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What is Webcasting?

A webcast is a media file distributed over the Internet using streaming media technology. A webcast may either be distributed live or on demand. Essentially, webcasting is "broadcasting" over the Internet.

Think of it as TV on the Internet, the similarity being that one message is broadcast to many viewers. It is different however, in that each viewer has a connection back to the point of delivery, or the server. There are two scenarios: Live and Archive (sometimes referred to as Video on Demand, or VOD). Each requires the following: Video origin -> Video Server -> Video Player

When live, the Video origin is an encoder that basically compresses the video as it receives it from a camera or VCR/DVD and sends this compressed stream to a Server. The Server is capable of duplicating that single stream into many streams, which is what the Player connects to. The Player is the software that is on the computer of the person who wishes to watch the video, and uses the computer monitor and speakers to present the video to the viewer. For Archive, or VOD, the video is previously captured and usually edited, then compressed to the streaming format and placed on the server. From here the Server delivers the stream to the Player, when the user clicks on a link. This is the essence of webcasting - taking video from a point of origin and delivering it to many viewers, using the Internet.

Reasons to Webcast

- Dramatically widen access to information and events
- The connection made by audio and video is unparalleled. Messaging is clear, and context is much more appreciated vs. written documentation of a meeting
- Improve transparency and accountability - promote democracy
- Demonstrate a leading edge image
- Create rich multi-media on-demand content for your web site
- Promote and market your organization, events, products and services
- Detailed audience tracking
- The public can review publicly available content live or at their convenience as all webcasts are archived (Video on Demand)
- Accessibility: The audio provides a simple way for visually impaired users to have a message delivered to them
- Be environmentally responsible
- Increase training revenues - Distance education and training is cost-effective, freeing up budgets for other items
- Internal workers have easy access either live or on-demand to content that is targetted and inexpensive to produce
- Universal message across a departmental workforce

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Keys to a successful webcast

Properly promoting your webcast is the key to its success. You'll want to ensure the intended audience is aware of your event and can plan for their virtual attendance.

The content of your webcast will generally determine its target audience. Identify if your event is something broad that should be made available to the world or more focussed for a key group of people. A simple email should suffice if your event is for a small number of attendees but if the goal of your webcast is to as many viewers as possible there are a number of ways to promote your webcast. Once you have identified your target audience you can start advertising your webcast. Make sure you plan to have enough time prior to the event to make it known to your virtual viewers. This can range anywhere from a few days prior to the event, to weeks in advance depending on the size and scope of the event. Ensure you have enough time to reach the as many potential virtual attendees as possible.

You can use several mediums to help advertise your event. Below is a list of options you may want to consider...

- Update your website with Event
- TV and Radio Advertising
- Email to Distribution List
- Social Networking Sites – Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc
- Word of Mouth
- Email Newsletter
- Message Boards
- Advertise with Industry Magazines
- Press Release

When advertising be sure to keep your message consistent and focus on the advertising mediums that best serve your target audience. Also be sure to clearly indicate the Agenda and Presentation Schedule and whether this will be exclusively a Live event or if virtual attendees will be able to access an Archive of the event.