

How to Translate Your In-Person Presentation Online

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Communicators from organizations large and small recognize that presentations are not only essential to productivity, but often differ in nature (e.g., training, seminars, internal communications) and benefit from ongoing skill development. This is also true when it comes to moving presentations online.

As we found in surveying more than 200 professionals for this paper, however, moving presentations online doesn't come without concerns such as keeping participants engaged and dealing with the fact that presenters can't see participants. Further, many respondents feel hampered by constraints with their organizations' attitude toward online presentations and/or technology choices.

Fortunately, the opportunity to transform both a presenter's skills, and preparedness to be a trusted advisor in the organization is highly desirable.

This paper delivers recommendations that any presenter can use to accelerate their virtual presentation successes in the form of three learning stages

- Stage 1: Understand the context for success with virtual presentations
- Stage 2: Adapt your presentation for engagement in the virtual room
- Stage 3: Discover what you can do better or uniquely in the new room

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Stage 1: Analyze the Context for Success with Virtual Presentations

In *Start With Why* Simon Sinek makes the case for your purpose driving your tactics. This survey not only sought to understand how presenters deliver value with virtual presentations, but we compared the results to the same survey delivered in 2009.

1a: Determine Which “Whys” Apply to Your Organization

Saving the cost of travel is still the most influential reason for moving presentations online (74% of respondents).

It is increasingly clear, however, that presenters are finding value in virtual presentations for reasons that transcend thinking that virtual presentations are second-rate alternatives to being in person.

For example, of respondents who indicated an “I’m a pro” level of virtual presentation acumen (15% of those with experience presenting online), 87% value “helps us reach people we would not otherwise reach,” a full 20% higher than respondents as a whole (67%).

Takeaway

Webinars and virtual classes aren’t better or worse than presenting in-person, they’re different. Analyze their value in context.

Which of the following factors INFLUENCE your decision to use live webinars or virtual classrooms? (Select all that apply)			
Value factors	2014	2009	Change
Helps us reach people we would not otherwise reach	67%	52%	15%
Saves the inconvenience of travel	65%	54%	11%
Allows us to include remote subject matter experts	53%	44%	9%
Allows us to train more employees and/or customers	62%	54%	8%
Saves time away from other duties	55%	55%	0%
Allows us to nurture prospects and leads	22%	22%	0%
Helps us become a “greener” organization	28%	30%	-2%
Saves the cost of travel	74%	80%	-6%
Allows us to add a visual component to a conference call	48%	55%	-7%

1b: Adjust Your Expectations Relative to Your Experience

Respondents were asked, in separate questions, about their relative experience with making virtual presentations and what they would identify as their biggest challenge.

Respondents who identified themselves as the most experienced rated preparation/adaptation as their top challenge (29% of respondents). As a group, their challenge with engagement (15%) was lowest relative to less experienced groups.

Conversely, the least experienced presenters are more concerned about technology and preparation (44% and 46% of respondents respectively).

Interestingly, the middle group is as comfortable with technology as the pros, but appears to be the most self-conscious about their ability to engage (55%).

Takeaway

Learning the tools and how to get ready for virtual presentations are mastered more quickly than the skills of engagement. Give yourself a bit of grace.

If you have experience delivering virtual presentations, which best describes your experience?	
Level of experience	Percentage of respondents with this experience
I have presented at one or a few, I know some basics.	28%
I am actively using virtual presentations. The basics are down, I'm starting to learn advanced techniques	30%
I'm a pro - using advanced techniques and innovating on my own	16%

What is your biggest challenge when making virtual presentations? (Choose only one)			
Level of experience	Keeping participants engaged	Using webinar technology	Preparing, adapting to the virtual room
I have presented at one or a few, I know some basics.	28%	44%	46%
I am actively using virtual presentations. The basics are down, I'm starting to learn advanced techniques	55%	28%	21%
I'm a pro - using advanced techniques and innovating on my own	15%	28%	29%

Stage 2: Adapt Your Presentation for Engagement in the Virtual Room

Ideally, technology assists engagement rather than inhibits it. To accelerate your mastery with engagement, start with a web conferencing configuration that best matches your presentation objectives. Once you've chosen the right "room setup," then map the tactics you use offline to your online presentation.

2a: Choose the Right Room Setup

Communicators making in-person presentations know that both the size of the audience and the configuration of the room affect how they interact with the audience. The same is true with virtual rooms.

Unfortunately, many virtual presentations feel limiting not because they have to be, but because the virtual room isn't equipped to support the desired interactions and workflow.

Takeaway

If engagement is the goal, start with the right room before you ever get to the live presentation.

