



## Beyond the Basics

### How to Optimize Online Training for Maximum Impact

In today's global business environment, reaching more people in more places in less time begins with two key steps:

1. Moving at least part of your training initiatives online
2. Applying proven marketing principles to improve the reach and impact of those key messages

The challenge for trainers who are serious about their craft is to continue refining how they create and deliver value, both to their trainees and to their organizations.

To move your live online training beyond the basics, your goal should be to identify those opportunities where you can more richly engage your audience and use that valuable dialogue to optimize your online training for maximum impact.

### Plan Registration Questions over the Whole Program

Registration questions are a strategic opportunity to dialogue with your audience or marketplace. Besides simply identifying who will be attending your training session, a good next step is to ask questions that help the trainer understand where trainees are at and how to optimize the session for them. But stopping there also leaves a whole dimension of business value untouched – assuming there

are groups in your organization that would benefit from tapping into the knowledge of every invitee. Begin by determining the beneficiary of the additional information gathered. Product managers need market feedback for product development; marketers need to understand how messages are being received; and sales teams want to understand prospects and customers with greater insight. Most likely, there are many more questions each team would like answered than could be reasonably expected from an invitee registering for a training class.

Next, simply but strategically distribute those questions over the registration process for multiple training sessions. For little additional effort, your online training program now creates value in a new way as this input serves to amplify your organization’s knowledge base.

## Create Slides That Are Simple and Visual

To create slides that are simple and visual, content designers must remember that in a live presentation, the slides don’t contain the important content. The slides are there to support the real teacher — the trainer — so they don’t need to be over-cluttered with information. With a small investment of time, even non-graphic designers can move beyond the basics to engage and delight their audiences.

With the hypothetical sales-training slide below, three easy steps taken by the trainer will help the sales trainee learn and remember more quickly.

1. The slide title is turned into a benefit-oriented statement.
2. The perspective is changed to come consistently from the trainee’s point of view; rather than listing what the customer does, it is changed to what the sales person — the trainee — does.
3. The prose is reduced to essentials and displayed in a visual format.

In this example the design is easily created using the AutoShapes function in PowerPoint. The colors

