

Webinars & Events for Demand Generation

The Ultimate Guide

The 5 Key Steps Leading Demand Gen Marketers Take to Build Better Webinar & Event Marketing Strategies



The Ultimate Guide to Webinars & Events for Demand Generation

Demand generation is a key goal of every B2B marketer's digital marketing strategy. Well-executed demand generation programs go beyond just the top of the funnel: they build awareness of and preference for your brand while creating a content journey that reliably guides prospects through the evaluation and decision stages of the buyer journey, ultimately converting into paying customers.

Demand generation programs, used in coordination with a modern CRM and Marketing Automation System, also present opportunities at each stage of the buyer journey to gather information from leads and prospects. The feedback that these individuals provide gives B2B marketers and their partners in sales actionable intelligence to create more targeted materials, messaging, and selling propositions to ultimately convert a larger number of prospects to customers.

Adding webinars and events to the mix provides an even more powerful opportunity. If you're only relying on two-dimensional tactics in your B2B content journey, such as eBooks and white papers, then you're probably using forms as your primary means to capture data from contacts. Forms are limiting because they only allow you to skim the surface with regard to the types of questions you can ask; you can't imagine many prospects would be willing to divulge their deepest fears or organization's biggest challenges in a form. However, in a webinar or at a virtual/hybrid event, it's a different story. Warming prospects up with a conversation about how companies are solving the very problems they're facing creates opportunities to capture data that can be used to your advantage further down the funnel to convert more leads to MQLs, more MQLs to SQLs, and eventually, more SQLs to customers.

Whether you're just starting with webinars for demand generation, or your events are already generating millions in pipeline, this Guide will explore the webinar marketing playbook that BigMarker's enterprise customer success team uses every day to help our clients build better webinars & event programs, and ultimately, bigger businesses.

The Role of Webinars & Events in B2B Marketing

Leading demand generation marketers build webinar & event marketing programs that continuously accelerate demand generation by: designing experiments, rapidly iterating and harnessing a data-driven approach.

The result is achieving **content-audience fit**: delivering the right messages to the right audiences at the right times across the buyer journey.



The 5 Steps Leading Demand Gen Marketers Take to Build Better Webinar & Event Marketing Strategies

Creating a demand generation machine is key to a marketing team's success. Utilizing webinars & events to grow demand generation efforts is important, and constantly evolving based on your target audiences' needs. What worked last year doesn't necessarily translate to growth this year. To keep your webinar & event strategy aligned with your demand generation goals, we're sharing our playbook for how we help our clients consistently grow their pipeline and surpass their demand generation goals through five key steps.

1. Market Intelligence

Assess Competitors & Design a Content Strategy that Stands Out from the Crowd

Good demand generation marketers look at their immediate competitors to benchmark their content strategy and see just how high the bar in their category is. *Great* demand generation marketers look beyond their immediate competitive set—assessing not only direct competitors, but also a broader set of industry participants who have the attention of their target audience. By looking beyond just direct competitors, we avoid missing opportunities to leapfrog our competitors and better understand what buyers in the market are looking for while they are information gathering.

Everyone has a limited amount of time, but if your content is consistently providing value (e.g. is it saving your prospect time? Helping them increase their ROI? Allowing them to bring new ideas to their team?)

When assessing the market to benchmark your webinar or event content strategy, here's a good framework to help you hone in on your unique strategy.

STRATEGIC QUESTIONS TO ASK

With whom are we competing for attention?

Pick your 1-3 main competitors, as well as 1-3 aspirational brands in your broader category that have the attention of your target audience and strong content strategies. Benchmark yourself not only against your direct competitors, but against the aspirational brands that are touching your audience. Elevate your content, presenters, design, etc. to rise to the level of the best brands in the broader set. By doing that, you'll leapfrog your direct competitors.

What is the industry talking about? What will they be talking about next?

Marketing teams are notorious for creating buzzwords, but drilling down content into specific themes will help you decide where you need to insert your POV as well as what content pillars they will be focusing on next. Check out their content partners to figure out areas they will expand to next.

DECISION POINTS

Once you conduct research on competitors and aspirational brands to emulate, you can begin to make the key building blocks for how to evaluate success of your webinar & event demand generation strategy in the market. Specifically, you need to decide...

- **What is our benchmark?** With whom are we comparing ourselves when benchmarking event content strategy?
- **What are our anchor points?** In what ways should we strategically decide to mimic the competition so our content resonates with what our audience is used to?
- **What are our beacons?** In what ways should we strategically decide to stand apart from the competition so our content cuts through the noise?

CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESS

As you evaluate your webinars & events, here are some key considerations to critically evaluate your firm against your competitors and industry leaders:

- Do our events stand apart from the others?
- Does our event position your firm as a thought leader?
- Does our event use relevant beacons and anchor points?
- Does our event iterate on earlier successes and failures?

2. Audience Insights

Design Your Content Strategy Around your Target Audience's Functional and Emotional Needs

Your audience is busy. They have their own personal and team professional goals that they not only need to meet but surpass year-over-year, and getting their time is precious currency. It's your responsibility to design a content strategy that provides value to them for them to implement on their team so that they achieve their goals more quickly, whether that be through playbooks or providing community aspects to help each other learn and grow.

