



CME Leaders Institute | Five Lessons on CE Training via Webinars

By Dave Paradi, MBA

Many associations who require members to take continuing education or offer optional continuing education seminars are turning to web delivery of training as a way to reduce participant costs, reduce meeting costs and offer more courses that are of interest to the members. Here are some lessons learned from experiences of running web based training as public courses and association hosted events.

Lesson 1 – Not all web delivery technology is the same

I have used many different systems and I have experienced issues with almost all of them. The most expensive solution is not necessarily the best and many times you will combine two solutions to get the best result. A web based CE training session will have two components – the visual component and the audio component. When you are testing and selecting these components, keep the following in mind:

- Having the ability to pass control from the association host to the presenter is a great benefit because it allows you to have multi-presenter sessions and have the presenter run the material from their own desktop.
- Select a web system that allows the presenter to have flexibility in what they deliver instead of only PowerPoint slides uploaded to a central system. By allowing presenters the flexibility to show other applications, you broaden the number of topics you can offer.
- Many web systems come with an audio system as well, but you should use the included audio system only if it allows different presenting modes, such as all participants muted (to reduce background noise during the main presentation), all participants unmuted (for Q&A or discussions) and the flexibility for an individual participant to mute themselves if they are in a noisy environment.
- It is not necessary to select an audio system that is toll free (i.e. 800, 866, 877 or 888 dial in number). Most members have access to very cheap long distance rates and the additional cost for a 60 to 90 minute call is usually under \$5.00.
- Some solutions integrate the audio and video together so that a separate phone connection is not needed. The greatest challenge in these solutions is that to have live audio and video streaming at the same time requires a very fast computer and Internet connection and this type of solution is usually not as successful as a solution of separate video and audio streams.
- Some solutions charge per participant per session and some solutions charge a flat fee per month for unlimited usage. Calculate the cost of your expected usage under each of the different pricing plans and determine which will be best for your organization in the long

run. Sometimes the monthly fee is less than holding even a single session with another provider.

Lesson 2 – Practice is Essential

While the web presentation technology has advanced dramatically in the last few years, nothing beats having everyone familiar with the technology before being in front of the audience. Set up practice sessions with the presenters and staff in advance of the actual training and go through any handoffs or switching to other applications that will be done in the live session. Make sure it works as planned and consider how you will deal with any issues that come up.

Lesson 3 – Clarify Expectations for Increased Satisfaction

While the various web based systems support most of the technology your members will have, it is important that you specify exactly what the system requirements are for participation in the web based CE training so that people are not disappointed when they can't participate. Your web delivery system provider should be able to provide you with the system requirements list and it should be published on the registration page so that members can check their system compatibility before paying for the training. A basic requirement will be to have a high-speed Internet connection so that the video portion is smooth. It is also important to let everyone know that the audio portion is delivered via a regular phone so they can be prepared for this as well.

Lesson 4 – Record Every Session

No matter how carefully you schedule the CE sessions, there will always be some members who can't make the session due to previous commitments. By recording each session (video coordinated with the audio), you can offer the recording for sale after the live session is done. This increases the potential revenue from each session and gives those who missed the session or new members the opportunity to gain from the previous training. There are a number of models of selling the recordings. Some associations offer the recording at a discount to those who register for the live session and some offer the recording at the same price as the live session. Some associations deliver a CD or DVD of the session and some provide a link to a web based recording that the member views on the computer. Decide in advance what your association's policy will be and make recordings a part of your CE offering.

Lesson 5 – Monitor Each Session

Most web delivery systems allow you to monitor the web session as it is going on. This is a good idea and a staff member should be assigned as a monitor for each CE training session delivered via the web. The monitor should have two computers set up. The first is logged in as the organizer of the session and is used to pass control to the different presenters and to respond to any questions sent in by participants using the text messaging options in many of the systems. The second computer is logged in as a participant so that the staff member can always see what the participants are seeing and quickly see and resolve any issues before too much time has elapsed.

Web delivery of CE training will be an increasingly popular way for associations of all sizes to deliver CE training to members distributed across vast geographical areas at a lower cost to both the association and the participant member. It can also become a way for associations to generate revenue from non-

members or prospective members by providing relevant topics that others are also willing to pay to learn about.

Dave Paradi has been a National Board member of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers since 2003 and has presented web based training sessions for associations and as public sessions. He is the co-author of "Guide to PowerPoint" published by Prentice Hall and is a thought leader on the strategic use of presentation slides in organizations. His web site is www.ThinkOutsideTheSlide.com.