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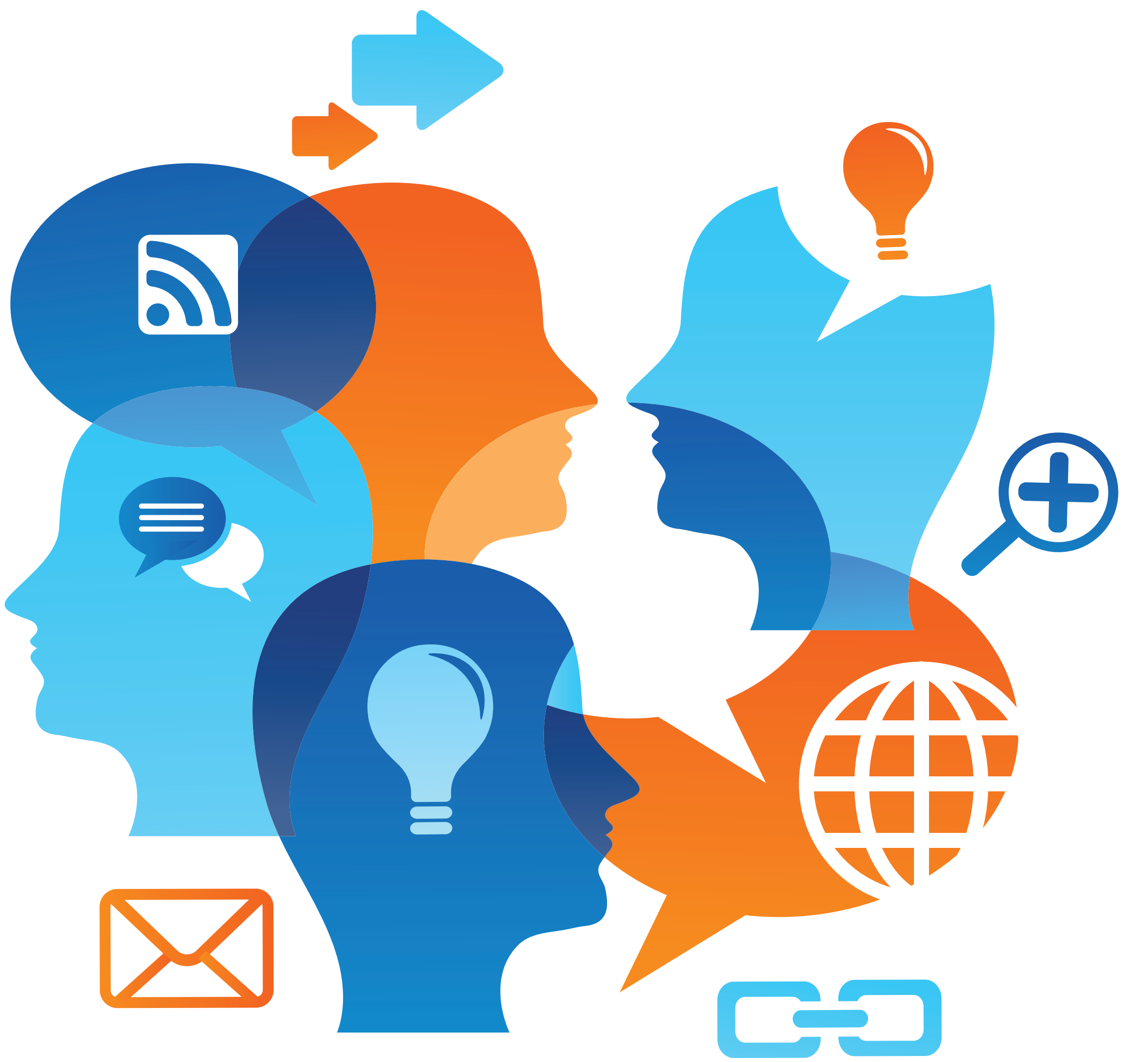
Eight Ways to Use Webinar Content and Behavior to Qualify Leads

