FEARLESS PRESENTATIONS®

MINI-COURSE

Live Online Meetings: Three-Part Mini-Course

- 7 Important Things that You Need to Know about Live Online Meetings
- How to Create Webinar Content to Maximize Audience Retention
- Nuts and Bolts about How to Deliver Webinars and Online Meetings

Fearless Presentations®

"Digital meeting creation is pretty much the same as an in-person presentation."

TERMS

In a **meeting**, two or more people come together to discuss one or more topics, often in a formal setting.

7 Important Things that You Need to Know about Online Live Meetings (Like Zoom or Skype)

One of the most common questions that we receive in our public speaking classes is, "Do the things that you are teaching us about in-person presentations change when you are on a webinar or an online platform?" The answer to that question is both "Yes" and "No".

The way that we teach people to design presentations is based on (1) focusing on the audience and what the audience wants and needs to know, and (2) make your content concise and entertaining.

So, in those respects, yes, digital meeting creation is pretty much the same as an in-person presentation. However, there are seven important things that you need to know about online live meetings that make them dramatically different from other presentations.

If you understand these key things, you can create powerful online presentations that leverage your time and your reach.

This is article and podcast is part one of a three-part series. Part two will be about how to customize your content for a digital delivery, and part three is about the technical aspects of conducting a live meeting. In part three, I'll show you the software that I use and why I use it.

Lesson 1

Online Meetings are a Fast and Easy Way to Deliver Bite-Sized Pieces of Content to an Audience.

"Bite-size training achieves quicker outcomes without blowing the budget." -- Dr. Sebastian Baily, Co-Founder of Mind Gym.

Bite-Sized Seminar sessions Over TimeWhen I first started coaching and teaching classes to business people, my first instructor trainer was a guy named Jim Bartz in Dallas. Jim used to harp on me over and over about the value of what he called "time-spaced learning". What he had discovered was that if you want your course participants to learn quickly and to retain the information, you get a much better result if you teach them a concept, make the delivery interactive, then give the class members time to apply the content in the "real world".

His concept was to conduct short, half-day sessions of content at a time on a weekly basis. The strategy worked phenomenally well. In fact, when I designed my first leadership class as the owner of The Leader's Institute ®, I used this technique. I created a series of six, half-day sessions spaced a week apart. By the end of the six-week class, the participants had experienced a dramatic behavior change. They had learned and applied so much of the content, that many claimed to have had a life-changing experience going through the course.

However, as The Leader's Institute ® started to grow, I experienced significant logistical challenges. When I was just teaching classes in Dallas and Ft Worth, it was easy to travel across town six times in six weeks. However, when I began teaching classes in Austin and Houston, those weekly car trips were time-consuming and expensive. For the first couple of years, I remember booking classes in Chicago on Tuesday, Madison, Wisconsin on Wednesday, and Indianapolis on Thursday just to keep my costs low. (It was cheaper to pay for a single round-trip flight each week and drive to all of the locations than to pay for six flights for each class (18 flights). Needless to say, after a year or so of this, I was exhausted. Eventually, I began doing slightly longer sessions each week and condensed the class from six sessions to four sessions.

Eventually, I also had to train new instructors because the schedule was too taxing otherwise. As a result, I had to increase the tuition of the class.
Technology fixed this logistical problem in the last few years, though. With webinars, I (or another instructor) can deliver bite-sized content on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis for little or no cost at all.

Lesson 2 & 3 / Online Meetings Can Expand Your Reach Very Quickly.

"Electronic communication makes possible what has previously been excluded: namely, active, simultaneous and reciprocal contact between individuals across all frontiers constituted by countries, religions and continents." -- Ulrich Beck.

Webinars Expand Your ReachThe major benefit of webinars is that anyone who has a smartphone or internet connection can access them. As a result, you have incredible reach in today's world if you use webinars. In a couple of weeks, we'll cover some of the different software packages out there that will allow you to broadcast a webinar, but there are so many options that we can't possibly cover all of them.

If you are an entrepreneur, you can generate webinar attendees by posting an invitation to your website and social media accounts. By doing this, you can reach potential customers all over the world. I've had people fly to the United States or into our classes in Europe from all over the world as a result of these people attending webinars that we have conducted. With Zoom, Facebook, and LinkedIn Live, now, that is likely to increase in the future.

