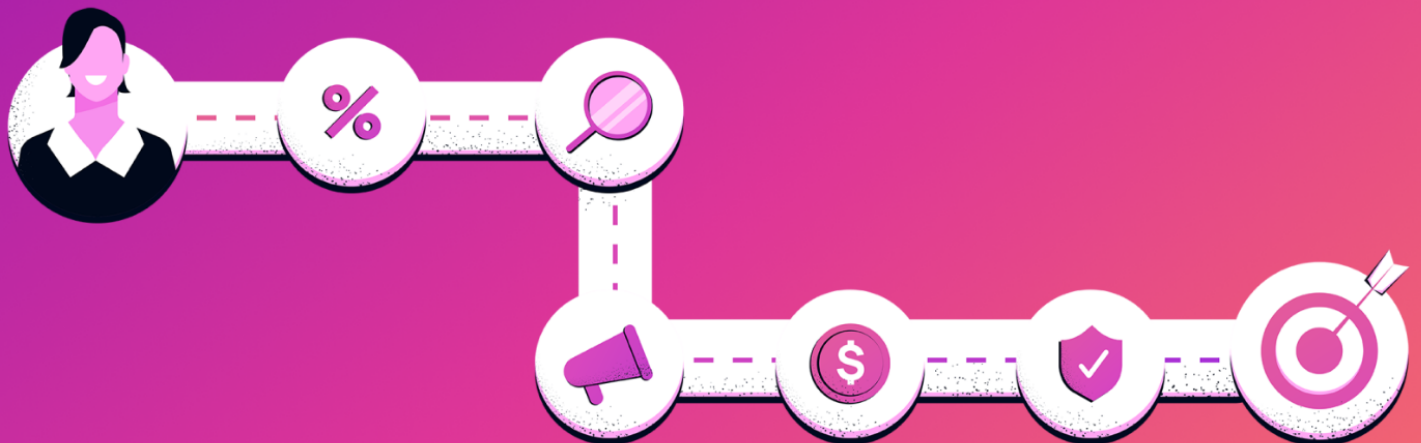


How to Use Webinars and Events Across the B2B Buyer Journey

We all know that webinars are a powerful lead generation tool at the top of the funnel. But they can also be used strategically across each stage of the marketing funnel, they can also be leveraged to gather data and accelerate prospects through the buyer's journey.



How to Use Webinars and Events Across the B2B Buyer Journey

As a marketer, you know business-to-business (B2B) buyers don't wake up and decide to buy on a whim — there's a process. Whether you visualize this process as the traditional, linear buyer's journey or as a marketing funnel, each model illustrates the path a buyer might take on the road to a purchasing decision. Both diagrams group buyers into distinct stages, such as **awareness**, **consideration**, and **decision**, or labels, such as the **top of funnel**, **middle of funnel**, and **bottom of funnel**. Each stage requires different tactics and content to best meet the buyer's needs at any given time, with the goal of pushing them through to the next stage until they reach conversion.

Though we'd like to think of the process as straightforward, neatly fitting buyers into their respective boxes, the reality is that the buyer's journey is a complex, non-linear process that doesn't always follow the same path. The marketer's job is to create a plan that will lead buyers down the most direct and efficient route — no easy feat.

This job is made easier, however, as marketers use each interaction with the brand to collect important details about the buyer until a clear and complete profile emerges. A powerful tool in the marketer's toolbox to accomplish this objective is the webinar.

Webinars help give your brand a voice and face, offering personalized interactions that allow the audience to engage. By utilizing best practices specific to each stage, webinars and other virtual events are impactful tools that can be leveraged to gather buyer data and accelerate prospects through the buyer's journey. In this guide, we'll walk through webinar best practices specific to each stage: top of the funnel, middle of the funnel, and bottom of the funnel.

Addressing Buyers in the Awareness Stage

The top of the marketing funnel (TOFU) or awareness stage uncovers the central problem and helps the buyer name the challenge they face, providing a basic level of awareness. The buyer is in research mode, looking for possible solutions.

