Fall in love with webinars again

Introduction

Are you amongst those who have never tried or even considered webinars until now? Maybe you keep hearing about webinars as a great lead generation tool, but want to understand why or how they work? Or perhaps you are having to justify using webinars for a new role at a new company. Or you might be amongst those who have tried webinars in the past and for some reason they just didn't work for your organization.

Whatever your experience with webinars or webcasting, there are good reasons for you to fall in love with webinars (again). This whitepaper looks at what has changed over the past decade and why webinars are driving leads globally for marketers. It will also provide a set of actions to get you started on your path to creating a powerful webinar programme that generates content and leads like you've never done before.
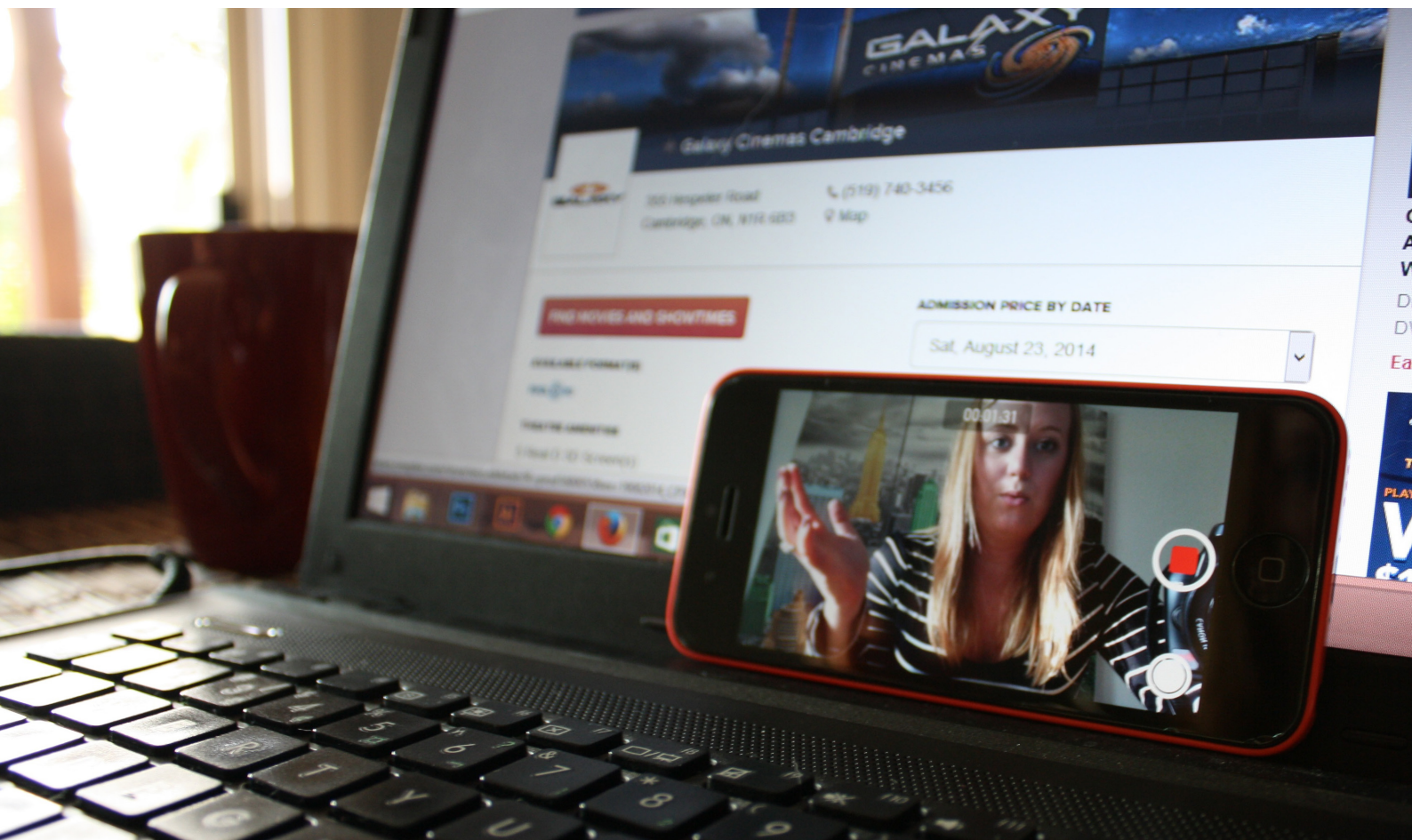
Part 1

Popularity and upward trend of the webinar

Webinars have existed in varying levels of sophistication since the late nineties. That makes sense, as it is a purely internet-based marketing asset, unlike others such as whitepapers. For the past decade, the market (in the UK and globally) has seen a continuous upward trend in the popularity of webinars, evidenced by global search behaviour, number of webinars run, and the number, and growth, of providers offering webinar technology.

