The Great Webinar Playbook:
Group Therapy for our Webinar Issues

By:

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Stuart helps attorneys get better at what they do (and enjoy the process) through his entertaining and educational CLE Performances. His expertise is in "Technethics," a term Stuart coined that refers to the ethical issues in social networking and other technology. Stuart also speaks about "Practical Ethics"-- those lessons hidden in the ethics rules that enhance a lawyer's practice.

Mr. Teicher is a Supreme Court appointee to the New Jersey District Ethics Committee where he investigates and prosecutes grievances filed against attorneys, an adjunct Professor of Law at Rutgers Law School in Camden, New Jersey where he teaches Professional Responsibility and an adjunct Professor at Rutgers University in New Brunswick where he teaches undergraduate writing courses.

The Great Webinar Playbook: Group Therapy for our Webinar Issues: Written Materials

Critical Webinar Basics

I. Planning

   A. The actual date of the presentation is a key factor. Several considerations

      1. Make sure it doesn't "cannibalize" the rest of your offerings

      2. Choose a date that's far enough in advance

         a) But, remember the lawyer's quirk- attorneys tend to make more impulsive decisions regarding webinars, and very often there's an uptick in registration right at the day of the event.

   B. Time zones- If you're going nationwide, this is a consideration in planning (and also marketing).

II. Marketing

   A. You must do it! Fat too many webinars are doomed from the start because they don't get marketed at all

      1. Don't loose it in your general calendar

      2. Use of Email blasts

   B. Previous attendees- send them a direct email for future programs. That email should be dedicated, meaning that it's not a message about anything other than the program you're advertising.

III. Type of program: Do you want people to hear your presenters, see them, or both?

   A. The benefits of audio only

      1. Cheaper
      2. Easier to broadcast
      3. Easier for the presenters to manage
      4. Broadcasters don't need equipment
      5. VOIP? (What the heck is VOIP?)

   B. The negatives of audio only

      1. Boring
      2. Not a competitive presentation? What are your competitors offering?

   C. Do you want to have your presenters use a slide deck/slideshow?

      1. Note: If you do this, be careful about things like transitions between slides-sometimes they mess us the webinar platforms.

   D. Are you going to broadcast video?

      1. Logistical issues: How will you actually get the broadcasters on screen? Will you send them a camera? Will you have them come into a studio?
      2. Will you also have a slide deck with the video?

         a) If so, who will manage the slide advancements?

IV. Which Webinar tool/platform will you use?

   A. You can find a vendor that will help you with this, like ACLEA members Copper Conferencing or Beacon Live (there are probably more, but those are the ones I knew off hand).

   B. Popular platforms you might want to consider:

      1. Adobe Connect Pro
      2. GoTo Webinar

         a) What types of factors should you consider when choosing a platform:

            (1) Number of people you're expecting
            (2) How materials are distributed
            (3) Technical assistance/support (operator assisted calls are more)

C. To record or not to record? Unless cost is an obstacle, always record...you never know if you'll want to offer it on demand one day.

   1. Get the speaker's consent to record and use the program and materials at any time. Prepare a consent form (and also a form that makes them represent that they didn't steal or plagiarize the material/program content)
   2. Determine whether you need to pay the speaker for on-demand offerings. Even if you don't do it now, maybe address it, in case things change.

V. Considerations regarding the presentation:

   A. The importance of rehearsal and practice

      1. With the platform:

         a) You need to have an intimate understanding of the technology you're using.
         b) Your presenters also need to be educated on the technology

      2. Make sure the presenter practices their presentation

         a) Educate your speakers- that this is a deferent animal. Many novices to audio webinars, for instance, think that they don't have to prepare because they'll have their notes in front of them and no one can see them. That leads to bad presentations.
         b) You'll need to work "preparation calls" into the schedule. Make sure that you take the time to prepare the presenters in these calls, give them a run through on the technology and a dry run for at least part of their presentation.

      3. Consider the type of headsets the speakers will use. Make sure they test them out on the preparation call-- no new stuff on the day of the presentation!

      4. If you're using a slide deck, consider whether your presenters are capable of advancing slides, or it they'll need help from your staff to do so.

   B. Issues with multiple presenters: If you're having a group present, there are additional considerations:

      1. Warn them about speaking over each other
      2. Divide responsibilities, like-- who will advance the slides?

C. Disaster recovery: Every webinar provider's worst nightmare is losing a call partway through the program. Think about these things beforehand, to accommodate for disastrous situations.

    1. How will you let the presenter know that their transmission was lost? Maybe they need to have their cell phone handy
    2. How will you get people listeners back on the line if they drop out by accident?

VI. Follow up surveys

A. What platform will you use? Survey Monkey? Something home grown?
B. Are you required to send out the surveys per your CLE regulations?
C. Timing- when will you send our the surveys? Contemporaneously with the program? Shortly thereafter? The timing is likely to have an effect on your response rate.

VII. CLE specific issues:

A. Incorporate attendance verification, if you need it
B. What is the mandatory Q&A type (on playback too)? Does your system accommodate what the regulations require?
C. Consider whether your refund policy is consistent with this program type

VIII. Finally....Develop a checklist. Checklists help everything go smoother!