

17 November 2009

An Introduction to Webinars, online briefings and meetings

The logo for SysEnvir, featuring the text "SysEnvir" in white, bold, sans-serif font, centered within a bright green rectangular background.

Chelmsford
Essex
CM1 2SR
UK

1. What is a webinar?

A webinar is sometimes described as a seminar of over 20-30 people held on the web as a medium of communication. Its main features are the ability to login from anywhere that has web access and reasonable broadband bandwidth. It is actuated by Web 2.0 technology which is utilized in a cloud way. That is on demand using the internet. The distinction between seminar and meeting seems to be a little arbitrary, and we shall use the buzz word webinar to mean any meeting of any number using the appropriate technology. I am sure someone will clarify in a standardized way one day.

2. How do we approach online webinars?

By using our personal computer (PC) or laptop. As long as you are connected at reasonably fast broadband speeds you can connect to a webinar anywhere, and with certain brands of enabling software applications you do not need to download software onto your computer. Therefore one can sit at one's desk, or at a table in Starbucks®. The essence is to remember that sometimes one is expected to pre-register, and for other webinars one can just join by clicking on the invitation email. Other attendance methods are possible including going to the provider's site in one case. Furthermore it is usual to 'arrive' only a few minutes beforehand, since the establishing software has to create a workroom for the webinar to take place. Thus one needs to click onto the invitation email a few minutes before the off.

PLEASE NOTE: You will need to use earphones to get the best sound from your computer, and they are more sociable than a broadcast from the computer's speakers.

3. How to interact

It is possible for attendees to interact with the presentation, although the only voice heard is usually the hosts (The giver of the presentation). This interaction can be to draw on the presentation using your mouse so that everyone can see the item you are referring to or want discussed. But mainly one uses the dialog box which appears on one's screen and enables you to chat via your keyboard. Most interaction is via the keyboard.

4. Why do I need webinars?

Webinars lower travel costs and carbon emissions.

Imagine you have a need to hold a sales presentation to provide your existing clients worldwide new data on new products or after-market services. Do you pay for clients to attend a presentation at your office or trade show? Do you pay for a sales person or two to visit them? Or do you for low cost have them attend an online webinar where they get the message and you save time, money and best of all, reduce your carbon footprint?

As you can see this also provides opportunities for sales pitches to new contacts.

5. What are the presentations made of?

They are usually produced using Microsoft Powerpoint® or similar software. The presentations do have to be in one or two standard formats, mainly Powerpoint®.

6. Who gives the presentation?

Whilst giving the webinar oneself is an option, and possibly the long term goal of some organizations, for others who prefer not to present another way is to engage the services of a consultant such as SysEnvir.