If you are creating webinars for an internal audience, you can communicate with employees in multiple cities, states, or countries all at the same time. We do this internally with The Leader's Institute ®. I have dozens of instructors all over the US, Canada, and Europe, so we will meet every week via Zoom to share success stories, cover training topics, and exchange ideas that would be very difficult to do logistically without online meeting platforms.

Online Meetings are Not Suitable to Every Type of Presentation.

Webinars do not Work for Every PresentationYes, there are a LOT of advantages to digital meetings, but there are also a lot of extremely important disadvantages as well. The main disadvantage is that webinars are not the best medium for certain types of skill-based programs. For instance, I don't think it would be a great idea to teach a teenager how to drive via an online meeting. That is a skill that takes practice.

However, one of the great things about Zoom is that technology is now allowing for the coaching of groups digitally. In the past, we have done a lot of coaching via Skype or Facetime, but it was mostly just one-on-one with an instructor. Yes, the training is great in a session like that. However, the person doesn't really get practice speaking to a group.

That is until Zoom improved noise reduction and create breakout rooms. We have recently begun to offer virtual versions of our Fearless Presentations ® class, and we are getting fantastic results. (Details of this virtual presentation class.)

Lesson 4 / **Online Sessions Need to be SHORT in Duration.**

Keep Webinars ShortIf you keep your online sessions to around 30 to 60 minutes in length, you will get better results. For every additional five minutes, though, you will either need to be very compelling and entertaining, or you will see a dramatic drop-off in attendees.

WorkCast conducted a statistical analysis of the optimal time for the length of a webinar (https://blog.workcast.com/whats-the-optimum-length-of-a-webinar). The results were pretty interesting. For webinars under 60 minutes in length, a majority of the people who attended the webinar live stayed on the entire time. However, most people who accessed the webinar as a recording dropped off after about 20 minutes.

While the study didn't address why the people viewing the recording dropped off, I can make a pretty educated guess. People are busy. If they are watching a recording, and they see that there is forty minutes left, they will begin to assess whether the first 20 minutes was worth their time. If the answer is no, they will drop off. Also, if they are attending live, the realize they will likely have a chance to ask questions at the end.

Without that additional nugget, they often leave the webinar before the recording is finished. However, if you are concise in your delivery and you can keep your webinar length to 30 minutes or so, this won't happen as much. Human nature is that once they get to that critical 20-minute point, they will look at the toolbar and see that only ten minutes is left. As a result, they are more likely to finish the entire session.

By the way, for in-person sessions, an hour to an hour-and-fifteen-minutes is the optimal time for a presentation.

Lesson 5 & 6 / **Online Meetings Can Expand Your Reach Very Quickly.**

Digital Meetings are Much Harder to Deliver than In-Person Presentations.
Webinars are More ComplicatedIf you are nervous speaking to groups of people, then you may not want to cut your teeth on digital meetings. Online presentations are dramatically more difficult to deliver than regular live presentations. You are likely to be exponentially more nervous conducting one than you would be just standing up and speaking at a staff meeting in your office.

First of all, you have more balls to juggle. In a regular presentation, you might have to set up a slideshow. But once that is done, you don't have to worry a lot about the technology involved in your presentation. In a digital meeting, though, you will have the webinar software to worry about. You'll have to remember to turn off the auto-mute button that many webinar platforms have installed. (I once did 25 minutes of a webinar where I was on a roll covering all kinds of great content, but no one heard any of it because I had "mute" on the whole time.)

You will have people chatting questions to you. You will inevitably have someone log on without headphones, and the feedback will make you have to mute all attendees.
All of these things are stressful challenges that are unique to webinar delivery. The absolute worst part of conducting a webinar, though, is that...

It Is Much More Difficult to Get Participants to Interact with You.

One of the things that our instructors reinforce in our 2-day Fearless Presentations ® classes is that one of the best ways to reduce public speaking fear is to "look for the friendly faces" in your audience. Most often, when you are communicating well in front of a group, you can look around the room and notice people nodding at you when they agree with you. If you say something funny, they will smile. However, on a digital meeting, this important feedback loop is lessened. As a result, the nervousness of the speaker can increase as the session goes on versus decreasing like is common when we speak in person.

