OVERVIEW

Webcasting and Web Conferencing
A quick comparison between the two technologies

Web events terminology can be confusing to both old hands and first-timers. The terms "Webcasting" and "Web Conferencing" are often mistaken. This overview will help you understand the differences between them.

Introduction

On the surface, these two technologies appear to be alike but they actually are designed to meet very different business needs. In the most basic terms, Web Conferencing enables online meetings. There is a strong collaborative element that allows participants to communicate among each other, just as they would if they were meeting face-to-face.

Webcasting is primarily a presentation medium. Information is disseminated from one or a few speakers to many attendees. Attendees have some ability to communicate with speakers by using chat features, Q&A, responding to polls, etc. Additionally, Webcasting products include richer feature sets that allow for more extensive capabilities and flexibility.

Basic Differences

Web conferencing is used when a small number of people (generally 50 or less) must collaborate to exchange ideas and/or information.

Webcasting is used to reach large audiences of hundreds or even thousands, internal or external, in a "one-to-many" structure. Typical applications include marketing, product launches, thought leadership, investor relations, education, training, corporate communication and town hall events.

The two offer vastly different capabilities including event management, attendee and speaker experience, on-demand access, and analytics and reporting.

Event Management

Preparations for a Web Conference or a Webcast follow the same basic processes as getting ready for a meeting or a special event but there is little technical preparation required for a Web Conference, which can even be initiated ad hoc.

When preparing a Webcast, you'll finalize speakers, prepare content, invite attendees and promote the event. Afterwards, you'll conduct post-event analysis and follow-up.

Webcasts also require more complex technical set-up that includes building registration pages, determining metrics, customizing and loading presentations into the player. Among users there currently are two strong event management trends, a self-service model and fully managed service. Webcast Studio offers a self-service option that allows a user to completely set up a Webcast using an intuitive wizard, as well as "white glove" service through a dedicated event services staff that handles all the details.

Attendee Experience

Since Web Conferencing is a meeting facilitation tool, it makes sense that it supports the "meeting experience" by enabling participants to view and work on documents in real time, and to speak and listen to the group. Any video input is usually through a webcam since high quality video is typically not necessary. There's little ability to manipulate or customize the player for branding or other identification.

In a Webcast, the presentation is the focal point. Attendees usually use chat, polling and Q&A features to reply or comment. Webcast Studio integrates Twitter so participants can send and see tweets inside the webcast.

Video quality can be very high. Webcast Studio supports H.264, offering a range of options from webcam to professional camera, depending on required production value. The Webcast Studio player is highly brandable, providing a large customizable banner as well as additional areas for sponsor or secondary branding.

Speaker Experience

All participants in a Web Conference see the same screen. Webcasting speakers see a completely different view than attendees do, called the "console." The console allows presenters to chat privately, displays a Q&A window that identifies who asked the question, and other information about the session. Speakers can use multiple presentations and share their desktop. There may be more than one speaker, and speakers may be in multiple locations. They see the same console view so they can communicate as if they were in the same room. They're integrated in the presentation so their physical separation is transparent to attendees.

On-demand Access

A Webcast can be recorded and archived for on-demand access, increasing the content's utility and lifespan. A Webcast can be archived as is, or can be edited to add, remove or reorganize content, and to improve flow. Webcast Studio users are able to post Webcasts on their website, or seamlessly in a virtual conference center or virtual environment where it's centrally located for global audiences to access 24/365. Web conferences can usually be recorded and made available but aren't editable.

Analytics and Reporting

Web conferencing can provide number of attendees, attendees' names, duration of the meeting, survey and/or quiz results.

Webcasting provides more robust analytics. Webcast Studio's Smart Analytics and Customer Engagement Index allow deep insight into audience involvement—tracking interactions and weighting behavior based on the organizer's metrics.

Webcast Studio

Webcast Studio offers rich capabilities for both speakers and audiences. Backed by the world's largest provider of conferencing services with 99.99% reliability, Webcast Studio offers the following benefits plus many more.

- No hardware, software or encoder needed
- Intuitive, easy to use self-service or "white glove" fully managed service
- Global, "follow the sun" support with 13 service centers and support for dozens of languages
- Proprietary Smart Analytics and Customer Engagement Index provide detailed intelligence on attendee behavior
- Easily create compelling multipage registration website with the integrated microsite builder
- Multiple speakers can present from multiple locations transparently
- Mobile accessible via a native app that leverages unique mobile device capabilities