Tips For A Successful, Pitfall Free, Lead Generating Webinar

Heather M. Butts, JD, MPH, MA

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About The Author

Thank you for reading my book about having a super fantastic online education experience. My journey of running webinars that are, as the book title indicates, lead generating, pitfall free and successful was one fraught with the same errors and mistakes that I will discuss in this book and that I want you to avoid. But first, a bit about me.

My name is Heather Butts. I am a lawyer by training. I received my BA from Princeton University, my JD from St. John's University School of Law, my MA in Public Health from Harvard and my MA in Education from Columbia University's Teachers College. My education training focused on multimedia, psychology and online training and my business L.E.A.R.N for Life Consulting, LLC specializes in facilitating the online training experience for small businesses, entrepreneurs and experts. I also teach health ethics in New York City and provide healthcare consulting, college preparation and webinar facilitation consultation on a one-on-one basis for clients. You can contact me if you want to learn more about my services at heather.butts@learnforlifeconsulting.com.

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Like many of you, I tried all kinds of ways to have wonderful webinars. I sat in on trainings and webinars myself, spoke with people, did tons of reading. Yet, it always seemed to me as though something was missing, or lacking. Usually people were missing, but also that exactly right formula to pull everything together. Then one day, I realized what it was:

The Webinar Timeline

What is the webinar timeline? The webinar timeline is a step by step process for assisting you in planning a webinar from 8 weeks prior to the webinar until 2 weeks after the webinar. In this EBook you will learn exactly how to implement the webinar timeline, what steps you need to follow within the timeline, and how you too can have a webinar that will generate client leads, be free from technical difficulties, and propel you as an expert in your chosen field.

This EBook is a compilation of tips, how-to advice and what

to avoid.

First, I will walk you step by step through the webinar timeline. By the end of this EBook you will know exactly what steps you need to take for your lead generating, successful webinar. Next, I will teach you about the 5 basic "players" of a webinar and what roles you need to ensure are in place in order to make sure that every aspect of your webinar timeline is managed appropriately. I will also give you detailed information about technical tips and how to avoid glitches. You must always remember that problems do arise, so I will talk about how to deal with those problems as they come up, as seamlessly as possible. I will also give you some tips on equipment, registration, and pre-webinar jitters. Finally, I will talk with you about marketing strategies to ensure that you get people to your webinar, they are engaged, and want to work with you in the future.

Thank you for joining me on this journey. Now on to the rest of the EBook!

The Webinar Timeline

The webinar timeline is a step-by-step roadmap for running a webinar from 8 weeks prior to the webinar to 2 weeks post webinar. Following this timeline will greatly increase the likelihood that you will have a strong attendance at your

webinar and that those present will be engaged in the presentation and the description of your product or services. It is critical that you ensure that your webinar is one that is focused and concise and answers the precise issue that your potential customers and clients have. If your webinar does not do this then it is likely that individuals on the webinar will either tune out completely, or be marginally engaged, thus defeating the purpose of having a webinar in the first place.

Four to Eight Weeks Before The Webinar

The webinar timeline starts 8 weeks before the webinar. Here is where the planning begins, initial marketing will start, and role definition, which is the first tip below, will be crystallized.

TIP: Define roles and stick to them. This concept of "webinar roles" may be a new concept for some of you but it is critical to think about your webinar in these terms so that you can pinpoint your anxieties with respect to running a webinar and determine whether you need assistance and, if you do need assistance, in what area is that assistance needed.

The 5 basic roles of a webinar are: The Producer, The "Star" or Presenter, the Marketer, the Content Provider and the

Audience. Now I know some of you are thinking: I run a small business - I can't have 5 different people involved in my webinar. Not to worry, we will deal with this later in the EBook.