Webinar content and behavior are as important as demographic information when qualifying marketing leads. While webinars themselves are a tactic, it is the content that determines where the webinar falls in the B2B marketing lead generation funnel. The webinar content will indicate which stage the potential buyer is in, and also what they are interested in. This will dictate which webinar registrants are simply contact acquisitions and which ones are truly sales-ready. Knowing the difference will improve the quality of leads sent to sales and build the sales team's trust in marketing leads. The rich and interactive nature of webinars offer B2B marketers a unique opportunity to qualify leads on the spot using real-time behavior. Marketers who use every possible opportunity to measure webinar attendee interest during the event are gathering valuable information about the registrants they've attracted, and driving better results.



1. **Buyer stage determines content**. Webinars as a tactic are chosen for their rich and engaging medium. Adding content to the webinar will determine where to plug the webinar(s) into the marketing mix based on the buying cycle—whether it is thought leadership, education, product demonstration, competitive comparison, or product training. Thought leadership webinars are very effective for inbound marketing and contact acquisition. A product demo or competitive comparison webinar would most likely fall further down the buying cycle as the content could indicate shopping behavior. While the thought leadership webinar registrants are most likely not sales-ready, the leads from a product demo webinar are appropriate to send on for a sales follow-up e-mail. The trick here is to understand what the needs of a typical buyer are, and deliver the necessary content at the right moment.

"Deliver the necessary content at the right moment."

2. **Content indicates solution of interest.** Not only does content type indicate buying stage, it also pinpoints the individual's interests and needs. Using webinar content to determine this information is especially helpful for products that offer multiple solutions or serve more than one target audience. Consider a product with two main solutions: conducting two monthly webinars on best practice topics (one for each solution) at the top of the marketing funnel will tell a marketer which solution each group of registrants is interested in and dictate the next appropriate step for each group. The benefit of using content to determine interest rather than demographics is that you are allowing the individual to select their true interest, rather than relying on title, industry, or other demographic-reported information, which may be misleading or inaccurate. Using the content to determine a prospect's interest shows that your company is full of true listeners, when it comes to customer needs. Additionally, by studying the profiles of webinar registrants showing interest in content related to a particular solution, marketers can uncover new target segments and adjust content creation appropriately for that new audience.

3. **Interest is not all about attendance**. 'Attended' or 'not attended' is the most basic way to look at this behavior, but webinar attendance doesn't tell the whole story. Tracking the recording views of each registrant is an extension of the story because registrants are still taking the time to consume the content. Realistically, attending a webinar live is not always an option. Keep in mind that just the act of registering for the webinar demonstrates interest in the content offered regardless of attendance or recording consumption. When determining score assignments for attendance, consider options for giving varying scores to a registrant that stays for the entire webinar or watches the entire recording versus someone that attends but leaves early or does not attend at all, while still giving consideration to the time they took to register for the webinar due to their interest in the promoted content.

"Thought leadership webinars are very effective for inbound marketing and contact acquisition."

4. **Tease out shoppers at the top of the funnel**. Adding a breakout session to the end of a top-of-funnel thought leadership webinar for a short demo of your product/service is a great way to identify current shoppers early in the marketing funnel. Tracking attendance to this session is very valuable information to pass to the sales team and should trigger accelerated interaction with these contacts.

5. **Gathering information is a process**. Take the interactive opportunity available via the webinar medium to ask a few more questions and gather more information about attendees beyond the registration data. Polling is an easy tactic to add to any webinar; however, it is also easy to get this information wrong. For instance, asking something already known based on the registration information collected, or based on the content of the webinar, is a turn-off for webinar attendees. Additionally, beware of collecting information during a webinar without delivering value first. When rolling up behavior into a lead qualification score, assign specific poll answers with differing scores, based on sales team input regarding qualified lead indicators.