Next week, I will cover a few fool-proof tips to reducing some of this common tension and making your Zoom Meetings more interactive.

Lesson 7

Once You Get Good at Digital Meeting and Webinars, Though, You Will be Viewed as an Expert in Your Field.

Although webinars are tougher to get the hang of, and they can make nervous speakers even more nervous, they create a tremendous opportunity in the business world. When I'm teaching the Fearless Presentations ® class, I often tell my class members that if they want to be a great speaker, the bar is set pretty low.

You don't have to be an exceptional speaker to be seen as good or even great by your audience. You just have to be a little better than the last speaker who put everyone to sleep, and your audience will love you.

So, when people complete my classes, they are often extremely comfortable in front of a group because they know they are more highly trained than most people who speak in business.

In the webinar genre, the contrast is even greater. I spoke earlier about the study where many webinar viewers of the recordings drop off after 20 minutes. It is quite possible that another reason that they drop off is the the webinars were just flat terrible. So, if you are interesting as a webinar leader, you have the opportunity build a following of viewers who see you as the go-to expert in your field by using this technique.

So, now that we have covered a lot of the pros and cons of webinars, next week, we're going to show you how to create your content for a webinar so that your audience really loves you!

"A good orator is pointed and impassioned."
- Marcus T. Cicero

How to Create Online Meeting Content to Maximize Audience Retention

Certain types of content are perfect for webinar delivery, while other types will fail miserably. (That is true no matter how good the presenter is, by the way.) For instance, any process that you are trying to teach that is foreign will likely have very negative results. However, content, where the participant is already somewhat familiar with the process, works much better.

So, online training is great for fine-tuning a familiar process. An example of this might be learning to drive a car. A teenager who just attends a series of webinars about how to drive would likely be terrified entering an on-ramp. However, if a person who has been driving for 10 years without an accident got a speeding ticket and had to attend a webinar on driver safety, the content would likely be helpful.

Online Meetings are a Fast and Easy Way to Deliver Bite-Sized Pieces of Common Situations Where a Webinar or Live Meeting Can Save Time and be Extremely Helpful

As Follow Up on In-Person Training. For instance, you can start with an in-person seminar or workshop and add online segments to increase retention.

To Fine-Tune a Process in which the Audience is Already Skilled. Many sales teams are logistically spread out into different territories. As a result, it can be very cost-effective to use webinars to fine-tune the selling process. Another example is when a surgical procedure is improved. Top surgeons can quickly show hundreds or thousands of other surgeons around the world what they are doing.

As an Introduction to a New Process in which the Audience will Receive Additional Training. If a company is rolling out a new marketing campaign, they can use a quick webinar to show it to all of their employees at once. Then, the marketing team can deliver additional information by other means as the process continues. We often use this technique before we conduct custom training for a company. We start with an introductory webinar then conduct the in-person training over time.

To Roll-Out Updates to Current Processes or Software. If a software team had to attend a formal training program every time a software update occurred, it would be very impractical. However, a short webinar to explain the benefits of the updates can be very helpful.
Explain New Technology that will be Beneficial to the Group. You'll find that experts who teach skills like Search Engine Optimization (SEO) or Social Media best practices often use webinars to deliver content. The technology is changing so fast that webinars are often the best medium to deliver this kind of content.

Of course, there are many other examples. The key thing to remember here, though, is that implementation of the content of a webinar is always going to be much less than with an in-person instructor or coach. So, use webinars to fine-tune versus shift culture.
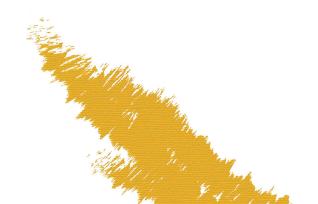
Step #1: Keep the Content Short and the Focus Narrow

"A good orator is pointed and impassioned." -- Marcus T. Cicero

Attention spans on a webinar are very short. You have to keep the meeting length under one hour to keep your audience engaged. In fact, 30 minutes is often better than one hour. Remember that you don't have to cover everything at once. The major benefit of online meetings and webinars is that they can deliver information in bite-sized-pieces. The analogy I like to use is that an online meeting should be more like sipping a glass of wine versus drinking from a fire hose.