First up, the producer. The producer is sometimes called the moderator although moderators rarely perform all the tasks that the producer performs. The producer is the technical expert on the webinar. The producer will decide what webinar platform to use, they will ensure the webinar runs smoothly with as few technical difficulties as possible; they will field and triage questions from the audience either in the form of the chat or phone conferencing. The producer oversees the real-time recording of the webinar, reviews the chat to ensure audience issues such as an inability to hear the audio, or see slides are dealt with, and oversees the post-production of the webinar including editing. The producer is the person who has to deal with all the technical headaches and when something does go wrong, fixes it as quickly as possible so that the webinar can continue fairly seamlessly. Ideally, the producer is prepared for technical difficulties and is not caught by surprise or unaware when something does go wrong. If you are hiring someone for the producer role, you will want to ensure that they are fully prepared for such technical difficulties and you'll want to know in general details how they will correct such problems if they happen during the webinar. Remember however, that if you are not the producer, you should have minimal involvement in the nuances of the producer role. As we will discuss several times in this EBook, mixing and matching

roles only serves to make you anxious and muddy the webinar waters.

Next, the presenter or the "star." The presenter or star is essentially the face of the webinar. This is the person who will tell the story that needs to be told, promotes the product and educates the audience. For many individuals, the presenter is the person that is doing the bulk of the work as they often assume the producer role as well, but as I have already alluded to, the producer role and the presenter role are the most counterproductive to combine into one. If there are any two roles that should be separated it would be the presenter role and the producer role. And it makes sense. So if you are the presenter, your sole focus during the webinar is conveying content to your audience. And conveying great content to your audience. If you are also concerned about lighting and the speed of the internet connection and whether the microphone is working properly, that inherently takes away from your ability to fulfill that very important function. In a perfect world, the presenter would be free and unencumbered from the producer role, minimally involved in the marketing aspects, which we are going to discuss in a moment, and focused on content and the audience. But as we all know, most of us fulfill several roles and the presenter invariably becomes involved in all of these roles. We will discuss minimizing some of this stress and getting the help you need to pull off a fantastic job while focusing on what role you are best at fulfilling.

Next, the audience. So the audience's job is basically to be fully engaged in the webinar. When you're doing practice webinars, and as we will discuss, multiple practice webinars are a must, a small audience is crucial for helping you practice and ultimately perfect, your webinars. In terms of engagement, the presenter needs to make sure that the audience is fully and completely engaged. The audience should get out of the webinar exactly what they expected. They're taking the time to attend the webinar and thus, should be getting from the webinar what want. The audience should ask lots of questions and should follow-up with the presenter if questions that they had were not fully or completely answered.

The content manager is our next role. The content manager role is often confused with the presenter's role but they are actually two distinct roles and you *could* have a separate person on your team - a copyeditor or writer who specializes in content and content management issues - to deal with this role. The content manager is responsible for creating the information for the PowerPoint presentation or slides. They're responsible for any fact checking that needs to be done. If for example you are doing a presentation that is historically based and you need detailed review by someone from an accuracy stand point, then a content manager is that person for you. The content manager can be invaluable in assisting you with editing the final document, doing spell checks and making sure the document comes in under the allotted amount of time. When there are content based questions, the content manager can assist the presenter in

answering them after the webinar is over. The content manager will also assist the presenter in creating the "script" for the webinar which will guide the presenter seamlessly through the webinar.

Last, but certainly not least, the marketer. The marketer is the one who will get the word out. This role and the producer role are the two roles that cause the most anxiety for most people. The marketer needs to get people registered and in the seats. But not just any people. The marketer needs to do their research and needs to ensure that the attendees are part of the target areas that the team wants to cultivate from a lead generation standpoint. The marketer will be the person to deal with registration, although they will definitely work with the star and producer on this, and will assist with post webinar marketing which we will deal with later in the EBook.

We're still at 4-8 weeks before the webinar and at this point you want to define how you will fill the information gap for your audience as well as yourself. What does this mean? So I'm sure most of you have heard about the "information gap" for your audience. What that means is that you want to target your webinar to fill a void that your audience has in their understanding about a topic, subject or issue. So let's say that your audience has questions about how to effectively market a webinar on Twitter. In order to fill the

information gap, you might create a 3-4 minute video that you could put on YouTube, teaching your audience how to create Twitter hashtags, utilize Twitter chats and use the search function on Twitter to effectively find leads and market a webinar. This makes sense to most people.

What we don't often talk about is how you can use a webinar to fill the information gap for you as a product or service provider. So how did you actually **_know_** that your audience had a question about using Twitter to market webinars? Think about that for a second. How do we find out what our audience needs? Additionally, when we find this information out, what do we do with it?

