

Simply, Conferencing

Running an Effective Web Conference

Before Your Web Conference

If it's your first time conducting a web conference

Then keep it simple. Avoid the temptation to try all the bells and whistles if you're just starting out or trying a new system. Master the basic controls: slides, application sharing, polling, and messaging. Once you and your audience are comfortable with these elements, gradually introduce more sophisticated features.

If you're planning a web conference in advance

Then schedule the web conference ahead of time so that all of the details for your meeting have been secured. Upload your presentation in advance and rehearse your delivery by scripting your introductions, transitions and conclusion.

If you would like to notify participants in advance of your web conference

Then send out invitations that include the meeting details: Date, Time, Audio Conference information, Meeting URL, as well as additional details you'd like them to receive, for example logging in a little early to ensure you can start on time. Make sure you proof the meeting information for accuracy before you send out the invitations.

If you're creating a PowerPoint presentation

Then keep the size of your presentations manageable for participants with slower Web connections. You can do this by limiting the amount of graphics or other nonessential content that you put into your presentation. If, however, all of your participants have high-speed connections, feel free to jazz your web conference up with more images and other aesthetic slide content.

If you would like increase retention of your participants during the meeting and gather real-time feedback

Then create polling questions and include those in your presentation.

If your web conference is scheduled for more than 90 minutes including Q&A

Then consider breaking it into segments delivered over a period of days or weeks. Identify the three or four messages within each segment that you want to leave with your audience and build your presentation around them exclusively.

If you would like to record your call for future playback

Then make sure you understand how the recording process works and, if necessary, set it up in advance and test your system for compatibility.

If you have multiple speakers for your meeting

Then plan a rehearsal at least 24 hours in advance to ensure that all speakers are prepared and trained for the meeting. Included in the rehearsal should be:

- Finalize the meeting flow: introduction, order of speakers, closing
- Walk through the content being presented for the live meeting
- Define the Q & A and chat process
- Test all equipment being used for the meeting: telephones, computers, video equipment
- Test any high bandwidth components such as video or flash (include a modem connection)
- Confirm that all speakers will be on a handset/headset.
- Confirm that all speakers will join the live web conference at least 15 minutes in advance.

If it's 15 Minutes prior to call start-time

Then join the web conference as a leader and, if using an Operator Assisted audio conference, confirm all speakers are joined to the leader's sub conference. This will allow for final preparation during which you can go over any last minute details with the whole group.

If you're ready to begin your web conference

Then get off to a fast start and be on time. Just like an In-person meeting, do not penalize those that arrived at the scheduled start time. Spend no more than two minutes introducing your event and providing a high-level overview of the call. This includes turning the call over to the main presenter if an emcee handles introductions. This will give your meeting a fast-paced feel that will keep participants tuned in.

If you'd like to see what your participants are viewing

Then set-up two computers for your web conference: one with your presenter's view and another logged on as an audience member. This gives you a much better sense of what your participants are actually experiencing.

If you will be receiving questions from your audience via online chat

Then designate a leader to manage the incoming questions and either have them respond during the conference or hold questions until Q & A has begun. This will allow you to focus on your message. If you think that your participants might spend more time chatting than paying attention to your presentation, disable this feature before the conference begins.

If you'd like to have maximum computer performance during your web conference

Then close out of all applications that will not be needed for the meeting.

If you wish to read or work on other documents while others have the floor

Then resist the temptation and remain focused on keeping the meeting on track. Just because your audience can't see you does not mean that you still don't owe them your full attention. This is especially true of smaller, more collaborative meetings where all the participants will be playing the role of "leader" at some point during the meeting.

If you're presenting a PowerPoint presentation and its slow to change

Then make a mental note to advance the next slide a little sooner. You gain nothing by stalling with, "Gosh this sure is taking a long time to come up." When something doesn't work as expected it is best to simply go on with the presentation and usually no one will be the wiser.

You intend to application share during your web conference

Open the application(s) and document(s) you are planning to share prior to the start of your web conference. In addition, use the full screen option for maximum impact.

If you intend to share your desktop (rather than a single application)

Then be careful not expose personal or confidential information, and be sure to close email and instant messaging to avoid pop-ups.

If you want to draw attention to certain points during your web conference

Then use the annotation tools to highlight important information.

If you are recording your web conference

Then be sure to let your participants know at the end of the conference how they can view the archive and when it will be available.

After Your Web Conference

If you would like to view a list of who attended your web conference

Then view and download a report of participants who joined by logging into your web conferencing account.

If you recorded your web conference

Then be sure to send out or post the recording for playback. Make sure you send a message communicating this to those who attended the call as well as to those who were supposed to be in attendance but couldn't make it.

If you'd like to improve the delivery of your virtual meetings

Then ask your CentraCall sales rep for feedback on techniques and tips on how to make your next virtual meeting an even bigger success.



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