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Press, Prospects, and Spiders: How to Capture All Three Audiences With Your Message

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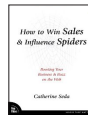
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Sample Chapter is provided courtesy of [New Riders](#)

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Getting quoted by the press offline is great. Getting quoted by the press online is even better. In this chapter, search marketing strategist Catherine Seda talks about low-cost ways to reach the press online and shares her hard earned tips for connecting with three audiences at once: press, prospects, and spiders.



This chapter is from the book **How to Win Sales & Influence Spiders: Boosting Your Business & Buzz on the Web**

Why Webinars Work

A webinar is a Web-based seminar. Conferencing companies such as Genesys, Microsoft, Raindance, and WebEx offer the technology to invite the world to hear and see your message. It's an engaging tool to communicate with partners, employees, investors, prospects, and customers. It's probably easy for you to think of creating content for those audiences. That's why I've put this technology in this chapter, because few companies think about using a webinar to attract media attention.

Many conferencing companies integrate data, voice, and video over a Web browser such as Microsoft's Internet Explorer. You create the presentation and invite an audience to participate. You and your audience will log into the presentation via the Web browser. Typically, each person must first accept a Java plug-in if the conferencing company detects this update is needed. A click on an "accept" button that appears should do the trick. Watch out for webinars that force people to download and install any necessary technologies because it's very possible they won't or can't.

The webinar can be offered in a few different formats. For example, you could create a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation as the visual part of the presentation. or you could use a Web camera to capture your live image on video to give your webinar a more "in person" seminar experience.

For the audio, everyone could call a conference call phone number, or you could use a microphone and let people listen to you via the Web (computer to computer Voice over Internet Protocol, also called VoIP).

Inviting the Press to Attend

Let's talk about inviting the press to your webinar and what's newsworthy.

To attend a webinar, people must usually register for it. You could create a "press only" presentation and require that the participants disclose the media outlet they represent. That lets you know who is going to be there. Because many journalists are freelancers, you can't assume their e-mail address will reveal that information.

Here are ideas of webinars that might interest the press:

- A preview of a new product or service
- A preview of a new survey or research report
- A preview of a new case study
- A preview of new how-to tips

Notice a common theme? I highly recommend giving the press a preview of something new you're about to release to the public. By giving them a sneak peek, you're including them in your public relations plan. This is strategic. Journalists want to be the first to break a story. So give them this opportunity.

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You don't have to create a presentation exclusively for the press. An educational event for the public will attract the media, too. Your statistics, case studies, and tips will interest the press and public.

Remember to promote your webinar on your site, blog, and e-mail list. Consider writing an optimized press release about it—and perhaps ask your partners to promote it.

Why not launch an online ad campaign? As I mentioned earlier, webinar participants usually register by providing at least their name and e-mail address. You want as many people to register as possible, regardless of whether or not they actually show up. You'll get them on your e-mail list. That's important if your webinar is free.

Just a note of caution—free webinars often have a high “no show” rate. I once taught a webinar through another company that recorded over 400 people registered, yet only about 100 showed up. If registration is required, at least you can follow up with all who registered.

Q & A Sessions

Another way to effectively use webinars as a marketing tool is to allow the audience to ask questions during your presentation.

Consider using the webinar interface instead of the phone. Through the Web, participants can type in their questions, allowing you to see which questions you'll choose to answer, even giving you a little time to think before you speak. Your participants may post far more questions than you can answer. That's okay. Your answers might make the perfect Web article, blog post, press release, or some other marketable information.

Although Web conferencing technologies offer handy communication features, you might not want to limit yourself to hosting event-driven webinars. Why not create a webinar that's always open? one that doesn't require you to be present?

Viewstream, an interactive media company, created a Flash-based product demonstration for one of its clients. As long as the viewer's Web browser supported Macromedia Flash, no download was required. Because the webinar was always available, the client's sales team focused on closing sales instead of showing the demonstration on a one-by-one basis. In this case, webinar participants weren't required to register. They called the phone number shown during the presentation, if they were interested in receiving more information.

The result? Within 90 days of posting the webinar and launching a public relations campaign to drive people to it, Viewstream's client saw a 200 percent increase in its lead-to-sale ratio. In case you were wondering if webinars really work as a sales tool, not just a marketing one, I hope this example is reassuring.

Unfortunately, webinars aren't spider friendly. Last time I checked, spiders can't log in, listen in, or watch a presentation. Plus, these are usually hosted on the conferencing company's site, not yours, which means your site couldn't get credit for the content anyway.

Want to know a solution to this problem?

If you can host the webinar on your site, create a special landing page for it. Then optimize that page for relevant keywords. You'll need content. That's where writing a title and summary for your webinar is helpful. Spiders and humans can read that.

Press releases, Internet radio, podcasts, and webinars are all effective ways for achieving online publicity—from the press and prospects. Regardless of which strategies you use, keep in mind that the press will follow the trail back to your Web site.

Unfortunately, many companies forget about the media when it comes to their Web site. If you feed the press with the kind of information they need, you'll greatly increase your chances of being featured.