

Using Interactivity to Engage Webinar Participants



Image: pixabay.com

Introduction



Training or Information Dump?

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GAIN ATTENTION

Have you ever attended webinar training and ended up feeling like the person holding the trash can in this image?

[Hand-raising] Ask participants to use the hand-raising tool to indicate if they have ever attended such a webinar.

The presenter speaks at you the entire session overwhelming you with information. At the end there may be a question and answer session, but if you lasted that long, chances are your motivation to ask questions is long gone.

Effective webinar training provides more than an information dump. It should engage students and present information in a way that promotes the intended learning outcomes.

Lesson Objectives

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Recognize benefits of interactivity in webinar training
- Describe how specific tools can be used to promote engagement
- Identify ways you can use interactive tools in your own webinar

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INFORM LEARNERS OF THE OBJECTIVES

In this lesson, you will be introduced to the tools and techniques you can use to engage students during a training webinar. These techniques will be used during this session so that you not only learn about them but also experience them just as your own students will.

At the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Recognize the benefits of interactivity in webinar training
- Describe ways common interactive tools can be used to promote engagement
- Identify ways you can use interactive tools in your own webinar

Poll Question



Have you ever attended a webinar and shortly after it began you switched to reading email, surfing the web, or even just leaving it?

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STIMULATE RECALL OF PRIOR LEARNING

[POLL] Using the polling tool ask participants:

Have you ever attended a webinar and shortly after it began you switched to reading email, surfing the web, or even just leaving it? Yes/No

[Add humor while waiting for people to respond.] Hopefully, you haven't already done any of these for this webinar.

[End poll and show results.]

Benefits of Interaction

- Promotes the sense of 'being there'
- Maintains learner attention
- Increases motivation to learn
- Enables formative assessment
- Provides for push-pull information exchange



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PRESENTING THE STIMULUS MATERIAL

[Only show title of slide and image to begin]

Without interaction, webinars often resemble the image shown here. At first, participants may be listening but before long all they hear is "blah blah blah." It's not surprising that many participants either leave early or multi-task rather than pay attention.

Relevant interaction with learners is a key component of effective instruction. By taking full advantage of webconferencing tools that enable interaction you can connect with and engage your learners.

[Display each benefit as you talk about them]

The following benefits to using interaction in a training webinar were alluded to in the first slide:

- Promotes the sense of 'being there'
 - Without interactivity during a webinar training session, students don't feel connected to the instructor and other students. They might as well be watching a recorded version of the presentation. Studies show that this

sense of 'being there,' or 'social presence' is important for achieving positive learning outcomes (Lowenthal, 2010).

- Maintains learner attention leading to increased retention
- Increases motivation to learn

PROVIDE LEARNER GUIDANCE

[Display next slide asking students to contribute to the list of benefits and respond to input in the chat window.]

[When finished with chat, return to this slide and display the next bullet points]

Additional benefits include:

- Enables formative assessment to determine if learners are 'getting it' or not. Also can be used to assess whether you are moving too slow or fast, and so on.
- Provides for push-pull information exchange so that not only the trainers knowledge is shared but also that of the participants [chat on next slide used to illustrate this]

Lowenthal, P. R. (2010). The Evolution and Influence of Social Presence Theory on Online Learning. In T. Kidd (Ed.), *Online Education and Adult Learning: New Frontiers for Teaching Practices* (pp. 124-139). Hershey, PA: IGI Global. doi:10.4018/978-1-60566-830-7.ch010

Chat on Benefits of Interaction



In the chat area, contribute any benefits you feel interaction provides during a webinar training session.

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ELICITING THE PERFORMANCE

[CHAT] In the chat area, contribute any benefits you feel interaction provides during a webinar training session.

[Discuss student input and point out that this interaction is an example of knowledge push-pull]



PRESENTING THE STIMULUS MATERIAL

By interacting with your students during a webinar, you engage them in what you are teaching and motivate them to learn about it.

Interaction makes students feel - THEY ARE NOT ALONE! This holds true for the presenter as well.



PROVIDING FEEDBACK

[USE CHAT or AUDIO] Are there any questions or would anyone like to share an experience with interaction during a webinar?

Enter your questions in the chat. Raise your hand using the hand-raising emoticon if you want audio access.