In fact, Google Trends show that the inflection point when search popularity for webinars permanently started to outpace whitepapers was already back in 2008. That arguably makes marketing webinars the most popular high-value marketing asset worth gating behind a registration form.

More recent trends show a higher popularity for marketing assets such as infographics, but by default these provide much less value and engagement. As a result, prospects are less likely to share their personal details to gain access to them. The consequence is that these type of low-level asset are often used as click-bait for the higher value-add and gated content at the very top of the sales funnel.

With market-leading webinar providers reporting high double-digit year-over-year growth, the rise of the webinar is genuine and sustainable. You may be asking yourself the question why perhaps you have never used them before, or how this trend can be accurate when perhaps your previous experience has not been a positive one? Part 2 will deal with these questions – read on.

Part 2

Maturation of webinar technology

Webinar technology relies mainly on two major aspects: internet connectivity and the technology itself.

On a global scale, internet penetration in 2016 was just a fraction under 50% of the total global population. In the UK. that number is over 90% which is significantly higher than the total European number (74%)*. With internet penetration growth hitting triple or quadruple percentages for the period since 2000, connectivity is arguably a key driver for increasing reach. This applies to webinar organisers, but more importantly to global audiences. UK internet connectivity matters very little, if your core target audience is located elsewhere in the world.

The webinar technology itself, then, plays a much more significant part in the adoption of webinars. With the proliferation of cloud technology came the rise of Software as a Service (SaaS), marketing technology and analytics. These three are core drivers of modern webinar technology, its user interface and UX, systems integration and the ability to produce the real-time analytics that make webinars the perfect tool for lead

The right tool for the job - what to look out for!

One of the key aspects for unsatisfactory webinar experiences in the past (or even now) may be the misuse of webconferencing technology for the purposes of running webinars.

What's the difference? Webconferencing tools are designed with meetings in mind, while webinar tools have been designed for lead generation and events.

The DNA and delivery mechanism for each are very different. A tool that requires participants to dial in by phone, or download a piece of proprietary software, is designed for meetings. It will not provide marketers or participants with the tools or experience to run sophisticated lead generation activity. By contrast, dedicated webinar software streams its content via the browser and is designed with interaction, analytics and the user in mind.

Dedicated webinar tools continue to increase their sophistication through improved technology and software development, while webconferencing and meeting tools remain limited by their core DNA. The leading webinar tools have made the transition from a streaming technology to a marketing technology tool. Streaming is still the underlying technology, but over time webinar providers have been able to build sophisticated marketing technology on top.

Part 2

Maturation
of webinar
technology

generation.

The typical webinar feature set and usability now, versus 10 years ago, is vastly different. Where once there was a static webinar interface with a stream, slides and Q&A, there are now a host of customization options, interactivity modules collecting marketing and user data, and integrations with marketing automation and CRM systems. Today's webinar technology has removed previous barriers to entry for organisers and participants alike.

