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## ONLINE EVENTS

# Recorded Web events click

### On-demand events better at converting registrants to qualified sales leads

BY RICHARD KARPINSKI

**O**NLINE EVENTS HAVE proven their worth as a way to deliver qualified leads to b-to-b marketers. Now, the challenge is how to run them more often and more efficiently.

Merrill Corp., which provides software and services to help large legal firms manage case documents, has built a closed-loop marketing process driven from an event Web site—[www.merrillcorp.com/law](http://www.merrillcorp.com/law)—that hosts a variety of recorded online events, qualifies attendees with survey questions and then drives the leads directly into its sales force automation system for followup by sales reps.

"It's a completely integrated solution and a tremendously powerful tool," said Toby Younis, Merrill's VP-marketing.

Merrill's approach highlights a number of key webinar trends: recorded rather than live online events; well-focused and content-rich material, and an integrated process for turning viewers into qualified leads.

#### MORE REACH WITH RECORDINGS

The move to recorded events is particularly notable, as many marketers associate Web event technology with delivering live, online events that mimic a live trade show or conference event. But especially online, marketers are finding they can reach more viewers by recording events and archiving them on their Web sites, leaving customers in control of when and how they view the content. Recorded events also reduce the burden on marketing staffs.

The end result is that marketers can deliver more recorded events—ultimately driving more sales leads.

"Marketers are becoming more comfortable with the fact that the day of gigantic, live webinars has kind of passed us by," said Stephanie Downs, president of

Conferzone, an online conferencing consultancy. "Nowadays, people want to gather information when it works best for them. Marketers are finding that 70% of their traffic [to a webinar] comes after they post the recorded event to their Web site."

"It's one of the main trends we've seen—the heavy utilization of on-demand [recorded] seminar content," said Vanessa Baker Simon, group manager-strategic marketing for WebEx, which provides the technology for Merrill's online events. "From what we've seen, on-demand events increase the ability for marketers to convert registrants to actual sales leads, while also

converting touches to leads. But because live events were difficult and time-consuming to manage, webinars also typically delivered far fewer total customer touches than other marketing approaches. Happily, recorded online events help change that equation.

"When you combine recorded content with sophisticated direct marketing tactics, you can really scale online events up as a marketing tool," said Brian Burch, chief marketing officer of Raindance, another Web conferencing vendor. "Your total number of leads becomes higher, not just your [conversion] percentages."

Another way to gain value and deliver more marketing results is to integrate rich content, such as video, into the online event.

Coapt Systems uses online events with video to educate plastic surgeons on new surgical technologies and techniques, said Coapt Systems Senior Marketing Manager Rob Griffin.

"We shoot a videotape of a surgical procedure and deliver the clips over the Web as part of presentation online to show what a product looks like and how it's used in true surgery," Griffin said. Coapt delivers its events live and then archives them on its Web site.

Time-shifting is especially important for reaching busy executives. Foresight Corp., a provider of software tools

for managing medical information, uses Web conferencing several times a week for one-on-one customer demos as well as to deliver webinars to prospect for leads. □

### Need to know 5 tips for producing successful online events

1. Start planning for your Web event as far in advance as possible. Planning a top-notch Web event requires months of planning and four to six weeks of aggressive outbound marketing.
2. Use every possible method to market your event—Web site advertising; e-mail newsletters and one-time blasts; search engine advertising; press releases, and third-party co-sponsors (industry organizations, trade journals, etc.).
3. Web events need attractive content to draw attendees. Come up with a snappy event topic and title, fine-tune the content and offer some kind of strong, related value-add—a white paper or a free trial, perhaps.
4. Create a strategy document and event plan. Assign a leader. Over-prepare speakers, hold a rehearsal and try to foresee every possible logistical or technical fail-point, creating contingency plans to avoid any problems.
5. Follow up with event attendees via e-mail or phone calls. No-shows should get a "sorry you couldn't attend" e-mail and a link to the event archive.

helping marketing organizations better utilize their resources."

WebEx now has some customers, such as enterprise software vendor BMC Software, delivering more than 100 online events per month worldwide by leveraging this on-demand approach, Baker Simon said.

#### MERGING CONTENT, DIRECT MARKETING

Typically, online events have delivered better-than-average results for key marketing metrics, such as



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