	Meetings	Presentations	Training
Scale	Small	Mid to large	Small to mid
Presenter - Participant Relationship	Collaborative - Presenter may lead and guide, but every participant has the potential to be a co-contributor	Communicative - Presenter or small team are "on stage"; participants may interact, but are not usually key contributors in the event	Cooperative - Presenter/facilitator leads the learning experience; high-level of learner participation desired or expected
Time/Timing	Most likely scenario: either to be used on-the-fly (like a phone call) or set up for recurrence; often set up via Outlook	Usually scheduled for single occurrences	Most likely scenario to involve a single class offering the same session at different times or a series of different sessions over time
Needed Level of Technological Enablement	Basic (screen sharing, changing presenter, sharing keyboard mouse, chat, recording)	Intermediate (Basic + customizable registration page, automated email notifications, polls and surveys)	Advanced (Basic + Intermediate + "course catalogue"-oriented registration page, often need to host/manage a library of content, may need to limit class size and have solution automatically change, use of tests, may have more complex need for materials distribution)

2b: Map Your Presentation Tactics to Your Engagement Tools

Changing the medium of communication means that how you engage participants changes. Presenting online isn't the same as presenting face-to-face, but you can accelerate your mastery of engaging a virtual audience by mapping your offline tactics to a new set of tools.

Stage	In-Person Experiences	Enabling Tool or Scenario	Maximizing Engagement
Prepare	Keep an eye on the whole room	Reconfigure your conferencing layout	Arrange the tools in your web conferencing control panel so you can glance at those most important to you (e.g., the participant list or a dashboard that shows participant attentiveness); HINT: This might even include undocking a tool from the panel
Prepare	Distribute materials	Upload/share from a materials library	Presenters control the pace of a presentation, and engagement is also improved when you control the timing of when you share a handout, worksheet, or have participants watch a video
Deliver	Get participants back from a break	Break timer	Attention is improved dramatically when it's only asked for in chunks; HINT: Consider a game or incentive that rewards participants to return on time
Deliver	Keep an eye on attentiveness	Attentiveness indicator, Questions indicator	Attentiveness indicators detect the active application on participants' desktops, and those who are "somewhere else" are registered as inattentive; Look for this in a dashboard for whole-group indicators or on the participant list to see attentiveness by individual
Deliver	Use your facial expression and gestures	Webcam	Draw participants in by making eye contact with your webcam; Occasionally ask participants to look directly at the camera so you can show them something
Deliver	Whiteboard	Drawing tools	Use a pointer or a variety of highlighters and pens to direct attention; Change up what you use to keep it interesting
Deliver	Project your computer	Desktop sharing	Consider dropping out of PowerPoint "presentation mode" to show something else; treat it like a participant is standing next to you and you've invited him or her to look over your shoulder as you show and tell
Interact	Ask for a show of hands	Participant "hand up" tool	Whether planned or on-the-fly, gauge participation and response by learning to see hands up "at a glance;" HINT: You likely can do this in more than one place such as the participant list or a dashboard
Interact	Participants can "lean over and whisper to their neighbors"	Chat privately	Active participants are less likely to wander away; Enable private chat to let them more naturally chat amongst themselves

Stage	In-Person Experiences	Enabling Tool or Scenario	Maximizing Engagement
Interact	Participants engage in a group discussion	Writing: Chat publicly Audio: Unmute all or select individuals	While some presentations are about what the presenter has to share, often learning and engagement improve dramatically when participants can voice their questions and inputs
Interact	Maintain control of the flow	Mute/unmute all	As the presenter you lead the pace of the session, and at some point you need to get back to what you need to share
Interact	Ask for feedback that helps you understand how you're doing	Polling	Little is more engaging for participants than having the presentation catered to them; use polls to gauge their reactions and needs
Interact	Gauge how participants are learning	Testing	Tests enable you to gather feedback formally; Consider not only testing after sessions, but during a session to assess comprehension; HINT: Plan a break to give yourself a few minutes to check the report
Interact	Establish rapport	Chat, public	Many presentations benefit when participants have a chance to introduce themselves; Another benefit is that you demonstrate early that you are live and expecting to be interactive in a normal way
Interact	Read a participant's name tag, call on him or her by name	Attendee list	People like to hear their names, but an additional benefit (especially with a large group) is that even participants you don't call on realize you are there and are personally vested in them

Stage 3: Discover What You Can Do Better or Uniquely in Your Virtual Room

After adapting your presentation to a new set of tools, something magical happens: you discover that some things you do offline can actually be done better (and sometimes uniquely!) in the new room. Here are a few practical things to try.

Gather Pre-Presentation Input

Using a registration page doesn't just have to be for an RSVP. Treat it like a mini-survey. Customize a question to ask for information that will give you insight about your participants. Use the web conferencing solution's ability to generate a report instantly to review responses as you are putting your presentation together. **TIP:** Use this even for a presentation that's internal to your organization.

Practice In the Same Room as You Will Present In

Presenters at in-person events know the value of "walking the room" in advance as part of their preparation. Online, this is not only easier, but you can set up polls and other preparations in advance. Best: Practice from the same computer and internet connection you will make your live presentation from.

Bring in an Additional Presenter or Expert

Another voice of experience adds depth and richness to your participants' experience. Sometimes time and money prohibit this from happening offline. Online they almost never do.

