

CONNECT

 eyefulpresentations



THE CONNECT PHASE



We won't mince our words - the Connect phase is the least glamorous stage of developing an engaging webinar or virtual event. The focus tends to be more on analysis and challenging yourself with awkward questions than on creativity. But what Connect lacks in creativity, it more than makes up for when it comes to importance.

Connect is the foundation upon which a successful webinar or virtual event is built. It's the check and balance carried out at the very start of the process...and then the yardstick by which every decision should be measured again.

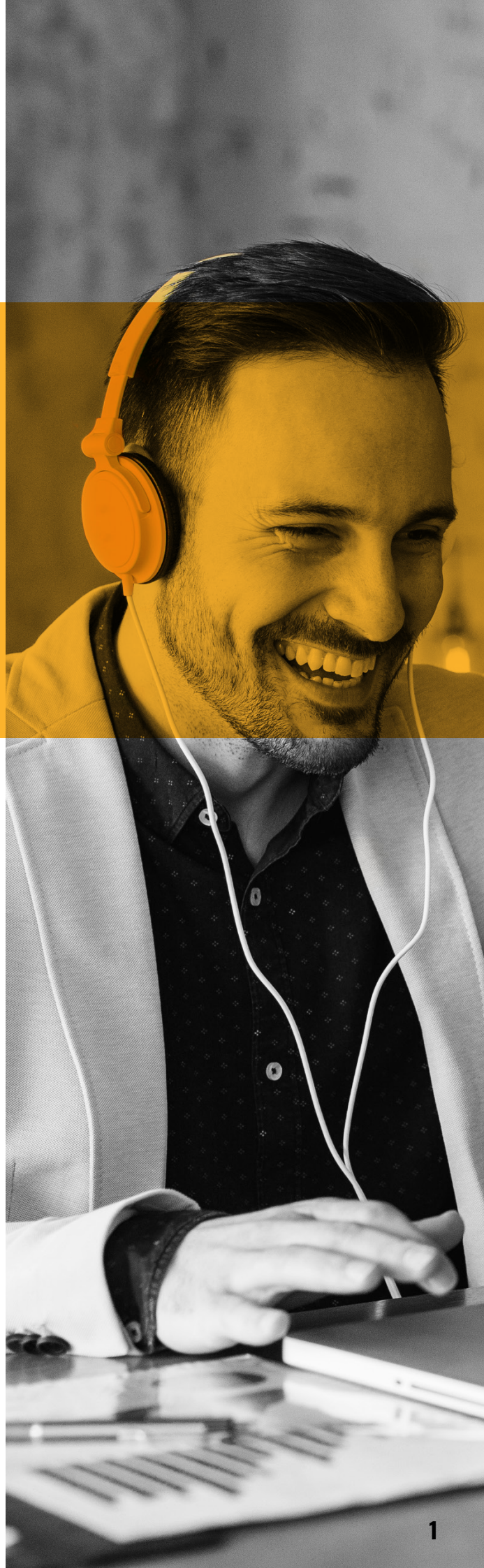
Success criteria for the entire project? A well run Connect phase will clarify this in terms of investment, social media engagement, brand positioning.

Ideal number of attendees? Connect.

Ideal profile of attendees? Ditto.

You get the gist - investment in the Connect phase pays back many times over.

So where to start?






DEFINING OBJECTIVES & MEASUREMENTS

Any form of communication, especially in presentation form, needs to be driven by a Call to Action. All webinars and virtual events, from internal updates to tradeshow, are fundamentally an act of persuasion. As such, they need to have clear focus on prompting action from the audience. In blunt terms, your webinar or virtual event can only be considered a success if it has prompted your audience to do something or think differently as a result of the information you have shared with them.

Identifying quite what you want your audience to do/think differently at the end of the event is the \$10,000 question.

It is also typically subject to high levels of debate from stakeholders stakeholders across the business (sales will have one idea, marketing another, the CEO another etc etc).

A black and white photograph of a man in a suit and tie, holding a pen over a document. The document features several charts and graphs, including a line graph at the top right, a pie chart in the middle, and a bar chart at the bottom. The man's face is partially visible at the top right, and his hands are in the center, holding the pen. The background is a solid dark blue color with a large, light blue hexagonal shape on the left side.

We recommend starting simple and building up to a clear measure of success:

- What is the purpose of the webinar or virtual event?
- How are you going to measure the quality of the output?
- In terms of a call to action, what is it you want your audience to do?

Download
content?

Sign up for the
next webinar?

Provide a
testimonial?

