# The little book of Webinars

The Charity Learning Consortium

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# The little book of
# Webinars

By Martin Couzins

The CharityLearning Consortium

**With thanks to**

Douglas Noble, Drake Music

Rachel Winfield, Leeds University Union

Nicola Tyzack, National Autistic Society

Sarah Hadfield, The Orders of St John Care Trust

Becky Norman, TrainingZone

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# Foreword

Webinars have been used for some time as a tool to share information virtually with a large number of people, no matter where they are in the world. But in today's climate of rapid change, the need for tools that suit the flexible, remote and self-directed learner have never been more important. As such, the humble webinar has the potential to offer great value to organisations – if used in the right way.

Small in size but packed with insights, **The little book of Webinars** is a useful guide for those looking to add this digital learning tool to their repertoire. It will also help anyone wishing to refresh their current approach.

I hope to see you online soon!

**Becky Norman**
TrainingZone

Webinars
are a great first step
into virtual training.
They're personal, interactive
and responsive
to need

# Webinars can transform learning

Webinar technology can help transform the way learning is delivered.

Presentations, lectures and events can all be delivered online using video conferencing software. The technology enables participants, and the host, to interact with each other in a number of ways, including chat, audio, video, polls and annotations.

Webinars provide charity learning teams with a really cost-effective method to deliver content to a large number of people, regardless of location. But it's important to know exactly when and how to use them.

**Tip: Business needs first, technology second**

All learning interventions should start with a learning need, linked to an organisational goal or challenge. As with any learning technology, resist the temptation to use webinars just for the sake of using them.

Webinars are a great way for us to share our own practice and thinking more widely across the sector we're working in

Douglas Noble,
Drake Music

# 10 reasons to use webinars for L&D

Once learning teams get familiar with what a webinar platform has to offer, they realise there is a huge opportunity to do learning and development (L&D) differently. Webinars can:

1. Offer a cost-effective way to reach many people
2. Become an accessible way to share good practice and thinking
3. Host two-way conversations on topics
4. Be recorded, so they become a resource
5. Help you deliver content to a large audience
6. Enable subject matter experts to share their knowledge, wherever they are
7. Provide a personal experience - participants can engage with the speaker and each other
8. Form part of a blended learning experience and bring programmes to life
9. Help you deliver content across geographical boundaries
10. Be delivered in real time

Don’t be seduced by
webinar functionality.
Start with the end
in mind – the outcome –
and work back from
there to design
the right
intervention

# Case study: Leeds University Union

Leeds University Union has 650 staff and 3,000 volunteers. Webinars have helped streamline the induction process, giving managers time to focus on other duties.

As part of a blended approach to induction, new starters receive compliance content digitally, and then attend a webinar to meet their manager and teammates. This really helps teams to put names to faces and get to know each other.

The union also uses webinars to help develop volunteers into student leaders. Alumni – based around the UK and the world – are invited to share their development pathways with other volunteers. The union can't afford to pay alumni to return to the campus to share their stories, so webinars provide a perfect means of sharing insights.

Webinars are great if you have a speaker or subject expert who is willing and able to share their knowledge to a wider audience, that might not otherwise get the opportunity to hear it

**Nicola Tyzack,**
**National Autistic Society**

# Webinars are great for sharing experience and content

## Sharing expert voices

Webinars are powerful if you have a speaker or subject matter expert who is willing and able to share their insights. Webinars make experts accessible to an international audience in a cost-effective and accessible way. Just consider the difference in cost between asking people to attend a face-to-face event versus facilitating it online.

## Sharing specific content

Don't even think about delivering a successful day's training in a webinar format. You can't. If you try, people will disengage very quickly. Webinars are suited to delivering specific topics, rather than a broad schedule of different content. Brevity is key. Keep the webinar engaging and short (60 minutes or less).

Webinars help liberate insights that used to be available to just the few, not the many

# Webinars can extend reach and build engagement

## Reach

Webinars enable people to share content on a one-to-many basis. That could mean hundreds of people online all at one time. Webinars also enable you to include speakers who might not be able to attend a live event, so you can include a wider range of speakers too.

## Engagement

How much engagement you want to encourage depends on the purpose of the webinar and the size of the audience. Webinars come with functionality that enables charities to engage with their audience, the audience to engage with each other, and the audience to engage with the speaker. Hosts can use a variety of functions for this, including audio, text chat, polls and whiteboards.

You can be a bit gung-ho with webinars and think you can use them for everything. It's important to remember webinars are just one of many ways to deliver learning

**Rachel Winfield, Leeds University Union**

# Understand the limitations

Long, dull webinars are sadly all too common. The format is unforgiving. It is live, online, with a captive audience.

There are a few factors that can derail webinars:

- Speakers who aren't good at presenting
- Poor technical management
- Simply turning day long, face-to-face programmes into online events. Just don't!
- Thinking a webinar is a collaborative learning tool. It isn't

**Warning!** You can't just put anything into a webinar and create effective learning. Webinars are not a panacea for all of L&D's challenges.

**Tip: Learn from what doesn't work**

If you attend a webinar that's not working, take a note of what doesn't work and why. Consider how you could improve the experience.