If you deliver content to your audience that they can benefit from immediately, they will enthusiastically return for additional content.

Step #2: Make the Content "Audience Focused"

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Step #3: Put Some Meat on the Bones

"If it is a 10-minute speech, it takes me all of two weeks to prepare it; if it is a half-hour speech, it takes me a week; if I can talk as long as I want to, it requires no preparation at all. I am ready now." -- Woodrow Wilson

Spend at about five to ten minutes in your online meeting developing each item from your list. I often find that it can take me up to 30 minutes of preparation to pull together five minutes of content. It may take longer, though.

Most of the time, I try to use at least one example or story from the "real world" to develop my content. But to make it more interesting, I often add a quote from another expert or an analogy as well. Statistics can also be a good option. However, a single statistic used in combination with an example or story works much better than just quoting statistics alone. Regardless, instead of just adding a bunch of random bullet points, come up with your main ideas, and support them with interesting evidence.

If you use this process, you should be able to create a quick outline of the presentation. Then, taking just a little more time, add in some quality content. So, you should be able to design a webinar or online meeting in a much faster way than the average presenter.

For instance, according to Vengage, over 47% of presenters spend more than eight hours designing a one-hour presentation. Less than 20% spend fewer than three hours preparing for the presentation. If you use these simple steps, you can design the entire presentation absent visual aids in way less than three hours.

Step #4 Make Sure You Have a Clear Idea of What You Want to Say Before Creating Your Visual Aids

Just like in an in-person presentation, figure out what you are going to say first, then design your visuals. The process is similar to designing a movie or a cartoon. You start with an idea. Then create a storyboard for the idea (the outline of the main points). Next, you design a script. Then finally, you create your visuals at the end.

When Fox broadcasting was brand new, the local Fox stations played a bunch of old TV shows that had been created decades before. So there was a lot of Partridge Family and Green Acres reruns. So, when I was a kid, I remember coming home from school and finding Speed Racer on the new Fox channel.

The show was a cartoon about an 18-year-old race car driver who seemed to get in all kinds of trouble. The funny thing about the show, though was that it was actually a Japanese cartoon that had been dubbed in English. So, the dialogue was really strange, and there were constant audible gasps to make the voices match the animation.

It was very easy to see that the visuals were created first and the sound was added at a later time. It is very difficult for a person to speak in a way to match up with a visual. So, figure out what you want to say first, then add in your visual aids.

Although this is the same tip that we give people who are creating in-person speeches, it is even more important in a webinar. When you are the speaker in a meeting room, as you speak, your audience is often looking at you. However, when you deliver a webinar, the visual aids are the center of attention. As a result, you want to...

Step #5: Spend More Time and Effort on Your Webinar Visuals

"Create your own visual style... let it be unique for yourself and yet identifiable for others." Orson Welles

If you haven't yet read or listened to my podcast on creating create handouts, I covered a lot of tips about how to Create Professional Handouts without a Graphic Designer. In that episode, I spent a lot of time talking about two tools that can make this process so easy. They are Canva and Shutterstock. You can purchase royalty-free photos from Shutterstock for very small fees. You can also use Canva to take the photos, and create great graphics with them.

When I create slides for in-person meetings, I typically use fewer pictures. If I'm teaching online or if I'm leading a webinar, however, my slides are very visual. Most often, I will just put a single bullet point (or main idea) on each slide, and I will create an image for every supporting piece of content that I add.

For instance, earlier, I mentioned the TV show Speed Racer, and I told a story about it. If I am in person, I will tell the story, and my physical movement will be the visual aid. I'd be trying to get the audience to picture, in their head, me as a kid sitting in front of my TV. I'd use my gestures to help them create this image. If I'm leading a Webinar, though, I can't do that. So, I'd click a button on my keyboard, and an image of the cartoon character would appear.

If I were to draw the analogy that a Webinar is similar to making an animated cartoon, I might show an image of a sample storyboard, switch to an actor with headphones in front of a microphone, and end with the cartoon character.