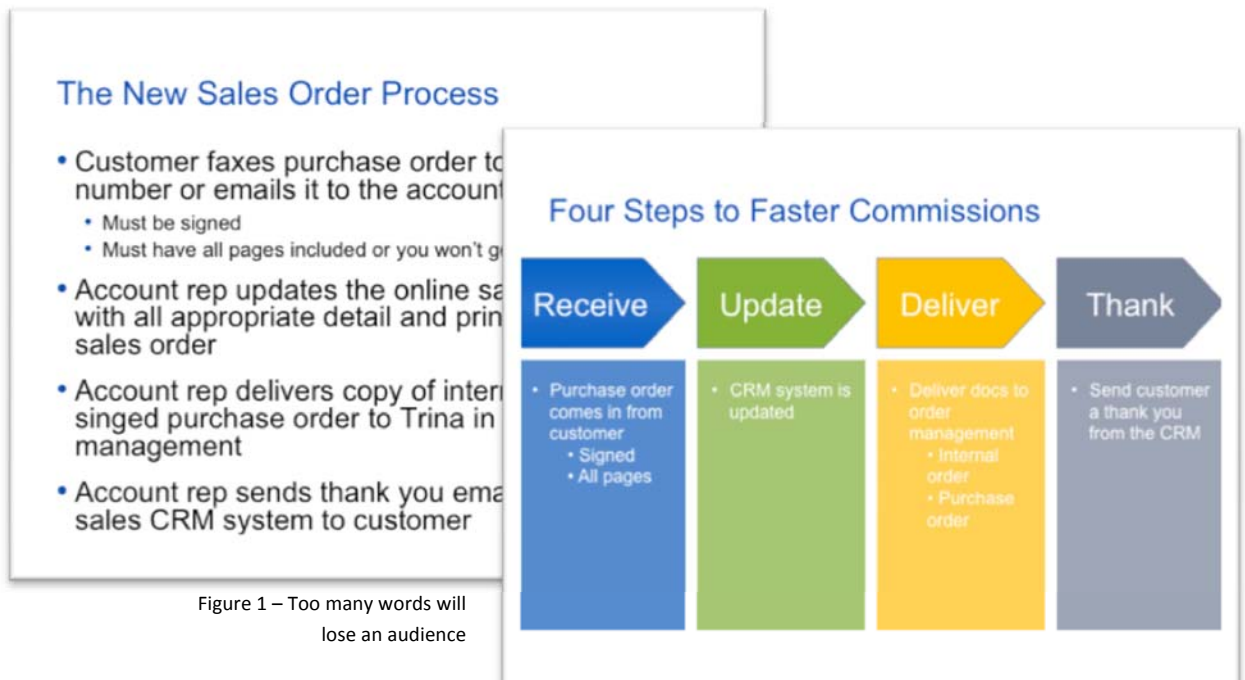


Figure 1 – Too many words will lose an audience

Figure 2 – A visual presentation increases comprehension and retention



were chosen from the color palette assigned to this template. Your marketing department likely has a set of colors chosen for your organization's PowerPoint template, making it easy to quickly create visuals that are coordinated and consistent.

## Design in the Online Training Dynamics

With adult learners especially, engagement is a key part of learning. Unfortunately, training that does not interact well with trainees is just as common online as it is offline, spawning the same "death by slideshow" quips and yawns.

Begin by intentionally incorporating points of interactivity. Make it a point early in the presentation to demonstrate the tools you will be using to communicate, such as polls or typed questions.

Next, think about natural places in the presentation that could be enhanced by asking for a "show of hands" or other audience input. Don't think, "I need to insert a poll here" — just be aware of those places where it would be natural to ask a question.

Finally, plan to use Q&A strategically. Rather than waiting until the end, use natural pauses (e.g., when taking a poll) or transitions (e.g., between content sections) to answer questions. Furthermore, ask ad-hoc questions as they strike you and ask the audience to type in a response — especially when you glance at the dashboard and notice a low attentiveness percentage. The spontaneity will liven up the presentation and keep learners engaged.

## Keep it Moving: Slides, Annotations and Dialogue

Imagine a television show where the narrator speaks to a series of fixed images, and those images only change every five minutes. You might be tempted to leave the room while trying to keep listening. During online training sessions, trainees who are not engaged may be tempted to divide their attention with a quick peek at an email or a Web page, reducing the likelihood of success for all involved.

The key principle of designing interactivity in your online training is planning to keep the presentation elements of your training session moving continuously. This could be as simple as taking one slide containing four ideas and instead creating four slides with one idea each. Online training features such



Figure 3 – Don't wait until the end of the session to answer questions.