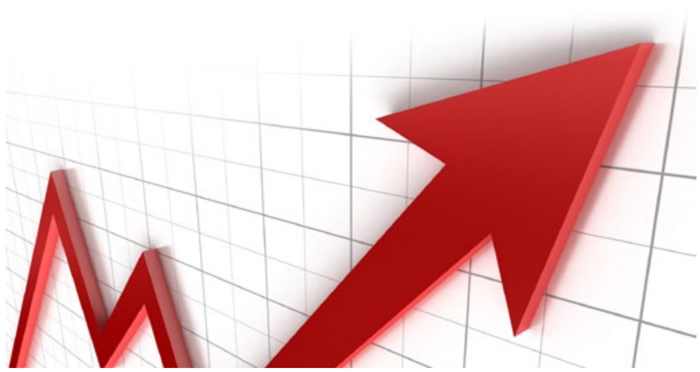
6. **Track further voluntary content consumption**: Providing further resources for live and post-webinar consumption is a great way to track interest and engagement, which can add to the lead intelligence gathering, and therefore the lead score. Resources made available during the webinar and the webinar recording, such as a product overview PDF to download or a web link to a "Contact Us" form are very valuable behaviors to track and add to the lead qualification process. Consider giving each file or web link a unique score. For instance, if someone downloads the PPT from the presenter, that is not as valuable as if they downloaded a solution overview about your product or service. Passing on specific intelligence to sales regarding what each attendee consumed will guide the sales team's approach to lead follow-up correspondence, and could potentially produce a more fruitful conversation with that prospect. Depending on the webinar platform being used, this type of behavioral information can also be tracked for webinar recordings because the file download and web link options remain live.

"Webinar attendance doesn't tell the whole story."

7. **Real-time conversations accelerate the process**. Q&A is one of the most commonly used interactive tactics during webinars. Depending on the content of the webinar, attendees may be asking questions about your product and service, so having a way to flag these questions that indicate shopping behavior or strong interest is extremely valuable. Whether this behavior is wrapped up into an overall score, or the information is simply passed on to sales with the rest of the lead information, be sure not to overlook the richness of the information collected during Q&A. If applicable, inviting a sales representative to assist with attendees' questions during the webinar will accelerate the conversation with prospects in real time, while also facilitating a smooth hand off to sales.

8. **Overall engagement points to interest level**. Planning out interactions throughout the webinar will help marketing and sales gauge individuals' interest level. Adding chat participation, use of emoticons, participation in polls, and activity during Q&A to the behavior scoring equation can give the sales teams an overall sense of how engaged each attendee was during the webinar to get a general sense of interest level. Some webinar platforms will generate this overall engagement score automatically. If not, marketing automation or CRM systems can wrap this data up into an overall score. Whether or not your systems can wrap up webinar behavior and content interest into a nice neat score, taking steps toward passing all the behavioral and content information collected before, during and after the webinar to sales in a meaningful way will help sales prioritize leads and provide a relevant follow up effort.

"Q&A is one of the most commonly used interactive tactics during webinars."



Webinars, above all other marketing tactics, give marketers and sales a unique opportunity to interact with prospective clients and qualify leads based on real-time behavior. Scoring on webinar content and behavior is easier than ever before due to the digital nature of webinars, which allows for ease of tracking and integration with existing marketing systems. Generating sales-ready leads is the highest priority of any marketer and gathering demographic information is not enough—it is time to take lead qualification to the next levels.

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Shelby has been in high-tech marketing since 2004, having led the marketing departments for channel partners of IBM and Adobe, and, most recently, implementing programs in field marketing, demand generation, and product marketing at Adobe. During this time she has produced and managed over 500 webinars. Previously, she ran a small business in professional sports entertainment in California. She has an MBA with a dual-focus in Marketing and Management from San Diego State University and a BA in Literature and Writing from the University of California San Diego, Revelle.

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- Campaign management and lead scoring
- Dynamic content delivery during and after the event
- Deeply engaging experiences
- Integration with marketing systems
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