The good news for marketers only just discovering webinars is that their feature set is now incredibly powerful making webinars a core contributor to any content marketing and lead generation strategy. Anyone who has previously been left somewhere between bemused and frustrated with unsophisticated webinar technology will now find it well and truly up to the job – provided the webinar programme you are designing is equally as sophisticated.
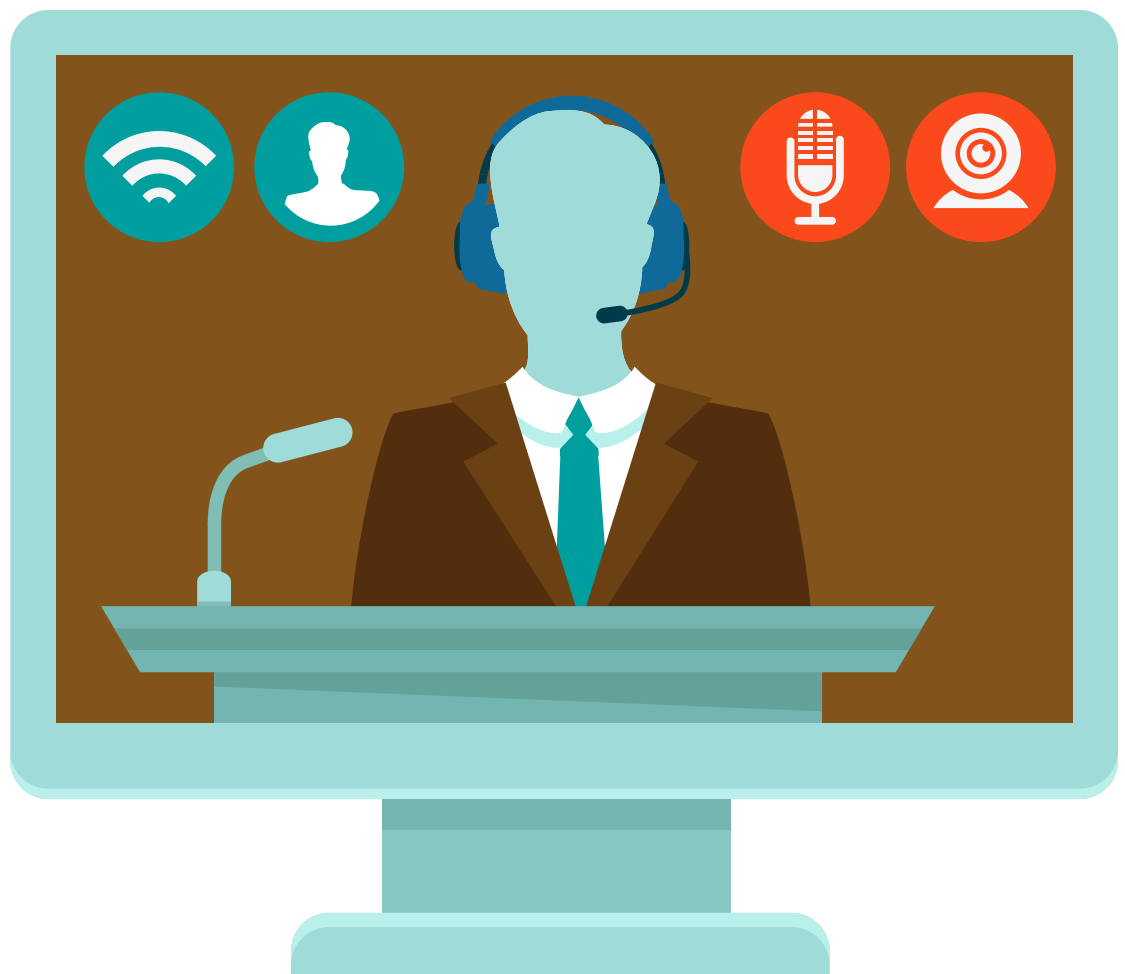
* http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm

Part 3

Why you should learn to love webinars (again)
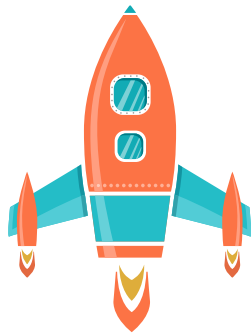
Futureproof

Webinars are future proof. They've been around for long enough to have earned their seat at the marketing table, but contain still plenty of scope to become more important and dominant in the content marketing mix. Streaming is here to stay, video is making its way into B2B, and data from analytics is today's modern currency. Webinars are proven and while you won't be amongst the early adopters if you start using webinars today, you will still gain a competitive advantage over those opting for other tools. That is reassuring, as well as a reason to not delay any further.

Content factory

Webinars are powerhouses when it comes to creating value-add content and spin-off content. Webinars themselves are already highly engaging and offer value to the attendees. Marketers can increase their effectiveness by creating spin-off content ranging from blog posts to whitepapers and videos to infographics. Webinars are able to produce the basis for a wide variety of content, so accelerating content output has never been easier and each content type engages prospects in different ways. In addition, webinars also prove a valuable tool on a vertical basis by being incredibly versatile for use throughout the entire sales funnel.

Driver of leads

In addition to its ability to produce high content quality and output, webinars have a level of interactivity and engagement unlike any other marketing content. Arguably it is the first type of marketing asset that was conceived with lead generation in mind – starting with the inbuilt registration forms to the interactivity features and the real-time native analytics. The entire webinar package is geared towards driving leads into and through the sales funnel.