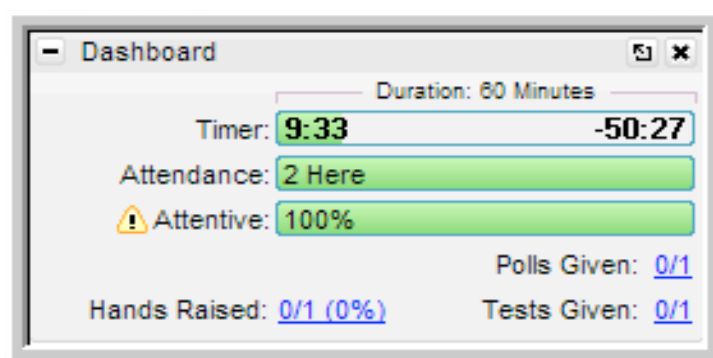


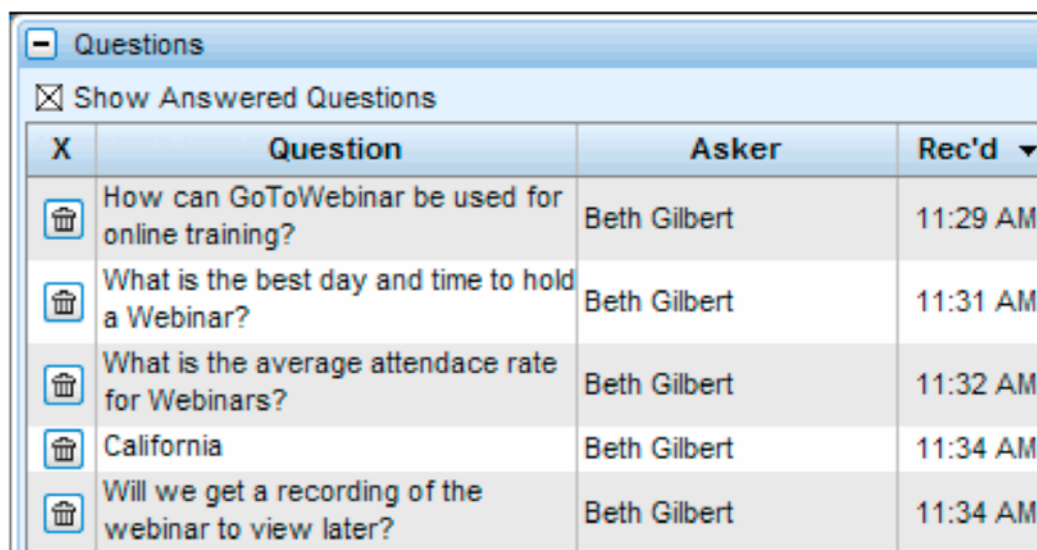
Figure 4 – Attentiveness Dashboard

as pointers and annotations can be used to highlight, circle, or point at content, helping each trainee follow the trainer's thought flow more effectively. Finally, because online training makes it easy to include other remote presenters or subject-matter experts, adding another voice or two to the training "stage" creates an exciting dynamic in your online training's aural experience.

## Record the Chat and Q&A Logs to Create Additional Material

Online training technology makes it easy to record the audio and visual elements of your online training for future Web-based viewing. Trainers who go beyond the basics will discover that interacting with trainees will create some valuable content (usable in a number of different ways), because most typed content (e.g., chat or Q&A) is captured.

One powerful way to use Q&A logs is to have the audience be part of creating content for future use. Passively, their most common questions may help you understand frequently asked questions, helping you improve your training content or serving as a foundation for a handout. Actively, you could ask for



- Questions			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Show Answered Questions			
X	Question	Asker	Rec'd ▾
	How can GoToWebinar be used for online training?	Beth Gilbert	11:29 AM
	What is the best day and time to hold a Webinar?	Beth Gilbert	11:31 AM
	What is the average attendance rate for Webinars?	Beth Gilbert	11:32 AM
	California	Beth Gilbert	11:34 AM
	Will we get a recording of the webinar to view later?	Beth Gilbert	11:34 AM

Figure 5 – Q&A Log

input that allows learners to contribute to each other's learning. Asking something like, "What Web site is your best resource, and why?" not only gives learners a sense of contribution, but also increases your own resource list.

## Use Tests to Evaluate and Adjust

End-of-event tests for any seminar are commonly used to gauge retention of information. They are less commonly used in one of two other contexts, either to shed light on the whole program or to plan specific follow up for individual trainees.

When presenting a series or program, plan to ask specific questions in the final survey about what trainees would like to focus on in the next online training session. Working together symbiotically helps trainees participate in where they need to go while helping you, the trainer, deliver what you know will

be on target.

Additionally, because survey content is recorded for each individual, what they have to say about how your organization serves them can be specific and valuable. Does the trainee need one-on-one tutoring, a follow-up call from their account manager or a service call from an executive? Responding to individual needs creates optimum value for the trainee and your organization alike.

## The Bottom Line: Engagement Optimizes Impact

Great online training goes beyond simply reaching people with an online slideshow. Timeless principles such as getting your trainees involved with their own learning experience are equally valid online as they are in person.

With careful planning and a little practice, your online training offerings will feel natural, delight your trainees and help your organization improve the reach and frequency of your key training messages as part of reaching your goals.

## Online Learning 101

Wednesday, June 25, 2008 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM PDT

### Survey Form

We would appreciate your feedback about our Webinar. Please complete the survey below.

#### This training session met my expectations.

- Strongly agree  
 Agree  
 Disagree  
 Strongly disagree

#### How would you rate the content of this training (5 is best)?

- 1    2    3    4    5

#### What topic would you like to get more training on?

- Screen customization  
 Content preparation  
 Effectively engaging audience

#### What would you like to see added to these training sessions?

Submit

Figure 6 – End-of-Webinar Survey

### About Roger Courville and 1080 Group, LLC

Roger Courville is the author of *The Virtual Presenter's Handbook* and sought-after speaker on improving productivity using live online communications. Roger is the principal at 1080 Group, LLC, an independent training and consulting firm that helps companies learn and optimize online presentations and Web seminars, and his real-world expertise is backed by that of the seasoned professionals at 1080 Group – who together have worked with hundreds of clients on thousands of events involving more than a million event attendees. For more information, visit [www.1080Group.com](http://www.1080Group.com) or call +1-503-329-1662.

### Additional 1080 Group Resources

[www.TheVirtualPresenter.com](http://www.TheVirtualPresenter.com) - Roger's blog and book site  
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