

How to run engaging webinars as a HR professional

Looking for the
inside track on
company culture
and HR? Follow
us on...



How to run engaging webinars as a HR professional



*Looking to start running HR webinars or refine your webinar process for staff/clients? This guide for HR professionals is by **Camille Brouard, Senior Marketing Executive at myhrtoolkit**. Camille has been managing our popular series of [topical webinars](#) since last year, where we've averaged 50+ attendees per webinar and focused on the HR, employment law and business topics that matter to SMEs and HR managers.*

The past year has been a huge learning curve for many in remote communications, including the rising popularity of webinars as a way to inform and connect with our communities. It's become important for in-house HR professionals to teach their teams virtually and for HR consultancies to communicate with clients remotely – the webinar is an ideal channel for that learning and sense of connection.

In this guide, I'll focus on these key areas for running an engaging HR webinar:

1. **Before the webinar**
 - Advertising and attracting signups
2. **During the webinar**
 - Having a smooth and professional presentation style
 - Keeping your audience engaged
3. **After the webinar**
 - What to include in follow up materials



Part 1: Before the webinar

Advertising and attracting signups

Firstly, you can use the best advertising techniques in the world, but if the webinar isn't of interest to your target audience then it just isn't going to fly! Choosing the right topics is therefore very important.

I consider what questions and worries my audience would have around these topics – and how we can help answer them.

Webinar topics

When I'm thinking about webinar topics, firstly I look at what's timely – for instance, a lot of our webinars in 2020 unsurprisingly were about COVID-19 and workplace issues, such as furlough, redundancy, and remote working.

I consider what questions and worries my audience (in this case, small business owners and HR managers) would have around these topics – and how we can help answer those questions.

Advertising with social media

As for getting your webinar out there, social media is a great resource – I suggest using a scheduler (there are free ones available such as Hootsuite) to schedule social media posts at key points in advance of the webinar, such as 2 weeks out, 1 week out etc, while staying in line with the general guidelines on how frequently you should post on each platform (for example, you should post more frequently on Twitter than you would on LinkedIn or Facebook).


LinkedIn is particularly useful for advertising webinars, as you can create an event on LinkedIn and invite your contacts to attend, as well as messaging contacts directly and making posts with the relevant hashtags. You can also post in groups! There are plenty of LinkedIn groups out there for small businesses, HR advice, employment law and so on.

Email contacts and mailing lists

You can also make great use of your current contacts by sending out mailshots – it's even better if you can build up a mailing list of previous webinar attendees so that you can keep in touch with them and alert them to subsequent webinars and other resources.

Guest speakers

You don't have to do all the work yourself! Another way to get the word out there about your webinars is to invite guest speakers and encourage them to share the webinar out on their networks too, so you have more reach! Plus, having guest speakers means you can bring in topics outside of your direct expertise that will appeal to your audience.

An orange speech bubble with a white border and a tail pointing towards the bottom right. It contains white text.

**Invite guest speakers
and encourage them
to share the webinar
out on their networks**

Part 2: During the webinar




Having a smooth and professional presentation style

Now let's move further in time towards the webinar itself. Having a smooth and professional presentation style will help you set the tone of the webinar and capture the audience's attention.

Practice call

I advise having a practice call before each webinar, especially if multiple people are going to be speaking on the webinar and even more so if you're having a guest speaker on.

A practice call helps you iron out any technical issues in advance, as everyone can test that they know how to get on the webinar, they can share their slides if needed, and that their mic and camera are working.




**A practice call helps
you iron out any
technical issues in
advance**

Test music

On the subject of testing, you need to make sure your attendees can see and hear you as well! On the webinar itself, I advise playing music at the beginning or chatting to attendees on mic before the webinar officially starts as a check in to make sure everything is working their end. Of course, you'll also have to post on the chat that you're testing audio, so that the attendees who can't hear are aware.

Don't panic!