When assessing your target audiences to inform your webinar & event content strategy, here's a good framework for you to consider...

STRATEGIC QUESTIONS TO ASK

Who are our target audience(s)?

Take a look at your top and most engaged customers and segment them into 1-3 target audiences. Your webinar & event content strategy should focus on one target audience for each webinar & event to keep your messaging focused and provide the most amount of value to each target audience.

How should we segment them?

The first lens you should take when segmenting your target audience is taking a look at the industries of your top customers. Are there specific industries that gravitate toward your product? If you can't identify any patterns, then you may need to focus on the job functions or roles of your top customers. Is there a specific department or job role that finds your product most useful? Focus on replicating the successes you currently see to target potential brand champions in prospects.

What are our audience(s) functional and emotional needs?

Identify what motivates these segments. Whether it's time saved, being an innovator, or as simple as bringing in more revenue, you can begin to segment out topic choices that hit on these different needs and develop content that helps fulfill these needs of your target audiences.

DECISION POINTS

After identifying your target audiences and deciding how you want to segment them so you can start to create content that is most relevant for them through the following questions...

- **Which are 1-3 functional and emotional needs can we satisfy with webinars & events?** What is our distinct value proposition for why our target audience should attend our event and what needs should we prioritize?
- **What stages of the buyer journey can we impact with our webinars & events?** What stage of understanding our brand and offerings is the target audience currently in?
- **What is the ideal content journey that will get our audiences to where we want them to be?** What are the current gaps in our sales cycle can we help fill with webinars & events to help instill further trust in our brand?

CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESS

As you are synthesizing and evaluating insights on your target audiences based on replicating your current successes, here are some key considerations to ensure your webinar & event demand generation strategy is on-target:

- Are we mapping our webinars & events to a specific audience segment?
- Is our segmentation robust enough or do we need to simplify our segmentation until we gather more data?
- Are we only hosting top-of-funnel webinars & events targeting a broad audience, or are we also hosting middle-of-funnel webinars & events targeting specific audiences based on their current stage in the buyer journey?
- Do our webinars & events collectively build into a cohesive content journey?
- Do our webinars & events adequately address our audience(s)' functional and emotional needs that we've identified?

3. Content Strategy

Pull Your Brand Promise and Selling Propositions Through into the Webinar & Events Medium

Audience insights are crucial to creating content that resonates with your target audiences. Now you can take the additional layers of your brand promise and value proposition and weave it into your content in a way that is not only informative but differentiates you from the competition and the value you provide for your clients. This is the crux of an effective content strategy: To balance audience insights with what you want to communicate to your audience, and great content blends the two seamlessly. Several strategic questions to ask yourself to get there are:

STRATEGIC QUESTIONS TO ASK

What are the key messages we want to communicate?

Make sure you are aligned with product, sales, customer success and your account team to maintain a pulse on not only what's important to prospects, but what current customers love about your brand. Work cross-functionally to align on key messaging that is informed by all key stakeholders and also has the opportunity to tease at upcoming functionality or product offerings.

What are the key things our audience needs to hear?

What are key selling propositions that ignite action in your target audience that hits on current pain points they're experiencing? Being able to identify gaps in current products they're using and showcasing why your brand is different is immensely powerful. Your audience understands the risk it takes to switch to a new product, but they need to hear from you how you directly mitigate that risk and set them up to succeed.

How do we weave our brand promise and selling propositions into our webinar & events strategy?

You've done your research on competitors and your target audience and you know what they need, but how do you present your company as the best option for them? Identify questions to ask the audience to get further targeted information about specifics around their pain points.

DECISION POINTS

You need to ask yourself a variety of questions to pull together a comprehensive content development roadmap that not only drives your webinar & events strategy, but also wraps into enablement materials for your sales teams.

- **What topics should we cover with our webinars & events?** What is important to our audience and do we have a unique perspective on these topics?
- **What presenters should we utilize for our webinars & events?** Are we equipped with subject matter experts internally who can establish our credibility or do we need to co-host with an expert?
- **What are the best points of data capture at this point in the buyer process that will further our demand generation goals?** Start with what your audience cares about at that phase of the buyer journey, and also start with the data that you want to capture. Then work backwards to develop content that bridges the two and accomplishes both. This is “V-shaped” content development as opposed to linear content development, which tends to miss the mark on what interests your audience.
- **What must we give in exchange for this data?** Is it a discount, exclusive access, or a piece of content?

CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESS

As you are synthesizing and evaluating and prioritizing what types of topics you should cover, here are some key considerations to ensure your content strategy is on-target :

- Is the webinar or event topic clear and compelling?
- Does your webinar & event strategy hit on keywords that are relevant and engaging for your audience?
- Is your event’s design elevated to advance the brand positively?
- Have you decided what pieces of data capture are most important to gather from all attendees?

4. Design for Growth

Set Your Webinars & Events Up to Maximize Audience Acquisition and Data Capture

After developing a sound content strategy, you should identify areas to maximize your audience acquisition and reach by partnering with industries that are adjacent to yours or that have established credibility in an area you would like to become experts within.