The important thing about visual aids is that people will lose interest quickly if the presenter isn't engaging with them consistently. Your images help you do that more easily. If you want additional information about how to do this well, check out the interview I conducted with Eric Molin about Speaking to International Audiences. This is the technique that he also uses when he designs slides for audiences where many people are not native English speakers.

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This part three of a three-part series on webinars and live online meetings. In this course, I'll show you a few of the technical secrets about how I deliver the actual webinars. I'm going to cover the best online meeting platforms to use along with sound and video suggestions.

If you missed either of the first two sessions. The first session was 7 Important Things that You Need to Know about Live Online Meetings. I told you types of content that work really well in webinars and types of content that can be very bad. Last week, we covered How to Create Webinar Content to Maximize Audience Retention. In that episode, I shared with you a step-by-step process that you can use to design content for your webinars or Zoom meetings.

Nuts and Bolts about How to Deliver Webinars and Live Online Meetings.

Lesson 1

Free Webinar Software and Meeting Software for Smaller Groups

If you are just getting started with online meetings or presenting webinars, the following are free or low-cost options.

Zoom in Under 40 Minutes.

If you Zoom through a Zoom presentation, it is free. Zoom allows you to conduct online meetings with all the "bells and whistles" for up to 40 minutes for free. So, as long as you keep the meeting duration short, they don't charge you anything.

I'm going to spend more time on Zoom later.

Skype with Under 50 Participants

My first online meetings were using Skype. It has been around forever, and most people have it installed on phones and laptops. Microsoft bought Skype a few years ago, and since then, they have changed a few things. In the past, Skype had a lot of free service like personal video calls, etc. My wife is from Ireland, so we used Skype for years to make calls to family. In addition, when I do interviews on a podcast, I will often use Skype.

Recently, though, Skype has begun to offer unlimited online meetings for up to 50 people for free. I assume they are doing this to compete with Zoom, since Zoom is gaining a huge share of the market. Whatever the reason, what is old is new again.

Facebook Live with Private Group

One of the things that we are beginning to do more and more is to conduct private Facebook group live sessions. Obviously, if you are conducting marketing webinars, then the regular Facebook Live service is phenomenal. For those of you who have followed my blog or podcast for a while, last year, I interviewed Tom Antion. Tom is the king of Facebook Live. He will often deliver webinars sitting on his couch in his huge mansion via Facebook. The folks at Ziglar Seminars (Zig Ziglar's company before he passed away) do Facebook live mini webinars almost daily.

If you work for a company, though, and you are looking for a way to communicate face-to-face, then just set up an invite-only private Facebook group.

So, this is when I often get asked something like... "But Doug, how do I show a slideshow or visual aid in Facebook live?" Well, Facebook has an option where you can share your screen, now. Unfortunately, you can't really switch back and forth from your camera to your screen. I'm sure they will fix this soon, but it is a pretty big problem. (Still, though, it is free.)

Other Free Meeting Software Options.

Google has an option called Google Meet (or Google Hangouts Meet). It is similar to Zoom in function, but you have to have a paid G Suite account to create a meeting. anyone with a Google account can attend the meetings, though. The software doesn't work on Safari browsers, though. So, it didn't make my top three options.

Free Conference Call.com is a great option for internal meetings within your organization. When I started my company two decades ago, we used this service for our weekly staff meetings. It was just audio conferencing back then. Now, they have free video-conferencing too. I wouldn't suggest giving a link to a free service to your potential clients, but if your employees already know you are cheap (mine do,) it works internally.

LinkedIn Live can be used just like Facebook Live. It is still fairly new, though. As a result, I haven't had a lot of experience with it yet. However, I suspect that it will move into my top three platforms in the near future.

Professional Webinar Software and Meeting Software for Larger Groups

Once you begin to use webinars or online meetings externally with customers or potential customers, these options work better. Yes, you can still use the free options, but the paid services are really inexpensive, now. They also reduce the challenges that can occur in online meetings. So, they are worth the tiny investment.

Use Breakout Rooms in Zoom Meeting to Reinforce Application and Save Time.

Right now, my "go to" service is far and away, Zoom. Zoom has done a couple of important things in the last few months.