If something does go wrong, in the words of the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, **don't panic!** Sometimes your internet drops, or you're presenting at home and your pets, kids, or neighbours decide it's the best time to start making a racket. Your attendees will understand, just let them know about the issue as soon as possible and how long it'll take to rectify it.



A bullying manager or colleague could be causing your best employees to leave.

Introducing the webinar

Let's move onto your webinar introduction, which is important for setting the tone! I advise using a script when you introduce the webinar, as there is plenty of handy information you may forget to mention once you're speaking in front of a crowd of (online) people.

Also, make sure to mention our next webinar at the start of the current webinar because some attendees will drop out of the call once the main speaker has finished.

Your presentation

Here are some quick tips for keeping your slideshow presentation smooth:

- Provide minimal information (so your audience are not just reading slides) and use text large enough to be read on smaller screens.
- Use images and change them regularly to keep attention.
- Subtle animation only! Having your points come in one by one can help maintain audience focus on the information at hand.
- In terms of structure: summarise your presentation, go through your points in order, then summarise them again to reinforce what they have learned.
- Use branded elements (e.g. brand colours, your logo, contact information).
- However, make sure you're not overselling – the webinar should be providing value to the audience, so keep the sales messaging light.
- If you have a guest speaker: do they want to present their own slides or will you? (You can address this during the practice call).

Keeping your audience engaged

Beyond having a brilliant topic and presentation, there are other techniques you can use to keep your audience engaged throughout the webinar.

Using the chat

It's a simple but effective technique. Throughout the webinar, you should be asking attendees to answer your questions in the chat so they are continually getting involved.

When you read through the answers, make sure to namecheck them so they know you've seen their comments and are interacting. Just use first names so it doesn't become a privacy issue (and be very careful not to make anyone identifiable).

Polls

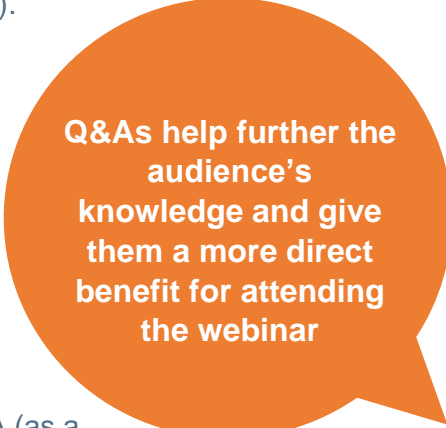
Another great way to ask questions of your audience is through conducting polls. This helps you get more of an idea of where your audience is at and what they want to learn about, forming more of a personal connection.

Q&A

At the end of the webinar, it's great to have time for a Q&A (as a yardstick, make it last about half the time of the presentation). This helps further the audience's knowledge and give attendees a more direct benefit for attending the webinar, as their specific questions are answered. If you're using Zoom, there's dedicated Q&A functionality that makes it easier to sort through questions.

Read each question out before answering it so everyone knows what's being discussed and, as with the chat, namecheck the people who ask questions (again, first names only).

Just in case you're short on questions, it's good to have backup questions ready to discuss. You can also ask for audience questions ahead of time to make sure you have some at the start of the Q&A.

An orange speech bubble graphic with a tail pointing towards the bottom right. It contains white text.

Q&As help further the audience's knowledge and give them a more direct benefit for attending the webinar

Part 3: After the webinar



Follow-up materials

Follow-up materials can be hugely helpful for reinforcing attendee learning and getting the most out of your content in terms of engagement. I recommend emailing attendees and non-attendees alike with follow-up materials (by thanking them for registering, you can easily address both groups within a single email). Some examples for what you can use include:

- Access to a webinar recording (this is especially useful for non-attendees).
- Articles on/related to the topic if you have the internal resources available.
- Useful external resources (such as materials you used in researching your webinar topic or extra reading ideas).
- Your next webinar! Keep people in the loop by encouraging them to sign up for your future webinars.

myⁱⁿtoolkit