STRATEGIC QUESTIONS TO ASK

How could we leverage partnerships to grow faster?

Are there any partners who we have existing relationships with that we can leverage or are there any current customers we can leverage to develop compelling, trustworthy content with?

What types of organizations would be the right partners?

Do we want to have any partners or speakers that serve in the current functions that match up with our target audience for us to further establish ourselves as thought leaders? Are there any integrations that this partner already has with our product that we can champion and promote within the content?

DECISION POINTS

Once you have the content outlined, you need to establish where a partner could be most helpful; whether it's brand awareness, credibility, or unique perspective. The following questions will help you decide if partnerships make sense for your webinar & events strategy:

- **Who are the right partners for our webinar or event program?** Are there any partners who we have existing relationships with that we can leverage? Are there any current customers we can leverage to develop compelling, trustworthy content through specific successes with our product?
- **How should we leverage those partners?** Decide if you would like your speaker to co-promote and what you're willing to provide to them in exchange for their time. Is it access to the registrants or a discount on your product?
- **What's the right structure for partnership?** Do you want the partner to collaborate on the content development and be a speaker? Or are they a guest on an existing series that you host? The former is great for partners in relevant industries to speak collaboratively on a subject matter, while the latter is useful for showing the proof of concept of your product for a certain industry.
- **What's the duration of the series?** Is this a one-time webinar? Or a series that you collaborate on?

CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESS

When evaluating current and future partnerships, it's key to answer these questions to understand how a partner can (and should) help you achieve your demand generation goals or if you need to pivot your approach:

- Is the potential partner relevant to our audience?
- Does the partner's brand elevate our program through a halo effect?
- Would this partnership be mutually-beneficial?
- Are the presenters relevant and impressive for the topic?

5. Measurement & Improvement

Establish an Experimental Approach to Event Design to Test, Learn and Improve Over Time

Webinars and events are a key pillar to a demand generation marketers toolbox, but the key to success is to ensure that you constantly put your strategy through experimentation. Try and test different approaches for your different target audiences to hone in on what provides value to them.

DECISION POINTS

Your webinar & event strategy should never be static. Define what your Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are and also identify variables to test that may assist you in more effectively achieving these KPIs:

- **What does “good” look like to us?** What are the KPIs that need to be accomplished in order to establish success? What are areas of improvement or new ideas that we can test out?
- **How broad should my webinar & event topics be?** Does your target audience crave more detailed operational information or do they prefer thought leadership and best practices? Define how deep or broad the topics should be to engage your target audiences.
- **What are the potential variables that we should test?** Your target audience may prefer weekly webinars during a specific time of the day or one 6-hour virtual event. You should also evaluate which types of speakers drive the highest engagement from your target audience. Don't be afraid to run multivariate testing within your webinar & events to be able to pivot your strategy more quickly: From session titles, to background and button colors and your event promotional email strategy, there are many factors that contribute to (or could detract from your goals.)

The Result

Leading Demand Generation Marketers Build & Tune Their Event Marketing Engines

By executing and iterating on these 5 Steps, you will have built a webinar & event marketing program that continuously drives demand generation growth by designing experiments, rapidly iterating, and harnessing a data-driven approach.

| Customer Strategy | Competitive Strategy | Content Strategy | Partnership Strategy | Data Capture Strategy |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| Strategic Questions | | | | |
| Segmentation Who are our target audience segments? | Market Intel With whom are we competing for attention? | Internal-driven What are the key messages we want to communicate? | Landscape Who might we partner with to reach more targets? | Customer Data What data do we want to capture? |
| Dimensions Industry, function, role, functional and emotional needs | Direct vs. Indirect Direct competitors, Ancillary players | Customer-driven What content does our audience need? | Prioritization Adjacent functions, Integration points | Customer-Driven What must we give in exchange for this data? |
| Decision Points | | | | |
| Content Journey Map the content journey for each audience segment | Beacons & Anchors Define beacons & anchor points that will stand out | Content Roadmap Design topics, presenters, messages, and data | Partner Recruitment Recruit value-add partners across the content roadmap | Data Capture Design data capture at optimal points in time |
| Measurement & Outcomes | | | | |
| Define success & failure criteria for each segment | Replicate early successes, iterate on early failures | Iterate keywords & images to maximize traction | Test & iterate partners to maximize traction | Test & iterate data capture to maximize traction |

As a demand generation marketer, you understand the importance of including a webinar & event strategy in your overall demand generation efforts, but to ensure your strategy is working and that your webinar & event technology can handle your needs, it's critical that you find a partner to help you maximize results and capitalize on success quickly.

At BigMarker, each of our enterprise accounts have an account team with three dedicated resources, an Account Manager, Customer Success Manager and Solutions Engineer, who specialize in helping our clients utilize our platform's full capabilities for their specific goals and work collaboratively to optimize their strategy based on learnings.

With 10+ years in the webinar & events space, BigMarker has the expertise to collaborate with you on your unique challenges. Ready to elevate your webinar & events strategy to better align with your demand generation goals? Reach out to us at sales@bigmarker.com to meet with a webinar and events expert today.