Sharing more
information
about their
needs?

Requesting a
meeting?

There is a plethora of different outcomes that you may wish to consider, but writing them down and debating them across the stakeholder group is fundamental. And that in itself will drive other areas, such as the theme of the events.

Getting to a consensus and then focusing your energies in this direction may sound like torture, but it is worth every nerve-shredding second. With clarity comes focus and efficiency.

YOUR AUDIENCE

The most important stakeholder in your webinar or virtual event is your audience. The buck stops here for the simple reason that if the speakers, content or calls to action don't resonate with them, the entire process is doomed.

The Connect phase dictates that you obsess about your target audience.

This is much more than simply sketching a facsimile profile of your perfect prospect – job title, company size, sector – it demands that you go deeper, prompting the creation of a detailed understanding of their drivers:

- Why are they carving out time in their busy schedules to attend?
- Why listen to you versus your competition?
- What would success look like for them?
- What would success with them look like for you?

The findings can be incredibly powerful. We worked with a client in the built environment sector who was planning a large virtual event to over 500 delegates. After reviewing their own objectives coupled with a full audience analysis (using our Audience Heatmap tool), we concluded that smaller, more intimate and focused webinars to 40 key contacts would deliver a greater ROI. As we move into a new era of virtual engagement, it's no longer about 'bums on seats' but the returns each event delivers.



THE DELIVERY FORMAT

Again, the focus here is on planning rather than getting into the detail of slideware, visuals or event logos and straplines. At a more fundamental level, how are you going to deliver the information to your audience? Is it a traditional talking head presentation, which is so often the case with webinars and virtual events? Take this time to consider the merits of other formats, such as a Campfire, where a number of presenters informally deliver their message while being facilitated by an MC. Or you decide that pre-recording your keynote and releasing 'as live' works best logistically and for a more global audience. Finally, a formal presentation, followed by a facilitator supported Q&A session might provide a more engaging and interactive experience for your audience.

As always, your audience will dictate certain elements of this, and as will the amount of information you have to share and the type of message that you're keen to get across.



SUPPORTING YOUR PRESENTERS

Once you have your purpose, audience and delivery formats agreed, it's time to focus your attention on your presenters. Not only do they need to be aligned with the overarching message of the event (any event organiser will be able to share horrific tales of presenters who went 'off piste', impacting the entire event), but also be confident in delivering their content in this new virtual format.

Some presenters may be brilliant on stage, in person, and electrifying in a seminar setting, however, delivering information in a virtual way, is a completely different game. Building time into your plan to equip them with the skills, coaching and 'screen time' needed to confidently deliver in this new format can make all the difference come 'showtime'.

TAMING TECHNOLOGY

At some point in the Connect phase for a webinar or virtual event, you will have to bite the bullet and consider which of the plethora of technology solutions are most appropriate to your event (and audience... and presenters).

Technology can become very complex very quickly. Our recommendation is keep it simple. At the most basic level, technology should be an enabler to help you manage the swathes of valuable information that can be generated through a well-run webinar or virtual event. The value comes from being able to track all the moving parts of your event.





- What are the most popular topics (and which are seeing less engagement)?
- What is the profile of the attendees in each topic area – a select group of highly motivated decision makers is likely to deliver more immediate value to your business than a huge 'room' of tyre kickers.
- What happened after the webinar or virtual event? What content was greedily consumed by your target audience weeks later vs. eye-catching video that barely got a click on your event page?

Utilising technology early in the process gives you even greater visibility of what content will work (and what won't) for your attendees. Generating and analysing data from the Connect phase ensures you can use it with higher levels of trust throughout your nurturing campaign, from first engagement at registration through to the Sustain phase.

GET SOCIAL

A great way to build awareness of your event and then to subsequently engage your audience through each of the phases is social media.

Ensuring you have your social media campaign clear at this early stage is key. It goes way beyond the drumming up of interest in your event – you should be viewing it as a heartbeat of interaction and engagement all the way through the process. Carefully timed Tweets and LinkedIn messages to your target audience can reinforce the information being shared 'live'. Remember, this is about communication with the individuals that are going to drive value from the event so our recommendation would be to worry less about the numbers and focus more in connecting with the right people. They will play an important part in keeping your heartbeats of information pulsing through your target market long after the event has closed.

LOOKING FORWARD

The Connect phase can be tough going. The planning, debates and occasional leaps of faith that make up this phase of a webinar or virtual event can be exhausting BUT when sufficient time and focus is invested, it builds a strong foundation for really valuable audience engagement, content and ROI.

