Webinar Technical Guidelines

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Webinars provide a unique way to reach chapter members on one of the most requested topics; state education. Utilizing technology to broadcast a presentation from one location to numerous personal computers will allow a chapter to reach members in a timely manner no matter where they are in the world. Due to the time required and nature of the presentations, if done right, it should keep costs low and provide education to a wide audience across the nation.

The following documentation speaks to many of the technical aspects or set up of presenting a webinar but will not go into detail regarding the presentation of materials through this format.

# Computer

There is a list of technical requirements for the webinar platform, based on the type of computer you will be utilizing. Please see your webinar platform’s list of requirements (GoToWebinar’s [Webinar Support page](https://www.gotomeeting.com/webinar/online-webinar-support)) before hosting a webinar. These requirements may change over the course of time and with new technology, so checking these requirements occasionally will provide the best outcome for your webinar.

# Internet Access

It should be obvious that internet access is required to run a webinar since it’s an online event, but because of the potential to have unreliable internet access, decreasing any concerns around reliability is important. To help maintain a more reliable presentation it is recommended you use a hardwired internet connection whenever possible (which means plugging the computer into the internet instead of using WiFi). Wifi is **NOT** recommended because it has a higher likelihood of dropping the internet connection and therefore failure of the webinar.

If your only option is to utilize WiFi at a location, it may be worthwhile noting the following:

* The reliability of the service.
* Being on a different wireless network than the rest of the location you’re at (e.g. being on the locations business network, rather than their general guest network).

# Internet Speed

Additional information you also need to consider regarding a recommended internet speed related to running the webinar platform can be found on your webinar’s support page (GoToWebinar’s [Webinar Support page](https://www.gotomeeting.com/webinar/online-webinar-support)).

# Webinar Session

The webinar session is a specific event that will occur on a given day and time. Correct utilization of this session is critical in having the webinar session active at the time you go live with the webinar because if you use the session incorrectly you could “activate” it and not be able to use it when you go live. To help alleviate any issues there are a few important things to consider:

* **Dry run your webinar.**
  + **Do not use anything but practice mode when doing a dry run.**
  + Using anything but practice mode will make the live event links invalid at the time of the live event.
* Only use the live webinar when you are going to go live with the event.
* Know the webinar program, it’s features, and how to operate it before conducting an event, this not something you can learn on the fly.

# Presentation

The presentation is at the heart of why people are attending the webinar. Uploading the presentation to the webinar handouts can help provide some backup in the event of a program failure but can also provide attendees with a download they can print at their convenience. Additionally, making sure that other organizers also have a copy of the presentation is important because it would allow the presentation to go on, even if the presenter loses their computer. If the presenter was able to keep their audio, another organizer could share the slides while the presenter continues to go through their material. This is somewhat dependent on how the audio is accomplished so additional information about how this can happen is included in the audio section.

# Presentation Screen

Familiarity with the use of a “clean” presentation screen within the webinar platform will limit the sharing of any information that may be shown mistakenly on the presenter’s desktop.

# Webinar Roles

Multiple people may be needed to effectively run the webinar, such as the organizer, presenter, technical roles and other recommended roles. Understanding of these roles, that these people do not need to be in the same location, and that they should conform to fulfilling specific job duties will help the webinar run smoothly. More in depth knowledge of the various roles, in addition to familiarity with the webinar features will also play a large part in the presentation. These roles and features are covered in additional documentation on the running of a webinar.

# Camera

It is not advised to conduct your first webinar with a camera as it can add a level of complexity to the new webinar presenter. If the presenter is familiar with delivering presentations online, showing the instructor on camera can create a more personalized experience. If you will be using a webcam an HD webcam will present viewers with the best picture. And although the webcam in the laptop may be an HD device, a separate webcam is recommended because it:

* Typically has a wider angle of view.
* Can more easily be positioned in the room (like on a tripod)
* Is more easily adjusted.
* May have other features the laptop camera may not have (like some webcams can follow the instructor if they tend to move a little, even when sitting stationary).

Camera position is another important factor, some aspects to consider are:

* Testing the lighting
  + Too much backlight.
  + Not enough light.
* Placing the camera directly in front of and around eye level of the instructor/presenter.
* Background behind the presenter; busy rooms and windows behind the presenter can cause some challenges.
* What the instructor is wearing can also be an issue. Some clothing examples:
  + Stripes may be hard to look at and not appear well on camera.
  + Consider what may happen if the instructor has to stand up to adjust the camera during the presentation.
    - No V-necks.
    - Appropriate full dress.

# Audio

Although the audio for the webinar can be broadcast through the computer, utilizing VoIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) a dial in option through a land line is preferred because if the presenter’s webinar program or WiFi drops, another organizer can share their copy of the presentation while the presenter continues with the material. A mobile phone is another option, but the presenter should be familiar with the dependability of the coverage in their area to minimize dropped calls.

If a host or presenter wants to use VoIP, they will need a microphone, preferably one that connects directly into the computer. Wireless microphones are also a good option for use in a VoIP setting, allowing the instructor/presenter to freely move around without being attached to their computer although, understand this technique introduces another potential technical failure point to your presentation (many times due to battery failure, so have backup batteries available).

# Summary

Webinars have some challenges, but the challenges should far outweigh the benefits that chapters can gain from providing state and practice management education to members in their own homes and offices. Webinars can reach members where they are, create more frequent learning opportunities, and provide a service that other organizations don’t provide. Much of the success of these events is predicated in the appropriate handling of the technology involved, being familiar with the webinar platform and getting the right people in place to run each event, so testing all these factors multiple times and completing dry runs are critical to their success.