Part 3

Why you
should learn to
love webinars
(again)

Facilitator of inbound

Inbound leads, i.e. those who have enquired or contacted you on their own accord, are much more likely to convert into revenue than leads who were prompted by outbound marketing activity (e.g. promotional emails). Webinars, and the content you can generate from them, are more likely to provide inbound enquiries. For every webinar and piece of related content you produce, the likelihood of pipeline contribution increases.

Connects Marketing Automation and CRM

Marketing automation tools, just like CRM tools, are largely static tools until they are connected to and promoting active content. Webinar content is the cog that spins all the other cogs, by providing the active part in your marketing technology stack. Webinars are the content that marketing automation tools can connect your contacts with to drive engagement and registrations, while CRM tools ingest results and sync back with marketing automation tools.

Put together, these factors create the basis for an active and effective content marketing and lead generation engine to drive sustainable engagement. The perfect foundation for pipeline contribution.

Read on for more information how you can start building a powerful webinar programme today.

Part 4

Six steps to creating a powerful webinar programme

Six steps to creating a powerful webinar programme

While running webinars has never been easier, running great webinars and a productive webinar programme still requires dedicated expertise and effort. Therein lies the opportunity for marketers. Organisations who dedicate time and effort to their webinar programme are able to create the value-add content that attracts and engages audiences.

Webinars are not for "quick win" marketing tactics. Instead they are the solid and reliable content factories that equate time and resource into leads and pipeline contribution. Not all marketers will take this view with webinars, but those who do will have every opportunity to stand out from the crowd, attract the audiences the competition can't attract, and gain a competitive advantage.

Here is what you can do to stand apart from the competition today:

- Get executive buy-in. Great lead generation doesn't come easy. So it helps to have the buy in from a senior executive who understands the benefits webinars can bring to the content and lead generation strategy. Involve them early and provide the top-level updates throughout the evaluation process to maintain their involvement. Sign-off will be much easier (and quicker) once you've found your perfect solution.

- Evaluate the best webinar platform for your purposes. Base your evaluation on the technology's DNA (was it conceived for meetings or lead generation), the provider's longevity and growth trajectory, the support, the reference clients (large clients doesn't always mean large webinar costs), lead generation feature set, and your ability to easily understand and operate the webinar back-end. Why not ask for a trial?

Part 4

Six steps to
creating a
powerful
webinar
programme

Commit a dedicated webinar programme manager or team. This does not have to be a full time job, but ownership of this role means an increase in focus and quality. Once you've mastered the quality, the quantity is much easier to achieve – both in terms of webinar output and attendance.

Become structured and automated. Create a repeatable and sustainable blue print for identifying webinar topics, securing subject matter experts as speakers, and creating the webinar output. The blue print allows you to scale and introduce an element of consistency into your programme. Your audience will respond and your lead generation will benefit from it.

Master the detail. Any valuable discipline requires deep expertise and knowledge. A good sales person becomes the best by paying attention to the detail. A great software is better than the competition because its designers focused on details. A great webinar programme produces better results than the competition because the programme manager mastered the details involved in creating great webinars. Invest what you want to get out of it. Webinars are not a quick fix. Instead they contain the power to gain a significant competitive advantage by the time they have fed highly qualified leads into your lead flow.

Choose the right partner. With any software becoming increasingly focused on self-service models (webinars are no different), it is increasingly important to pick a webinar provider that becomes the partner you need them to be. Knowing when to be hands-on or hands-off can increase the effectiveness of your webinar programme from the outset or provide the boost when you've become distracted with other matters. Evaluate the quality of a provider's team with as much enthusiasm, as you evaluate the platform itself.

Conclusion

Webinars continue to grow in popularity, adoption and sophistication. They provide a comprehensive set of features and integrations that make them future-proof and able to connect into – and drive – your marketing technology stack. As such they also require dedicated time and resources, which provides marketers with an opportunity to gain a competitive advantage over other organisations churning out the same type of content types. Companies who are committed to great lead generation can improve the output and results by implementing a sophisticated webinar programme.

247 Webcasting -
Professional Webcasts with a UK Company

We are the webcasting services company for people who need professional, robust and easy to use webcasting software and second to none technical support. We work with businesses that need access to a reliable webcasting software that allows them to run an unlimited number of high quality live webcasts, online presentations, web training or online seminars, instantly accessible from any device with no download required.Or contact us for a demo:

Tel.: +44 (0) 207 1939 758
Email: sales@247webcasting.com