(image from Bing search with Creative Commons license)

Common Interactive Webinar Tools

- Polling
- Chat
- Whiteboard
- Emoticons
- Application Sharing
- Audio

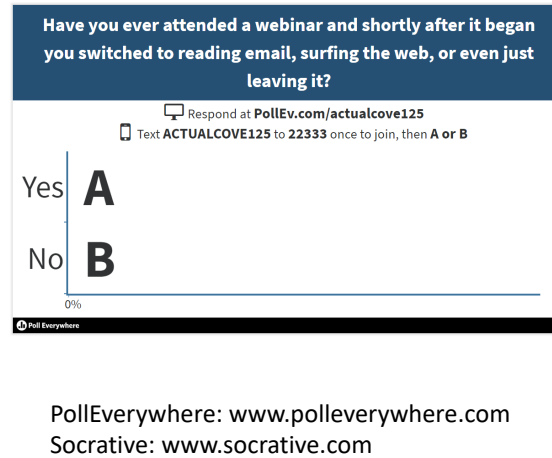
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PRESENTING THE STIMULUS MATERIAL

The tools available to support interaction will vary with the software you use. Next, I will give an overview of the following ones that are commonly offered:

Polling

- Poll types depend on the webconferencing software
- Most common types are multiple choice with bar chart response display
- May or may not be anonymous



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PRESENTING THE STIMULUS MATERIAL

- Useful for Question and Answer sessions
- Responses are not anonymous. However, this depends on the webconferencing software and participant requirements. If students are not required to register into the webinar and don't sign in with their real name then they are basically anonymous.

Here we see the poll from earlier in the session. This poll has been created using an interactive polling tool that is not part of the webconferencing software. This tool, PollEverywhere, has more features than what is typically offered in webconferencing software and can be easily interfaced with your webinar. In the lower right corner, you can find the URL to PollEverywhere and another similar tool called Socrative. Both tools have free options that may suit some of your webinar needs. Paid versions are reasonably priced.

[No demonstration since polling was used earlier.]

www.polleverywhere.com

www.socrative.com

Chat

- Useful for Question and Answer sessions
- Can be chaotic
- Not anonymous
- Also participant to participant interaction



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PRESENTING THE STIMULUS MATERIAL

- If you have ever attended a webinar, you are probably already familiar with the chat window. It can be very useful for Q&A sessions but can be chaotic with a large number of participants. The chaos can be managed using techniques such as asking a subset of the participants to respond rather than all of them.
- It can also be hard for some presenters to keep track of chat activity while also delivering the webinar content. It is advised that you have someone helping you with the webinar who can monitor the activity for you and bring it to your attention.
- One drawback may be that the responses are not anonymous so some participants may hesitate to contribute. Although, if students are not required to register into the webinar and don't sign in with their real name then they are basically anonymous.
- Although the main focus of this instruction is on instructor and participant interactions, I should also mention that these same interactive techniques can be used to enable participant to participant interaction. Chat is an ideal way to do this. But once again, it can become chaotic if not managed properly. It is probably best to only use it if your webconferencing software provides the capability for

separate chat sessions among participants. That way you can keep your instructor to student interactions separate.

[No demonstration since chat was used earlier.]

Whiteboard

- Brainstorming
- Content annotation



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PRESENTING THE STIMULUS MATERIAL

The whiteboard tool lets you share a whiteboard where webinar participants can contribute by adding text and drawings. An example use might be to display a segment of code and ask students to point to a specified section.

LEARNER GUIDANCE

[Demonstrate using the whiteboard. Let participants mark on it.]

Emoticons

- Various icons such as a smiley face, hand-raising, confused face, applause hands and so on
- Useful for instant feedback regarding understanding and feelings



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PRESENTING THE STIMULUS MATERIAL

Most webconferencing software provide various icons

LEARNER GUIDANCE

[Demonstrate using emoticon.]

Application Sharing

- Software demonstrations
- Show and tell



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PRESENTING THE STIMULUS MATERIAL

Application sharing lets you share your computer screen with your webinar audience. Some webconferencing software allows you to pass control of the application to others while some only allows control by the conference originator. This capability is very useful for demonstrating computer applications. If shared control is allowed you could use it to enable show and tell sessions to let participants share their own examples (getting back to the push-pull benefit discussed earlier).

[Demonstrate application sharing.]

