



The Presenter's Guide to Web-casting

Useful hints and tips about preparing to present a web-cast presentation

It has become more and more common for conference presentations to be web-cast. This increase in popularity is due to a number of factors. For example:

- The demands on people's time, or the reality of financial constraints, can result in many people being unable to attend conferences, especially if there's a need to travel any distance.
- Most organisations are fully aware of the environmental issues involved when their staff have to travel distances, especially by car.
- Social factors, such as young families or caring considerations, can often influence people's decision to attend a conference or seminar.

With these in mind, web-casting is a growing option for those who can't attend an event but who are interested in the topics being covered. However, web-casting your presentation can be quite different from presenting to your live conference audience.

So, if your conference presentation is likely to be web-cast (and the likelihood is increasing) it might be helpful to understand what factors you should consider.

Most of the hints and tips contained in this bulletin are really just common sense and, dare I say it, plain good manners.

Consider the Remote Viewer as Part of the Live Audience

It's very easy when you are in full flow to forget that you have people joining in via your web-cast. So, when you're developing your presentation cues and reminders, make a note about acknowledging your remote viewers, both at the beginning of your presentation and frequently during it. It is equally important to build a rapport with your external audience as it is with the live audience in the auditorium.

A Different Perspective

When your presentation is being viewed by a remote viewer their perspective is different from that of a live audience.

On the following page is a typical layout of what a viewer would see during a live or archived web-cast.



You'll notice from this graphic that the screen is divided up into different sections and that the video of the presenter appears at the top left of the screen.

To the presenter's left is the area showing the presenter's PowerPoint slides. It is therefore important for continuity and clarity that you always have your PowerPoint screen to your left when delivering your presentation to your live audience. This allows the remote viewer to follow your eyes or hands when you refer directly to the PowerPoint information. There's nothing more distracting than a presenter referring to something to their right when you are seeing it positioned to their left on the web-cast screen.

A word about PowerPoint slides.

We've all suffered "death by PowerPoint" at some time or another. Why? Because too many PowerPoint users forget that their audience can read and they make the classic error of displaying long pieces of text on all but a few of their slides. Don't do it.

The other common error in presentation is to read out what is up on the screen for all to see. Don't do this either.

If you do decide to make these types of errors, we can just about guarantee that your audiences (live and web-cast) will lose interest. And that means your presentation will lose impact and the messages you've prepared may be lost.

Wherever possible, try to use graphics instead of text – but avoid the mistake of using Clip Art – if only because everyone else has already used it over the past 20 years and audiences have already seen all the clip art they can be expected to cope with in a life time. It's also very unoriginal.

Probably the best book on creating PowerPoint presentations is Nick Oulton's *Killer Presentations*. If you follow his basic rules you'll be able to create truly memorable presentations to engage your audience and significantly enhance your presentation.

Incidentally, from a technical point of view, it's always best to use a font size that's no smaller than 12 points (bigger if you can) and try not to make the slide too busy.

Preparation

If your conference organiser asks you for your PowerPoint slides 48 hours before the event they are doing this for a very good reason. It's because they need to get your presentation over to the web-cast company so they can upload it to their server and, if necessary, make any changes to the format if it's not compatible with the web-cast.

If the organisers can't access your slides until the morning of the conference, or you decide to make last minute changes, you create huge problems for the web-caster, the possibility of additional charges to the organisers and the potential for disaster when the cameras roll and 5000 people tune in to see your performance.

Again, it's simply good manners, not to mention professionalism, to have everything prepared prior to the actual event.

Another little technical point is a microphone. If your conference organiser can provide a tie-clip microphone you'll be in a much stronger position, since your audience will hear you clearly, especially those who are viewing via web-cast. And remember, unless the lectern has two microphones, one on either side, you run the risk of losing volume when you turn to address the screen.

Finally, a word about presentation style. Some people love to wander all over the stage. Because of lighting conditions and light-spill from the screen, this can cause headaches for the web-cast camera operator and, during your presentation, you may suddenly disappear into silhouette. If you must go for a walk, do it an hour or so before going on stage.

Questions from the Audience

If you are taking questions from the audience, it's always helpful if you can either repeat them or rephrase them for the remote audience, especially if the organiser did not provide remote microphones for audience questions. Also make sure that you look over to the web-cast moderator who'll indicate if there are any questions from the remote audience. The moderator will tell you who is asking the question and what the question is. When you reply, it's nice to repeat the questioner's name in your response.

If you stick to these simple suggestions it will help your organiser deliver a more effective and engaging conference to their remote viewers.