

Redefining Distance to Market your Company

By Lee Traupel

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The recent terrorist attacks here in the US have caused many companies and individuals to rethink how they want to market to and work with others. As a result, web-enabled presentations and or collaborations are finally coming of age – the technology works with a minimum of hassle, it's an efficient way to give marketing presentations, hold meetings, provide training and do product demonstrations. The cost savings can be significant, especially when contrasted with all of the burdened costs of holding conventional meetings; i.e. travel, hotel, transportation, facilities and “time out of the office issues.” Here is a quick primer on some baseline issues to consider when weighing the effectiveness of virtual marketing presentations and meetings.

1) There are a broad number of vendors, although the “virtual presentation and meeting” market segment has undergone consolidation in the last few years. I'd recommend assessing these four market leaders: www.webex.com (well established with diversified terms of services), www.placeware.com (corporate focused), www.centra.com (provides a good client plug in that enables Voice over IP (“VOIP”) communications), www.raindance.com (emphasizes teleconferencing).

2) PC configuration, Internet access and firewall issues all need to be considered when your assessing the effectiveness of this process and technology. Port settings need to be “tuned” or optimized, the PC must have multimedia capabilities if your using VOIP, just about any speed of internet connection will work, but the experience for the attendee can vary depending on the connection speeds and how “heavy” your presentation is with graphics.

3) Web presentations offer a lower cost model versus traditional presentations or meetings, but there are burdened costs for web-enabled marketing – phone conferencing can be anywhere from \$.15-35 per minute per user, presentation uploads for a standard power point presentation (which is the defacto app for virtual presentations), can cost \$10-30. per presentation, costs per attendee can vary tremendously but average \$50-500. per session, depending upon the number of users.

4) One of the most expensive parts of virtual meetings is always the teleconferencing component. All of the market leaders have some VOIP component (voice over IP) but most are not publicizing this technology or service, as they don't want to cannibalize a significant contribution to their revenue streams. One exception is Centra – they are offering VOIP integrated services with their standard web presentations or meetings. The audio quality is good, analogous to voice quality of a standard cell phone call – but there is a client download (small under 250K) to deal with and you

must have a multi-media enabled PC.

5) Some web-enabled presentation challenges include the need to keep people involved – you can do this easily by leveraging the chat capabilities, dynamic polling, and standard Q&A components built into the application. The higher their interest level (as in real world meetings) the better your meeting or presentation will be.

6) Marketing presentations can be easily archived and made available to others on a 24/7 basis – this archiving can include the standard presentation, enhanced with video or audio components, depending on the sophistication of your presentation. Be prepared to pay an extra charge for this – but the marketing ROI can be significant, especially when you factor in how little most companies charge for an archiving service versus your front end costs.

7) Virtual marketing enables a whole set of web-enabled processes – you will have the ability to easily capture your prospect/customer's e-mail address and standard contact points via a registration process, involve them and capture preferences via polling in your presentations and “push” follow up communications during your presentation/meeting or later. But, it's very important to include standard “privacy” statements in your materials and adhere to them as you move forward through your business processes.

8) How does video conferencing impact your assessments of web-enabled presentations or collaborations? This depends on your budget, number of people attending the presentation, presenter and attendee locations and other intangible that are specific to your business. In general, video conferencing works better for very small (under five people) presentations or meetings, due to some of the inherent challenges of this medium.

Lee Traupel has 20 plus years of marketing experience – he is the co-founder of Intelective Communications, Inc. <http://www.intelective.com> , a marketing services company which provides strategic and tactical marketing services exclusively to small to medium sized companies. His articles on interactive marketing have been widely published via: Internet.com, Europublic, Adventive, Yahoo, SitePoint, WorkZ, Wilson Web, BuyerZone, National Business Association, Traffick, and many other sites and publications. He can be reached at [mailto: Lee@intelective.com](mailto:Lee@intelective.com)

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