Audio

- Useful for asking and answering questions
- Good way to get longer answers to open-ended questions
- Only allow one person to speak at a time



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PRESENTING THE STIMULUS MATERIAL

The audio feature is useful for letting participants ask and answer questions. It can be a good way to get longer answers to open-ended questions but its use may not be feasible with large audiences.

Typically during a webinar session, the participant audio is muted and only the speaker can unmute it. A good way to allow participants to request use of audio is to ask them to use an emoticon such as the hand-raising. Or you can have them request it in the chat window.

[Demonstrate using the audio. Invite one participant to use audio. Have them request it by raising their hand emoticon.]



[USE CHAT or AUDIO] Are there any questions or would anyone like to share an experience with using these tools?

Enter your questions in the chat. Raise your hand using the hand-raising emoticon if you want audio access.

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Example Scenario

You just explained Amdahl's Law and you want to know if your students understood it well enough before moving on.

One approach: Ask them to use the thumbs up or thumbs down emoticon to indicate whether they understood it or not.



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PRESENTING THE STIMULUS MATERIAL

Now I'm going to give some example webinar scenarios and ask you what tool you might use to support interaction.

You just explained Amdahl's Law and you want to know if your students understood it well enough before moving on.

LEARNER GUIDANCE

Suggested approaches:

- (given on slide) Using the thumbs up or thumbs down emoticon, ask them to indicate if they understood it
- Using the polling feature, ask a multiple choice question to test their understanding
- Using the whiteboard, display a graphic showing two formulas and ask students to circle the one that depicts Amdahl's Law.

ELICITING THE PERFORMANCE

[Using chat, enter the name of the tool and a brief description of how you would use it to support interaction.]

Example Scenario

You know that some of your learners have experience in the information you just presented and you would like to give them an opportunity to contribute to the course content.

One approach: Using hand raising, have them request the microphone if they would like to share an experience with the class.



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PRESENTING THE STIMULUS MATERIAL

You know that some of your learners have experience in the information you just presented and you would like to give them an opportunity to contribute to the course content.

LEARNER GUIDANCE

Suggested approaches:

- Using hand raising, have them request the microphone if they would like to share an experience with the class.
- Using Chat, ask them to give input on their experience (if response is expected to be short).

ELICITING THE PERFORMANCE

[CHAT] Using chat, *enter the name of the tool and a brief description of how you would use it to support interaction.*

Example Scenario

You want to demonstrate how to generate performance data on a sample code and interpret the results.

One approach: Use application sharing for the demonstration and display of results. Use pointer and arrows to highlight.



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PRESENTING THE STIMULUS MATERIAL

You want to demonstrate how to generate performance data on a sample code and then interpret the results.

LEARNER GUIDANCE

Suggested approaches:

- Use application sharing to demonstrate how to run the software needed to generate the performance data. Then discuss the results displayed on the screen. Use the pointer and arrows to highlight area under discussion.
- Use application sharing to demonstrate how to run the software needed to generate the performance data. Then copy the results to the whiteboard so you or the learners can use annotation to highlight key areas.

ELICITING THE PERFORMANCE

[CHAT] Using chat, *enter the name of the tool and a brief description of how you would use it to support interaction.*



PROVIDING FEEDBACK

[USE CHAT or AUDIO] Before I go to the final slide, does anyone have any questions or comments?

Enter your questions in the chat. Raise your hand using the hand-raising emoticon if you want audio access.

(image from Bing search with Creative Commons license)



ASSESSING PERFORMANCE

If you want to test your understanding of what you learned from this webinar, there is an assessment available in the XSEDE Moodle course titled “Effective Webinar Training”. You will get information on how to access it in an email shortly after the completion of this webinar. You don’t have to take the assessment, but you will be awarded an official XSEDE Webinar Interactivity digital badge to recognize your achievement.

Summary



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ENHANCING RETENTION AND TRANSFER

In this webinar, you learned how you can use interaction to engage your webinar participants. I introduced you to several benefits interaction provides, some of the common tools used for interaction, and how you might use them in various scenarios for your own sessions. I hope I was successful in making you feel engaged during this session. [Hopefully, participants will respond positively to this comment by typing in the chat window or using emoticons. Don't ask them, if they were attentive and engaged they should do this voluntarily.]