The best way to find out is to simply ask them and a webinar is a fantastic way to do that. You can have webinars just devoted to filling your information gap. Have a webinar and call it "What are the 5 issues that are causing you problems for growing your business," or "What 8 issues do you have when you use Facebook." Make it an open webinar and more of a discussion where you query your audience and you find out what their issues are and how you can make your service or product better because of their issues. So think about the information gap as a win-win for you and potential customers. You can give them information that they need and they can give you information that you need.

We are still at 4-8 weeks out on the webinar timeline. Next

up, the registration process. So you want to keep the registration process simple and to the point. First Name, Last Name and Email Address. I always add one question that registrants are *required* to answer regarding how individuals registering for the webinar found out about it. You can make the question something like: "How did you find out about this webinar." Pretty simple right, but that one question can inform your marketing efforts going forward. If you get 100 people to register for your webinar and 20 of them came through Twitter, well, you know that's a target rich environment for you.

TIP: Start and continue to Market Still at 4-8 weeks out, as soon as you lock down the details for your webinar, you are going to want to start the marketing process and keep it going through and even after your webinar. This is probably the area I get the most questions from people. Individuals will often say to me . . . what is too soon/late to start marketing a webinar. I also tell them that as soon as you have your topic nailed down and you know you are going to go forward with the webinar, you can start marketing. For most people that's 2-4 weeks before the webinar, but if you have this information sooner, fantastic! Remember, marketing is an ongoing process to if you start marketing 6 weeks before the webinar, you're going to still send out emails, tweets, announcements up until the webinar. So starting early is fantastic because for people who register early, you can continue to remind them, and utilize them as your champions to get the word out to more people. If you're announcing a webinar 11 days before it is going to happen,

you don't have much time to cultivate excitement about it and have others champion the webinar and get their networks excited about it. So start sooner rather than later and keep the momentum going until you presentation.

Additionally, marketing earlier rather than later can alleviate fears you may have about holding a webinar. Nothing is more anxiety provoking than beginning your marketing campaign 10 days before a webinar when you still have to deal with content, registration, and technical issues. I hear concerns from people all the times about webinars. And what they say to me is . . . I can't imagine doing a webinar, it's too overwhelming, I know there are going to be problems. And oftentimes people aren't specific. They just want to stay away from the entire process. But if you break a webinar out into the timeline, and then sub-divide it into the roles that we described earlier, then you can begin to pinpoint your anxieties. So if, for example you see that . . . well I'm concerned about the actual presentation, being in front of people and doing the webinar, but I love the technical aspects and I love the marketing aspects, then you may either want to practice the presenter role more thoroughly, or you may want to join forces with someone who loves presenting, but is anxious about the actual marketing and technical roles. I think the majority of you will find that the whole webinar process does not cause you anxiety but rather, it is aspects of the webinar process that cause you concern. Once you identify those aspects, you can take ownership and control over them and either gain more expertise in those areas or partner with someone who has

the skillset or comfort levels that you lack.

We're still at 4-8 weeks on the timeline and are going to talk a bit about marketing and get into details regarding the various ways that you should market your webinar. I could write an entire EBook on this topic alone but suffice it to say, you should be marketing often, a lot and you should be cross marketing. So your Facebook marketing should be intertwined with your Twitter and Google + marketing. You should be using online forums, and creating YouTube Videos. I've seen amazing ways that people are using Pinterest to market and of course you can utilize Facebook and Facebook ads,

Of course, no marketing discussion would be complete without referencing LinkedIn and LinkedIn Events. LinkedIn is critical for finding your target audience and engaging them with polls, answering questions and giving advice. Of course you'll want to put the link to your webinar in any posts that you put on LinkedIn. Writing guest blogs on a topic very relevant to your webinar topic and putting the webinar link at the end of the blog is also key. I did a guest blog for AnyMeeting prior to a for them on a very similar topic (LINK) and it gave me a lot of traction for this webinar, so definitely write guest blog posts but make sure that you're marketing those posts to your Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and webinar announcements.

Giving flyers to local businesses is a great way to market. Print up 500 flyers about your webinar and take them around to local businesses. You would be surprised what this can do for your marketing machine. Additionally, you'll meet local business owners who may be interested in having you do a presentation for their customers, and you'll create good will in your community. Another win-win!

