferencing bridge, and logging onto the application.

This article offers some helpful tips specifically targeted to web conference training.

1. Even though you are using web conferencing to deliver training, the training content *itself* must still be planned and crafted just as carefully as if it were for a traditional classroom session or e-Learning course.

2. When developing PowerPoint slides to use in web conference training follow these guidelines:

   → Simplify content.

   → Use a large, bold, simple font like Arial.

   → Have no more than 6 to 8 lines of text per page (fewer are better).

   → Make no more than 4 to 5 training points per page (fewer are better).

   → Use plain backgrounds that contrast well with the text without clashing.

   → If possible, avoid complex animations (i.e. no spinning text, etc.).

3. Establish one person as the point of contact, (POC) for communicating with their group of attendees. Provide all information to this one person and let them communicate it to their own people.

4. Provide an outline of objectives for attendees prior to the conference.

5. Test <u>all aspects</u> of your presentation ahead of time. (Enlist the help of an online facilitator or a student for these tests.):

   → Check your phone lines and headset, and replace weak batteries with full new sets.

   → Though most web conference technologies automatically run a short program to install and test your machine, open your *own* test conference and run your presentation. Confirm that your machine won't freeze up because of low PC memory or connection speed.

   → Check any online exercises, tests, or polling questions you have planned for the session.

   → Run through the presentation twice, to both check its timing and leave ample time for questions and answers.

6. If student answers are being stored in a database or a learning management system (LMS), determine how they will be scored, saved, and accessed later.

7. Are you using an electronic whiteboard? Check to see how its images will be stored. Will your students need them later? How can they access this material? Is it something you can post in a reference area on your training LMS?

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8. If you are going to demonstrate with examples, try to keep them relevant to the audience. It's easier for people to learn when material is presented through examples that make sense to them.

9. Check how much background noise your system produces. Stage the actual conference in a quiet place, where you can control any heating or air conditioning noise. Be careful about rustling papers. And never eat anything or chew gum during the conference.

10. Will a host introduce you or will you have a guest presenter during the web conference? If so, you'll need to run through all of things discussed in item **5** with the other participant.

11. Do you or your guest tend to run long? If so, you may want to use cue cards. Or use a second computer (or laptop) as a time clock, to signal when someone is running long.

12. Limit each session to 60 – 90 minutes. Longer sessions are not productive.

13. Limit your audience. When possible, keep the number of people attending small. (No more than six people are best.)

14. You might want to ask your technical people to set up a *dual monitor configuration on your PC* (or laptops) for you, so that your presentation appears on one display (as others are seeing it), while your delivery screens and notes appear on the other.

15. If appropriate, check time zones before scheduling the web conference. You'd be *amazed* how often even experienced trainers forget to do this…and end up opening a conference at the wrong time.

16. Related to item **15**, check in advance to make sure that dates and times appear correctly in all meeting listings and notification messages. Confirm that the dates and times you define are communicated consistently to all participants.

17. Check ahead of time that all online links through which students can join the web conference will work… whether they are delivered to learners in an LMS message, via email, or on a web page.

18. If any learners are located in *other* organizations, try a test connect into their facilities *well* before the actual conference. Though rare, their IT departments *may* need to change some firewall settings before you'll be able to communicate in.

19. Have more than one Web Conference option ready to use. Then, if some participants can't connect, you can create a new conference on the spot, with different conference tools.

20. Generally, you do not want people to join a web conference until it is actually open for business. Depending on the system you use, you may be able to enforce this with a student display that says: *"Cannot join until…"*

21. Before starting, ask your POC if everyone is present and if it's OK to begin.

22. During the actual conference, check in periodically by asking questions of the attendees. For example: "Does that make sense. Are there any questions so far? Can you think if an example where you might use this _____." This helps to ensure the attendees are attentive, and to see if they have any questions. Silence is a sign that the information is not being understood.

23. Try to stay "on course" but allow for flexibility. Often questions asked will take you to another topic area and may require more explanation than allowed in the allotted time. Try to answer all questions and offer to follow up with more information offline, or in another conference, when time is limited.

24. When you get close to the end, if you feel like you might run over or need a few extra minutes to finish up, stop and check with all participants. Be considerate of others' schedules.

25. Provide training exercises on the topics discussed.

26. Plan ahead for how you will close the session. Thank everyone for their time and attention, leave time for any closing comments or information, discuss next steps (if any), and review how you can be contacted (if needed).

27. Follow up with your learners after their web-conference training. This could be by email or perhaps even through a *test* to gauge their understanding of the material.

28. Keep a log of all training and notes. It can help improve your future training.

About The Author

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About SyberWorks

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