The key to success is being really well prepared – people will ask you anything and everything!

**Sarah Hadfield, OSJCT**

# Case study: OSJCT

Sarah Hadfield at The Orders of St John Care Trust has been using webinars for IT training for years. It meant she had a good system in place to meet extra demand to deliver training in MS Teams and Zoom.

Webinars usually last 40 minutes, with 20 minutes training and the rest informal questions. She finds that gives enough time to deliver something of value to busy staff running care homes.

Live webinars are backed up with a variety of resources that Sarah has created, including quick reference guides, FAQs and videos. She updates the FAQs weekly, to include new questions people ask.

Feedback, like this example, indicates this approach works: “Excellent, a good opportunity to see things in action to speed up confidence prior to use.”

Like any good learning design, the key is in understanding the need and designing something that hits the mark. Webinars are no different

Martin Baker,
Charity Learning Consortium

# Designing webinars

Important things to consider:

### Business/training needs analysis

Be clear about the audience and design the webinar to meet their needs.

### Experience design

Consider what the webinar will look and sound like. Create engaging visuals and play to the strengths of the format. Ensure the webinar is accessible.

### Engagement design

If you want engagement, design for it. What questions will you ask, how will you show the answers, and how do you want participants to interact with each other and the speaker?

### Impact measurement

Consider what impact data you want from the webinar. How will you measure it?

### Marketing and communications

Market the webinar in a way that reflects what participants will experience and deliver on that.

I'd say you need all the elements of classroom-training skills, but with some extra elements added on top

Nicola Tyzack

# Five skills for facilitating webinars

Although different from the classroom, there are similarities in designing a webinar. So, if you're accomplished at classroom training, you can convert this to online delivery. In this respect, webinars make a good first step in shifting from the physical to virtual environment.

When it comes to managing the experience, there are five key skills that L&D teams need to ensure a successful webinar. They are:

1. Production
2. Coaching
3. Presentation
4. Improvisation
5. Communication

If you can design a course, and an aim and an objective, and some interesting content and slides, then you can design a webinar!

Rachel Winfield

# Skill #1
# Production

It's crucial to understand how the webinar platform you are using works, and how to use the various functions available.

There are plenty of platforms to choose from, such as GoToWebinar, Webex and WebinarJam. Your organisation may already have a subscription. If not, you may be able to use a charity discount.

Practice, practice and practice so you know how to use the software inside out. If you have guest speakers, you'll need to be able to support them through the webinar. You'll also have to support participants who encounter any difficulties using the software, especially for the first time.

**Tip: Collaborate**

At the Charity Learning Consortium, members regularly share expertise.

Develop your skills
and then share them
and coach others, including
colleagues, speakers
and participants, so they
grow in confidence
in using webinar
technology

# Skill #2
# Coaching

As you develop your technical abilities, consider your role as a coach to others, especially speakers. Not all subject matter experts like to speak in front of others, so coach them through the practice sessions. Help train colleagues too.

Webinars work better when there is a host and a producer, as well as a speaker, so the more people that are accomplished in these skills in your organisation, the better. Develop your role as webinar coach. Raising the skills and confidence of those around you will improve the quality of all of your webinars.

**Tip: Develop your own skills**

Offer drop-in webinar sessions to help colleagues become more confident with the software.

The speaker needs to be engaging and know about their topic. There's nothing worse than listening to someone who is just reading off the slides

Nicola Tyzack

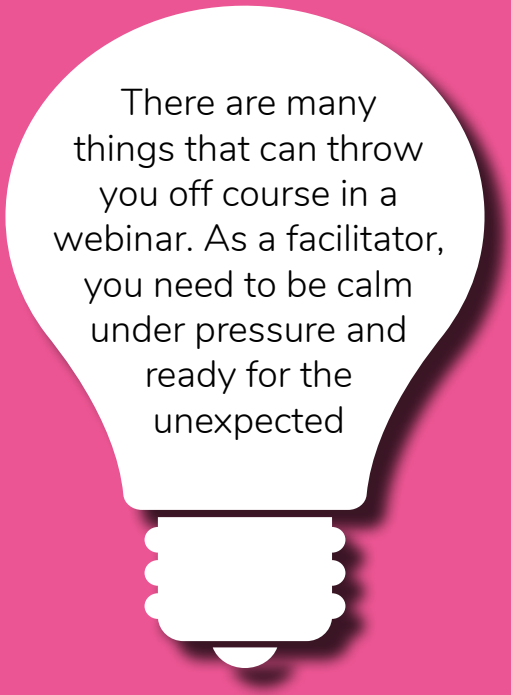
# Skill #3
# Presentation

You'll need a good on-camera presence, confident tone of voice and the ability to speak on a subject in an engaging way.

These are all skills that can be developed.
If you're going to be a webinar presenter, try out different techniques on others and ask for their comments. Let others try presenting to you as well, and give feedback to them.

**Tip: Practice makes perfect**

Practice with colleagues, friends or family.


There are many things that can throw you off course in a webinar. As a facilitator, you need to be calm under pressure and ready for the unexpected

# Skill #4
# Improvisation

Webinars are live events – which means anything can and does happen! With a good knowledge of the webinar platform you should be able to respond to the unexpected. This might involve supporting a speaker or helping participants.