Internet Radio is yet another great marketing tool. I actually have an internet radio show (www.blogtalkradio.com/learnforlife) and I highly recommend linking up with the host of an internet show to talk about who you are, what you do and how you can add value to their show. BlogTalkRadio is the provider that I use and there are hundreds of hosts that are always looking for guests so get on the site, start searching around, look at different shows and contact some of the hosts with your show idea. Of course, when you present on any radio show you'll want to refer to the link for your webinar's registration and you should ask the host to put that link in the announcements leading up to the show.

Don't forget cross promoting on webinars. So let's say that you have a webinar that's happening in 3 months, but you have another webinar in 2 months. Advertise your later webinar on your earlier webinar, providing a link to the later webinar.

Press releases are a fantastic way to get the word out and there are lots of ways to do this now on the internet. As you have more and more webinars and get the word out about what you're doing, reporters and press will decipher which of your webinars are newsworthy for purposes of covering, so keep sending news outlets your webinar information until something clicks for you!

Next up, bulletin boards, and by this I mean old fashioned, library or post office bulletin boards. Do you have a local borough hall or municipal building? Do they have a community bulleting board? Great! Sounds antiquated but you need to try lots of different marketing ploys to see what really works. Remember, in your registration you're going to have a question that asks people how they found out about the webinar, so if you have 100 people registered and 30 indicate that they found out about the webinar through the bulletin board in the local post office, well then clearly that's an effective marketing tool for you.

Emailing marketing is next on the list. I often get questions about Aweber vs. Constant Contact vs. MailChimp. Irrespective of which marketing tool you use, email marketing is going to be critical to your efforts. Webinars are also excellent ways to increase your email list so you'll want to incorporate a system that you're comfortable with and gets you great results. Most of these systems have free trials or free programs, so you can try them and see which one you like and what works best for you. But your email marketing

program will be critical to your success.

Next, your own blog and your own blog posts. So hopefully everyone has a blog where you post interesting, insightful information, articles and tutorials. You are going to want to promote your webinar heavily on your own blog to ensure that the unique link that is created from those posts is on Google and other search engines so potential clients have yet another way to find out about your webinar.

If you're holding any in-person seminars or workshops before your webinar, you'll definitely want to promote the webinar at those events and also let various local and regional groups know about your webinar. Remember, this is a continuous process so keep cross posting. You will be able to see what worked best when you digest post-webinar data.

Two to Four Weeks Before the Webinar

So now we're at 2-4 weeks before the webinar. At this point you should have decided what webinar platform you're going to use. Whether you use AnyMeeting, GoToMeeting, GoToWebinar, Meeting Burner or something else, you will want to make that decision so you can begin to practice using that platform. I would also suggest that you contact the webinar providers you're interested in utilizing and asking

them detailed questions about their system, what resources they provide and trouble shooting. Some providers have 24/7 support and you can call them anytime to get detailed help with your problem. Other providers have videos and tutorials that you'll want to familiarize yourself with prior to your webinar, so just know yourself, know what you'll want access to prior to the webinar, and then make sure you find out exactly what the webinar provider has to offer you so there won't be any surprises the day of the webinar.

Also I would highly recommend doing 3-4 technical practice sessions, with an emphasis on the technical part of the practice. The content is secondary at this point. What you want to do is work out the technical issues and answer any questions that come up while you're doing the program. So if you want to read *Clifford the Big Red Dog* or *Green Eggs and Ham* as you're doing these practice practices that's fine - what you want to do at this point is find out any technical hiccups and figure out how you will react to such difficulties. I bring up reading Doctor Seuss, not only because I like *Green Eggs and Ham*, but also because oftentimes people will say to me . . . I can't do a practice session because my content isn't done yet. But remember, right now your producer hat is on. This is not the content manager's moment. Believe me, their time will come. Right now you just want to work with your producer or, if you're the producer, work with yourself to ensure that you're fixing and mastering any technical issues well in advance so you can focus on the content and presentation without worrying about the technical issues. Remember, technical issues are usually

the number 1 concern people have when doing a webinar so this will give you enough practice and lead time to feel more comfortable. Also remember, if the production aspect is just too anxiety provoking for you, reach out to someone who does this kind of work so you can concentrate on the aspects of the presentation that you do well and are comfortable with.