Interact with Every Participant Equally

When online, there is no participant sitting in the back of the room where you can't see their hand up or hand up. Further, in a virtual room they can interact with each other equally. **TIP:** In the pane where participants are listed, clicking on a column header will sort that column. If, for example, you wanted to see all the hands up without scrolling down the list of participants, click on that column and they will all sort to the top.

Build Rapport More Quickly

In an in-person room, if 20 participants introduce themselves, the exercise likely takes 20 minutes. Have participants type their “about me” details into chat and you can do it in three. This is even useful if there are 1000 participants online. You might not be able to respond to all of them individually, but as you respond to some, participants will realize you are live and accessible. Powerful!

Gather Quantitative Feedback. More Quickly

Unless you spend time on counting, a set of hands that go up in an in-person room shows you “approximately a third of people said they prefer option B.” Online you not only have exact numbers, but everybody votes in a poll at the same time. Like building rapport more quickly, you achieve a result more quickly because everybody votes at the same time. Bonus: Those responses are captured in a report, too.

Manage Questions More Equitably

In-person presentations often bias interactions to those who sit near the front of the room, even if someone is running around the room with a microphone. Online there is no distance bias.

Look for Groups of Common Written Questions

With larger audiences, sometimes you can't get to every question. Glancing at the written questions, however, gives you a chance to look for FAQs (frequently asked questions) to ensure you address the more common needs.

Follow Up After the Presentation

Online participants use their email as part of how they log in. This enables two creative ways to improve post-event engagement.

First, automated emails go out to those who registered for the session. The system automatically generates the email, but consider also customizing it to include invitations to ask additional questions, connect on social media, etc.

Second, post-event reporting will give you this and every polling or test response and question asked during the presentation. Knowing exactly how a participant was engaging with you *during* your presentation sets you up perfectly to reach out to them *after* the presentation in an informed, meaningful manner.

“The polling feature of GoToWebinar is really, really effective. At the end of the webinar, we can ask attendees, ‘Which program are you interested in?’ And then we can call them within 30 minutes and sign them up, because we already know their needs. We also use polling to gather data from our clients to use in research afterwards.”

—Shannon VanDeByl,
Client Services Manager,
Teneo Results

The Bottom Line

When survey participants were asked about how much they present online now versus what they expect to do in the future, the growth rate was an astonishing 230%. Even if this is overly optimistic, it is an interesting commentary on the value they are experiencing.

It is also a potential indicator of that which you stand to gain in how you create value for your organization and even your professional career.

Success requires transformation. When we move presentations online, the first thing we tend to notice is what we lose relative to our experience presenting in person. To be sure, webinars and virtual classrooms aren't the same as presenting in person, but they also not difficult.

With a clear understanding of your whys and thoughtful application of a new set of tools, you will not only master a new lifetime competency, one additional possibility opens up: you will discover what is uniquely valuable and irreplaceable about presenting online.

Best of all, your audiences will thank you.

“GoToWebinar is a competitive differentiator for our company, allowing us to reach our target audiences in a unique and efficient way.”

—Tim Palmer
Webinar Sales Supervisor
Collette Vacations

About Roger Courville and 1080 Group, LLC



Evidence and Skills for Mastering Webinars and Virtual Classes.

Roger Courville is a speaker, author, analyst, and Chief Aha! Guy at 1080 Group, LLC. The collective team experience includes hundreds of clients, thousands of web seminars, and more than a million web seminar attendees. Contact 1080 Group at info@1080group.com, +1.503.476.1080, or www.twitter.com/1080Group. Roger Courville's blog, curriculum vitae, and mailing list can be found at <http://www.thevirtualpresenter.com>.

About GoToWebinar

GoToWebinar

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Six Step Quickstart Checklist for Virtual Presentations

Save this quickstart checklist for later reference.

✓	Step	Guidance Questions
<input type="checkbox"/>	Think through how you would engage an in-person audience	How do you start your presentation? Is there a formal introduction? What would you do to interact with the audience (e.g., ask for a show of hands)? What do you do if there is an on-the-fly question from a participant?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Set up your online room	What can I create or prepare in advance? Example: set up a poll, upload materials, customized a follow up email, etc. What question(s) could you ask on a registration page that would set you up to better respond to participants' wants, needs, or fears?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create your presentation with elements of engagement in mind	What web conferencing feature best enables the interaction(s) you want? If there are more than one features that could work, which is the most comfortable for you to use? How might you vary which features you use to increase the variety of experiences participants have?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Log in to your room in practice mode; Configure your presentation environment	What do I need to see at a glance or access quickly? What, if anything, will I not use that I could minimize or close altogether? What tools enable me to engage my online audience the way that I want? Are there some tools that should be turned off?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do a "walk through" practice session with the presentation team	What behind-the-scenes things will need to get done (e.g., start the recording)? Who will do it? How will the presentation begin? How will you transition between presenters? How will Q&A be handled?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Go live!	Are you well rested and hydrated? Have you reminded yourself and others that, even if you don't do something the way you wanted, that nobody's going to die?

Interested in even more tips about webinars, virtual classrooms, and presenting virtually? Visit www.TheVirtualPresenter.com.