



GETTING THE MOST OUT OF WEBINARS

Webinars have been around since 1998, but recent improvements have boosted their popularity as a low cost, information-packed resource for theological schools.

Advantages of webinars

Anyone with a computer with speakers and an online connection already has the technology to participate in a webinar. Although there are some down sides to learning through webinars — you don't enjoy all the energy of a live classroom, for example — webinars come with distinct advantages too.

- **Cost.**
A nominal fee covers an unlimited number of attendees gathered at a single site.
- **Simplicity.**
No special equipment is needed beyond a computer with an Internet connection.
- **Convenience.**
Attendees hear experts discuss timely topics without the hassle and expense of travel.
- **Interaction.**
Opportunities to interact with experts include posting questions and responding to polls.
- **Help.**
Technical support is available throughout the program.
- **Ongoing connections.**
The benefits don't end when the hour is up.

The best advantage of all: They're accessible. You can easily take part in webinars offered by the In Trust Center and the Association of Theological Schools, but you can also enjoy webinars put on by your investment advisors, your church or denomination, and various professional associations.

Prepping for a webinar

Choosing a webinar involves doing your homework. Before registering, read closely the description of the topic and the biographies of the expert presenters. For In Trust Center webinars, topic and presenter information is at www.intrust.org/webinars at least two months prior to the event. (Caveat emptor: Some webinars — often the free variety — are essentially infomercials for a product that the presenter is selling. Make sure you know what you're signing up for!)

Once you have completed the online registration, you will receive simple instructions on how to access the webinar. Print out the directions so that you can read them while following instructions on your computer.

To maximize the benefits of the webinar, be sure to get some things right:

- **Right people.**
Invite appropriate colleagues to view the webinar with you.
- **Right questions.**
Prepare possible questions to ask the experts.
- **Right environment.**
Create a distraction-free environment, with cell phones muted and office phones rerouted.
- **Right tools.**
Have a printer available to capture slides and other resources.
- **Right note taker.**
Designate someone as recorder to jot down comments and questions from your group.
- **Right time.**
Log on a few minutes early to become familiar with the chat box and links.

On the day of the event you will receive a reminder via e-mail.

Webinar “etiquette”

Unlike a seminar in which all participants are in the same room, a webinar is a structured conversation that unfolds in a controlled environment. The benefits are many: no attendee can dominate the discussion; attendees (and their questions) are anonymous; viewers can be as passive or active as they choose, depending on their knowledge of and interest in the topic; attendees at the same site can interact without disrupting the entire seminar; and the host can halt any tendency to stray off-topic. Disadvantages are few: The host decides which questions to submit to the experts, so yours may not make the cut; no follow-up questions are likely; the dialogue may seem scripted at times; and the conversation ends at the posted hour, regardless of how lively the discussion is. (Some webinars do allow participants to email questions which will be answered after the live event.)

Post-webinar activities

The webinar doesn't end when attendees sign out. While the webinar experience is still fresh in your mind, talk with your colleagues who attended and plan to offer feedback to the webinar host. Be sure to complete the webinar evaluation, forward any unanswered questions, and suggest topics for future webinars. When you have more time, you'll want to click through to any links to additional resources that were provided during the webinar. And share the slides that you downloaded with any colleagues who were not in attendance.

Be creative!

Certain rules limit the recycling of webinar content. The In Trust Center encourages schools to work within those rules to find creative ways of sharing content with faculty, administrators and board members. For example, you may want to capture some of the webinar slides and blend them into a presentation geared to your school. You can also purchase an archived webinar and share it with your board or key administrators during a retreat or new-member orientation. Or ask a board member who attended a webinar to make a presentation or report at the next board meeting, or at the next board development session.

Coming to terms with . . .

WEBINARS

Webinar	Web-based seminar/ workshop with interactive capability
Webcast	Web-based program without viewer interaction
On demand	Library of past programs, archive available for free or for a fee
Host	Facilitator/moderator/ troubleshooter who interacts with speaker(s) and attendees
Chatbox	Feature that enables attendees to send comments or questions during the presentation
Poll	Invitation to attendees to answer questions pertinent to the discussion; results are usually posted live during the presentation
Links	Additional resources related to webinar topic; available before, during, and after the program

For more, contact the In Trust Center at resources@intrust.org or 302.654.7770.

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