TIP: Do multiple "Worst Case Scenario" webinars. So as we were just discussing, you want to do lots of technical practices and you want those to be the best case scenario. So the dog isn't barking, kids are at school, fire alarm isn't going off at work, internet connection is working. But I would suggest doing 2-3 worst case scenario practices. And that's where you tell your kids to run into the room where you're practicing and start making noise. Or you leave a tasty treat out for your dog so they start barking incessantly. Or at some point you disconnect your computer and then have to figure out how to get back online in a calm manner. Everyone has their own personal worst case scenario so think about what that is for you and then practice it as many times as you need in order to own it. Once you own your worst case scenario then it won't be so frightening and scary and you can concentrate on the content, the presentation and a great webinar.

At this point you're going to start finalizing your content. On

the timeline we have this at 2-4 weeks before the webinar, but don't worry if this goes into the final week. Just work on getting the content and slide presentation to a point where you can start doing content based presentations. Also you will want to create a short script of 3-4 minutes incase you have some sort of visual problem but you still have audio. If audio fails for more than 30 seconds, have a slide available that you can quickly put up that just announces that you're having audio problems and will be back shortly. As an aside this is why it's a great reason to do a presentation with someone else - ideally in the producer role. Because if you have a total audio and visual failure, that person can pick up where you left of until you can either get back on the webinar or, if you are completely unable to get back on, then they can finish up for you. What you don't want to have happen is that you're the only person on the webinar, something happens and you can't get back on and then your audience is left with an incomplete webinar. So that would be my biggest plug for at least having a producer or facilitator with you on the actual webinar. And remember, technical issues happen, so let the audience know what's going on, inform them if you can of the issue and then try to keep an good attitude about it and move on with the presentation.

Three days to 1 Week Before The Webinar

We're now at 3 days to 1 week before the webinar. You want to do a few more practices and by this time you'll have the content to go along with the practice. If you're using links or

video, tests them out as close in proximity to the presentation as possible to make sure they have not been corrupted or are simply not working. I would also suggest having back-up documents so if your links have problems you have a screen shot to give to your audience. This may seem like a lot of work right now, but if you have a link or video failure during the webinar, you will appreciate that you have a backup screen shot to show your audience.

You will also continue to practice doing your worst case scenario practices over and over again. They don't have to be the full webinar length, but short 10-15 minute practices that have you figuring out ways to fix technical or content difficulties.

Equipment! You should have all of your equipment in place at this stage of the practice process and you should have a small audience of friends or family listening in to your practices to let you know how your microphone sounds, how the slides look and so forth. Now is the time to find out that your microphone makes you sound like you are in a wind tunnel or your slides are advancing at a super slow rate. So get that small audience together and continue to practice with your webinar equipment. Also if you have access to an additional laptop or computer I highly recommend downloading your presentation onto that computer and have it next to you during the webinar so that if you have some sort of catastrophic failure on computer #1 you can be up and running quickly on computer #2.

Thirty Minutes to Fifteen Minutes Before The Webinar

So 30-15 minutes before the presentation, take a deep breath and join the webinar chat room to see who's there, who your audience is and get yourself calmed down and comfortable. You can even ask a few preliminary questions in the chat such as where people are from, why they are on the webinar, and so forth. If you feel up to it you can even make a few minor mental adjustments during the webinar based on information you found out about your audience in the chat room.

Remember, during the webinar - have fun! All your hard work has paid off and you're doing the webinar so have a good time and engage with the audience. I often like to send a reminder to registrants a few minutes into the webinar in case they forgot about the webinar but still want to attend, so again this is where a producer can be immeasurably helpful. Your producer can send out a reminder via twitter or Facebook as the webinar is going and then if you've created a twitter hashtag the producer can answer questions that come up either on twitter or Facebook or in the chat itself. You'll also want to announce a webinar giveaway to the entire audience and maybe do a special prize to 1-2 audience members that were particularly engaged and involved with the webinar. You can either let the webinar participants know before-hand what the prize will be or you

can "tempt" them before the webinar and announce the prize on the webinar.