TOP OF FUNNEL OPPORTUNITY FOR WEBINARS & EVENTS

In addition to developing brand awareness, the marketer's goal is to collect as many new contacts and email addresses as possible to build a solid list of prospects to nurture.

Webinar and Event Best Practices for the Top of the Funnel

In terms of data capture, your overall strategy is to keep hurdles low. The registration form is one of the first interactions your buyer has with your brand. Registration forms should be short and simple, collecting essential contact details such as name, company name, and email address. Expecting a lead to answer ten detailed questions will likely result in a high form abandonment rate. Keeping the registration form quick and easy will yield more conversions.

Likewise, your content strategy should be high-level and serve to educate the buyer. The landing page should offer a brief overview of the topic and what the buyer will learn by attending the webinar. The presentation should demonstrate your expertise in a particular area of interest, industry, or subject by offering a unique point of view, inspiration, or guidance. Content at this stage should whet appetites and deliver just enough information for buyers to take the next step in the journey. Leads have a shorter attention span at this stage, so many webinar marketers aim to get their message across in the first 25-35 minutes when targeting the top of the funnel, with 5-10 minutes left at the end for Q&A.

Top of Funnel Content Examples

- Common misconceptions about what the problem is and how to address the challenge.
- "How To" and "What Is?" content.
- Expert panels, trend reports, and networking sessions.

Addressing Buyers in the Consideration Stage

Buyers in the middle of the funnel (MOFU) are committed to addressing the problem they face and are evaluating different ways to solve it. Also known as the consideration stage, MOFU buyers are exploring possible solutions and evaluating pros and cons. They may also begin building a list of requirements. And while MOFU leads are warm, they are not yet ready to buy.

MIDDLE OF FUNNEL OPPORTUNITY FOR WEBINARS & EVENTS

Your goal for MOFU is to enrich the buyer's CRM profile, collecting deeper information about who they are and their specific needs. The more details you can collect will allow you to create more effective marketing messaging and empower your sales team with actionable intelligence.

Webinar and Event Best Practices for the Middle of the Funnel

Data capture at the middle of the funnel becomes more targeted, working to build upon basic contact details. For example, it may be helpful to know the prospect's primary role or seniority level to create segmented marketing lists for future campaigns. However, collecting more detail does not mean that your registration form should create more work for your buyer.

At this point, you should know the names and email addresses of returning visitors to your site. Through advanced event technology and marketing automation tools, a feature known as [progressive profiling](#) allows form fields to change dynamically based on the visitor's past interactions with your brand. Since the buyer already provided their name and email address, progressive profiling technology pre-fills the form, saving the buyer time while minimizing the required effort. By giving your web visitor this shortcut, barriers to registration are reduced, and form conversions increase.

The concept of progressive profiling can also be used during the presentation with the addition of polls. When drafting polls, think of the data gaps you need to fill and work backward to generate questions for your audience to answer. Perhaps you'd like to know what feature sets are most important to your potential buyers. In this case, you may ask your attendees their most significant challenges over a specific time frame, along with multiple answer choices. These results will then serve as a blueprint for follow-up messaging in addition to unique insight for all event attendees.

MOFU content should still have an educational focus but should shift from driving awareness of your brand to driving preference for your brand. Use solution-focused content that showcases

your differentiators or provides criteria for evaluating potential solutions. Content at this stage should further entice your attendees to dive deeper into the consideration process. Additionally, rather than crafting broad thought-leadership presentations, content should be tailored to different buyer personas. This customization will allow you to target functional and emotional needs better and tee up the opportunity to ask more persona-specific registration and poll questions. And since audiences are more invested at this phase, many webinar marketers choose to go more in-depth at the MOFU stage, extending the length of webinars to the 45-60 minute range, plus Q&A.

MOFU Content Examples

- List requirements or factors buyers should consider, such as "8 Factors to Consider When Considering XYZ."
- Case study presentations like "How Company ABC Used Feature X to Solve Their Problem."
- General or in-depth product demonstrations highlighting key features or differentiators.

MOFU Poll Question Examples

In the consideration stage, it is common for webinar and event marketers to ask probing questions to capture meaningful intelligence from leads that will come in handy at later stages of the buyer journey. Here are two examples:

Probing Question to Assess the Lead's Adoption of Your Category

To what extent are you using buyer intent signals to inform forecasts?

