Webcasting vs. Web Conferencing

How to choose?

A Capitol Connection White Paper

THE CAPITOL CONNECTION
George Mason University Television

Organizations today routinely bring participants together online for virtual meetings and events. New platforms to facilitate online gatherings are reliable, flexible, feature-rich, and affordable. Webcasting, web conferencing, webinars, streaming media – they all sound similar, but how to they differ and, most importantly, which will work best for your project?

Choosing the best option for a particular online meeting or presentation, however, can be challenging.

What are your objectives?

Your participants will have the most productive experience if you choose your online meeting technology based on clearly defined objectives. Examples: "My out-of-town board of directors needs to collaborate on finalizing the draft of our strategic plan." Or, "We have a speaker at our conference whose lecture will be of great importance to many scientists not able to attend the meeting this year."

Then envision the experience your remote participants expect: Watch a presentation with no need to actually participate? Intensively take part in the meeting or event? Perhaps themselves present from a remote location?

Suggestion: spend some time thinking through your objectives and participant expectations before delving into the technology choices.

Do you need video?

Live video over the Internet can be an effective and essential component of an online meeting. Lower-quality webcam video is an included option in most web-conferencing technology.

However, webcasting live video of an event to a large Internet audience typically involves professional video crews and video equipment.

Here is a rule of thumb: if you have a presenter whom your remote participants need to see – not just hear – then build video into your choice of technology.

Budget

Yes, virtual meetings and events are less expensive than costs associated with travel. But once you decide to offer an online meeting or event, how do you budget it?

Webcasting: Total cost depends to a great degree on the complexity of the video production you require at the source, e.g., one video camera or three? Professional stage lighting? A few hours or several days?

Web conferencing/webinars: Typically offered under a relatively inexpensive contract that includes a small number of always-available meeting "seats." Also, can be offered on a per-participant, per-minute basis.

About The Capitol Connection

Founded in 1981, The Capitol Connection is the leading provider of public affairs and news cable TV to businesses and associations throughout the Washington, DC, metro area. In addition, The Capitol Connection offers a full array of web-casting services for businesses and organizations that desire to produce their own live or archived webcast events.

The Capitol Connection is a telecommunication service of The George Mason University Instructional Foundation, a nonprofit corporation organized to support the educational and community outreach missions of George Mason University.

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Platform Choices

Webcasting

A "one-to-many" option best for presenting live video, audio, and slides to a large online audience watching and listening.

Web conferencing/Webinars

A "one-to-one" option using web-based software platforms such as Webex, Adobe Connect, and Microsoft Live Meeting to enable small groups of people to meet online. Participants typically use the web-conferencing software to collaborate on documents or view slides while talking via telephone conference call.