An important note about selling during the webinar: If you're going to be selling a product or service during the webinar, let the audience know upfront so they know to expect the sales pitch. More importantly, for your purposes, if the audience knows upfront that you are selling a product then they will know to stay on the webinar until the very end. Now having said all of that, here is my counter advice. You want to make the content of your webinar fantastic so the focus of your webinar should not be "how can I sell my product to my audience" rather, the purpose should be "how can I help my audience so much that they will want to listen to me tell them about my amazing product or service." But the goal with a webinar is also helping to inform and educate your audience. If you focus on selling then you've already lost your audience. Remember, content is king so make sure your contact is fantastic!

Engaging your audience is also critical during the webinar. There are so many fantastic ways to engage your audience. You can do it through a video, through polls, through surveys and prizes, Q and A. Just get creative and think about how you can keep your audience constantly engaged in your content and how you can keep helping them by keeping them engaged. You'll want to practice all of this prior to the webinar and on some of the webinar platforms you can even set up polls prior to the webinar so do as much prep work as

possible in order to create a fantastic, engaging webinar.

I've mentioned twitter hashtags before. You don't want to overdo it. So make sure that if you use a twitter hashtag you mention it once or twice and then keep the webinar moving. You don't want people spending so much time on twitter that they're not fully engaged in your fantastic content.

Right After The Webinar - Two Weeks Post Webinar

The webinar is over! This is where, if you had great content, engaged your audience and had some fantastic giveaways, your lead generation machine flourish. You want to get the recording edited and ready for distribution within 48 hours o the webinar. You want to follow-up with super engaged audience members, all registrants and everyone else via the registration information, twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and the other marketing platforms we mentioned earlier. Keep using social media to keep your lead generation machine going. You're going to do this for the next two weeks.

Also you're going to want to look at any data you have from the webinar to see how you can make the next webinar even better. So if you did a poll during the webinar and 80% of your audience told you that their number 1 problem with Facebook is the new timeline, then you may want to devote an entire webinar next time entitled "9 tips for mastering the Facebook timeline." But you can only do that from gathering data during the webinar and then using that data to better

information your behavior going forward.   Also, provide polling data and survey data to your webinar participants via social media and so forth.

Summary and Final Thoughts

Final Thought #1: ***Webcam vs. No Webcam.*** Webcams are actually good if your audience is new to you because you can build trust and a rapport with your audience. If you're going to use a webcam just make sure that your lighting is excellent, so a room with lots of windows during the day, good lighting at night. You need to make eye contact with the webcam otherwise if you're looking down or off to the side you'll come off looking shifty which will defeat the purpose of attempting to create a trusting relationship with your audience. Also make sure your background is not distracting so you don't want to have some abstract painting behind you and if you know the circus is coming through town and walking by your webinar window, might be a good idea to pull the shades. Nice blank walls are your friend in this instance.

Final Thought #2: Mailchimp, Aweber and Constant Contact, Oh My! I currently use MailChimp and love it but I know there are good things to say about all of these systems. Most have free trials so I would highly recommend testing them out because this is a very subjective piece of the puzzle so see what you like best, what works for you and then commit to it.

Final Thought #3: Screencasts are your friend. Screencasts

are great ways to record short videos that you can put on YouTube. You can even create a short preview video of your upcoming webinar and distribute your YouTube link on Twitter, Facebook, your newsletter, blog and email announcements. I use *Microsoft Expression Encoder* but have used Camtasia which a lot of people like. ScreenFlow is also an option. Again, just test various systems out, most have free trials, so just see what you like. I use Windows Movie Maker for my editing program, but even YouTube is getting in on the editing game so again, test out different systems and decide what you like best!

Final Thought #4: Facebook Groups. What a wonderful way to promote yourself and what you do. I have a Facebook Group that I would love for anyone on this call to join. We're all about supporting each other and giving each other advice about different tools, methods and so forth. LINK

Resources

I hope this EBook has been helpful to you. Please feel free to be in touch with me at heather.butts@learnforlifeconsulting.com or via the links below.

- www.learnforlifeconsulting.com
- www.twitter.com/learnforlifellc
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