The key is to know your way around the webinar platform, keep calm and keep everyone on the webinar informed of what's happening and what they can expect next.

**Tip: The more you do, the better you'll get**

The more webinars you produce, the more familiar you'll become with the types of technical challenges that can crop up for participants. Make a mental note of them, and how you responded.

If you don't know the answer to something don't guess, admit it and get back to people afterwards

Sarah Hadfield

# Skill #5
# Communication

Webinars enable communication. Whether you're presenting or supporting, you need to feel comfortable, and be able to communicate clearly and with energy. It's more difficult to keep people engaged online as you can't always see them, so you'll need to work harder to ensure people feel welcomed and part of the event.

**Tip: Take time to reflect**

Record your sessions and make sure you review them. Look at what worked well and where you can improve your communications.

For the first couple of webinars we were quite nervous about how they were going to go. So we pre-recorded some of them and played the video as if we were doing it live

Rachel Winfield

# 10 tips for success

1. Know the webinar technology inside out
2. Don't use too much content. Keep the message simple
3. Limit the length of the webinar to 60 minutes or less
4. Make room for discussion, so people can connect
5. Practice – even the most informal webinars need practice and preparation
6. Use a host and a producer, as well as a speaker, to get the best results
7. Listen, watch and be responsive to the needs of the audience
8. Interact with participants – chat is a good way to do that
9. Know how to mute all participants, especially for larger groups
10. Gather feedback and use that to improve your next webinar

Webinars are a gift
for learning professionals.
They provide the mechanism
to listen and to learn what
your colleagues need
from you

# Two questions for improvement

A live webinar presents learning teams with an opportunity to understand what attendees want from a session and whether it then delivers. These insights are invaluable for learning teams looking to constantly improve their offering.

**Tip:** Ask these questions at the start and end of every session. Ask participants to share their answers in chat, and save a record for your reference.

**Start with:** What would make this a valuable session today?

**End with:** Did you get what you needed from today's session?

## How can webinars help you?

As with all technologies, webinar platforms offer a multitude of features and therefore possibilities. Take time to pause and consider what webinars could do for L&D in your organisation.

Because of coronavirus, we started a weekly news show for all our staff via webinar. Everyone in the company dials in on a Wednesday and watches the chief exec deliver the weekly roundup of what's been going on

Rachel Winfield

# Quick tips for success **before a webinar**

- ✓ Be clear on the business challenge and learning need that the webinar is helping overcome
- ✓ Know your audience – identify who the webinar is for
- ✓ Communicate a compelling story about attending the webinar
- ✓ Send a short survey to understand the audience's understanding of the topic
- ✓ Ask for accessibility requirements
- ✓ Send out pre-event resources so attendees are better placed to engage with the event
- ✓ Have a plan for how the session will run and share that with speakers

# Quick tips for success **during a webinar**

- ✓ Remember to hit record so the session is saved
- ✓ Have the opening slide on screen as people arrive
- ✓ Use the text chat to welcome people and encourage them to chat and ask questions
- ✓ Provide clear housekeeping on how the event will run and the tools you will be using
- ✓ Be clear about what people should do if they have access/technology problems
- ✓ Be welcoming and friendly throughout the webinar
- ✓ Use polls and annotation tools to gather feedback during the session
- ✓ Encourage attendees to respond and participate to questions and comments

# Quick tips for success **after a webinar**

- ✓ Use the recording as a resource and share with attendees and the wider organisation
- ✓ Share any relevant links and resources that were mentioned in the session
- ✓ Gather insights from comments during and after the webinar – and act on them
- ✓ Create related resources that people said they would value
- ✓ Debrief with speakers – what would you do differently next time?
- ✓ If it went well, share your success story across your organisation

Find out more at **clc.link/webinars**

# About the Charity Learning Consortium

We are a one-stop shop dedicated to providing affordable and effective learning solutions for charitable organisations. Membership includes a suite of eLearning, charity-specific video content, a learning management system and access to a vibrant community for members to connect and share good practice. You also get a whole host of other goodies as part of an annual subscription.

Hundreds of charitable organisations benefit from collaborating with us. Bringing them together enables the Consortium to offer cost-effective, quality eLearning to more than a million people across the UK. Our collaborative approach paves the way for learning and development success, with ongoing support, fantastic networking opportunities, relevant workshops, and an inspirational Charity Learning Conference & Awards.

**charitylearning.org**

# About the author Martin Couzins

As Head of Insights at content and communications agency **insightsmedia.co.uk**, Martin Couzins helped clients design, facilitate and produce webinars. He now has an inhouse strategic communications role at Fosway Group in which he continues to facilitate webinars.

Martin set up and manages **www.learnpatch.com** a curation platform for L&D professionals. He's a recipient of Training Journal's Special Achievement Award and was shortlisted in the Learning Awards for his work designing and delivering four massive, open online courses.

‘Like any good learning design, the key is in understanding the need and designing something that hits the mark. Webinars are no different’

**Martin Baker**
**Charity Learning Consortium**

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