- A. We're not using buyer intent signals at all.
- B. We've just started to, but our use of buyer intent signals is still limited.
- C. Buyer intent signals are a significant input to our forecasts.

Probing Question to Align a Lead with a Use Case

Looking ahead to next year, what area of your business can big data be most impactful?

- A. Marketing & Demand Generation
- B. Selling & Sales Analytics
- C. Operations & Efficiency
- D. Finance & Capital Budgeting

Addressing Buyers in the Decision Stage

The bottom of the funnel (BOFU) is the last stage of the funnel and includes potential buyers who have decided on how to solve their problems. This group is actively evaluating your solution against their requirements and your competitors. BOFU buyers may also be soliciting feedback from current clients or searching out reviews or social proof to support their purchase decision.

BOTTOM OF FUNNEL OPPORTUNITY FOR WEBINARS & EVENTS

Your goal for the BOFU stage is to support the sales effort by arming your team with intelligence that can help convert opportunities into revenue.

Webinar and Event Best Practices for the Bottom of the Funnel

Polls are, again, an extremely powerful tool for capturing data during webinars and in-person events and can be used to move prospects from the BOFU to client status. Asking probing poll questions can inform you of the prospect's category adoption level (innovator, early adopter, early majority, late majority, or laggard), gauge the competition, and determine their use case.

It's also incredibly beneficial for continued sales efforts to tease out potential objections so that your sales team can be prepared when they encounter roadblocks during the sales process. Similarly, identifying what other roles or personas may influence the purchase decision is also critical ammunition to supply to your sales counterparts. Paying attention to attendees' questions at the end of your event can also provide indicators that will help you craft follow-up messaging or notes to pass along. After the event, send a strategic post-event survey — an excellent vehicle to collect more intelligence.

BOFU content presented during an in-person or virtual event should help the buyer solidify their decision to purchase, showcasing specific product details that solve their challenges. This content reinforces differentiators, addressing why the buyer should choose your offering specifically — essentially sealing the deal. BOFU prospects may also be interested in the onboarding process and what to expect regarding training and educational materials.

BOFU Content Examples

- Return on investment (ROI) calculators or real-life results.
- How your buyer can "sell" the solution to other internal purchase influencers.
- Social proof such as customer videos, live interviews, or written testimonials.
- Current client survey results that are formatted as proof points.
- Implementation steps, training plans, and ramp-up timelines

BOFU Poll Question Examples

In the decision stage, it is common for webinar and event marketers to ask more in-depth probing questions to empower our colleagues in Sales to tailor their pitches and offers to address the unique needs and challenges of each prospect. Here are two examples:

Probing Question to Predict Objections That May Arise in the Sales Process

What is the most significant barrier to expanding the adoption of Analytics/BI methods and tools at your company?

- Budget
- Time / bandwidth to dedicate
- Leadership buy-in to the value proposition
- Training/enablement programs are too difficult or not effective

Probing Question to Identify the Competition

What tools do you use most frequently to perform analysis and analytics?

- Mostly Excel
- Pure-play Software Solutions (e.g., SAS, Sisence, Tableau)
- ERP BI Tools (e.g., SAP Business Objects, Oracle Analytics Cloud)

Creating the Best Path Forward

The optimal webinar and events strategy involves hosting different sessions targeting segmented audiences with specific messages at pivotal points during the buyer's journey. This personalized approach can be accomplished by implementing event technology solutions and progressive profiling tools to generate complete buyer profiles, enabling precise messaging and actionable intelligence for sales. By utilizing each step of the buyer's journey as an opportunity to gather intelligence, marketers can create the most efficient path forward from prospect to purchaser.

About BigMarker

BigMarker is the webinar, virtual and hybrid events platform rated #1 in customer satisfaction. Founded in 2010, we pioneered live video on the web. Today, we host over 3 million events per year, powering digital event experiences for some of the world's most innovative companies, including more than half of the Fortune 500. For more information or a live demonstration, please email us at sales@bigmarker.com.