First, they have reduced the background noise from multiple live microphones. I really don't know the technology behind this, but here is my guess. Zoom seems to mute all microphones of participants unless a sound above a certain decibel occurs. Yes, you still get the occasional dog barking in the background. However, I have recently conducted meetings with over 100 participants without having to mute anyone. That is a huge breakthrough in technology.

Second, Zoom added a breakout room function. This allows the presenter to divide the huge group of people into smaller meeting rooms to increase discussion and collaboration. Out of all of the technological breakthroughs in recent years, this one is at the top.

For instance, let's say that you have a weekly staff meeting via Zoom. The big boss can divide the entire team into departments. Then, each participant in the department can give a brief report to his/her coworkers. The department heads could allow each person one to two minutes to report. Even if the department has 10 to 20 people, this part can take 20 minutes or less. Next, the big boss would shut down the breakout rooms and have everyone return to the global meeting. The department heads could now give a summarized report of their breakout room reports.

If you happen to be conducting a training webinar, you could use the small groups to reinforce the application. You could teach something, then break the group into mini-meetings to discuss how they could use the content.

Microsoft Teams Combines Chat, File Sharing, and Web Conferencing.

Microsoft Teams seems to have been created for big companies to collaborate internally. However, recently, they have added options to invite guests into the online meetings. So, although this platform wasn't designed to host webinars or online training meetings, it now fulfills this role better than webinar platforms. Most webinars are one-sided. A person is speaking and everyone else is listening. They are typically not very interactive.

Microsoft Teams was designed to be interactive. Now, you can use it as an online meeting platform too. It combines functions like Group Chat (similar to Slack,) file storage and cloud sharing (similar to G Suite,) and online meetings (Similar to Zoom,) but it is all in one place.

If you have a Microsoft 365 account, you, most likely already have access to this for no additional fee.

Before You Begin, Invest In Good Equipment:

You really need three things to conduct a great webinar. First, you need a webinar service like we just talked about. Second, you need a fantastic microphone. Finally, you need an upgraded video camera (so you look really good.)

You Have to Have a Good Microphone If You are the Meeting Leader.

For the last few weeks, news broadcasts have been fairly haphazard. With the Covid-19 outbreak, guests on news programs have broadcasted from their homes. A quick observation can easily tell which guests had previously recorded content from their homes. One guest being interviewed would sound crystal clear. Seconds later, the next guest sounded like someone was slapping a wooden spoon against aluminum foil in the background. The only difference between the two was the microphone being used.

The great microphone that you can buy for webinars or online meetings is the Blue Yeti Microphone. This microphone is awesome. They are $129 to $159 on Amazon, but they are worth their weight in gold. You should also get the microphone pop filter. This $6 investment will keep your P's from popping when you speak into the mike.

Blue also makes so really good microphones that are a little less expensive. The Snowball is the starter microphone that a lot of podcasters use. The Nano is similar to the Yeti but a little smaller. All give really good audio, though.

Upgrade Your Camera So You Look Fantastic.

You don't have to invest a ton of money into an HD camera and connect a bunch of wires to your computer. Instead, just upgrade your webcam or connect your phone to your laptop.

Upgrade Your Webcam.

This is the easiest way to have stellar video quality for your online meetings. Just purchase a USB 1080p webcam, plug it in, and voila, instant studio. Logitech makes a number of great 1080p cameras. For the most part, any will do. Just like anything else technology-wise, though, the higher the price, the better the quality. Currently, anything in the $120-$200 range will give you a beautiful picture.

Use Your Phone as Your Camera.

Cellphones today have better cameras than most cameras. And if you want to turn your high-quality iPhone camera into a high-quality webcam, well... There's an app for that. The Epoc-Cam app connects your phone to online platforms like Zoom and Skype. Download the PC or IOS drivers from their website and install them on your computer. Then, download the app from your app store. (The app was under $8, so much cheaper than a new webcam.)

My Suggestion on Nuts and Bolts about How to Deliver Webinars and Online Meetings

So, in summary, here is what I suggest to create great online meetings and webinars.

Zoom Conferencing Platform ($15/mo)
Blue Yeti USB Microphone ($129)
Logitech 1080p Webcam ($129)
For less than $300 the first month and $15 per month after that, you will have a studio-quality setup.