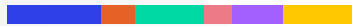


HOW TO OPTIMIZE PROSPECT ENGAGEMENT AND CONVERSION



ON24

NetLine
CORPORATION

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This report is the third in a series of e-books to help B2B marketers with their optimization efforts, brought to you by ON24® and NetLine.

Too often, marketing teams think their job ends when they hand over leads to sales. But there's so much more that can be done to impact the bottom line — and ultimately, increase marketing's contribution to both new sales and customer lifetime value.

Webinars provide a fantastic opportunity to realize both. So, how can these digital tools deliver better experiences and drive results? In this mini-report, we'll describe why customer-focused webinars are so effective, how they should be structured to drive the best results, drive opportunities for sales and how webinar content can be used for content hubs that excite new prospects and help existing customers get the most out of your offerings.

Read on to discover:

- Why focusing on engagement results in a stronger marketing-generated pipeline.
- The key questions you should ask yourself when planning your webinars.
- How to collect insight from your webinars that your sales team will love.
- Why optimizing your content hubs can accelerate the speed at which your prospects convert.

HOW TO DESIGN WEBINARS FOR CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT, NOT MARKETERS



In the first mini-report, we covered how you can optimize your marketing efforts at the acquisition stage of the customer journey — from improving your reach across channels and optimizing your landing pages to using webinars to drive attendees and turn them into MQLs.

Regardless of the medium you use to acquire, engage and convert your customers, a focus on metrics can help you achieve your key goals. But too narrow of a focus, and you run the risk of losing sight of the bigger picture.

Webinars are no different. Even though webinars provide plenty of data you can use to set optimization goals against, from the basic (e.g., attendee count and percentage) right through to granular (e.g., questions asked, polls answered), chasing these goals will be fruitless unless you make sure you build your webinars for your customer first. With that in mind, here are some points to consider.

YOUR CUSTOMER WANTS TO ENGAGE ON THEIR OWN TERMS — NOT YOURS

Our earlier report, *The CMO's Guide to Building an Optimization Culture* demonstrated that customers don't follow linear paths when it comes to their journey. While we might want them to download a particular piece of content, or sign-up to a particular session, we can't force them. Even with the best possible lead scoring and profiling technology, it's impossible to know exactly which path an individual will choose on their journey, or what interaction option they'll prefer.

Make sure both your webinars and your on-site experience offer plenty of different ways to engage, both live and on-demand. This will help visitors to choose their own journey — and allow you to collect the engagement data to improve that journey over time.

WHAT INTERESTS YOU DOESN'T NECESSARILY INTEREST YOUR CUSTOMER

Offering many interactive opportunities isn't enough. Even if you have a lot of content on your website, plenty of resources in your webinar consoles, and lots of polls and surveys, none of it will matter if your content doesn't help your customer.

Before you create any asset or incorporate any interaction, ask yourself: does this help address the needs of my target audience? Is it compelling? If the answer to either of these is “no,” rethink what you are offering.

Use detailed customer personas as an aid to review your content offerings if you already have them. If not, build those personas out as soon as you can.

A SINGLE EVENT IS NOT THE ENDPOINT OF SUCCESS

As you choose how to optimize your B2B marketing efforts, you will need to use some quantitative indicators to measure performance, set goals and take steps to reach them.

However, **while these metrics are both insightful and important for you, they are of no value to your customer.** They care about addressing their own needs and priorities — both today and in the future.

Whenever you run a campaign, make sure to keep this at the front of your mind. Look to address their immediate needs and demonstrate you’ll be there to offer value in the future.

So how can you do this with webinars? First, as mentioned above, make sure your webinar

addresses the needs of your customer. Second, make sure the next interaction they have will offer value too; if a great webinar is followed by a poor experience, you’ve lost the chance to keep the momentum of that relationship positive. Third, keep running webinars of regular value to your buyers to keep them engaged.

FOCUSING ON ENGAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE WILL PAY OFF

There’s a chance that after reading this far, you might be asking whether the pursuit of quantitative optimization can actually align with the customer experience.

The good news is that the hard-to-measure changes you make in improving the quality of your content and how you are delivering it does result in a measurable difference.

Assessing its own data, ON24 has found a **high webinar customer engagement score correlates with a lift in the pipeline metrics that marketers are often targeted on.** An engagement score of 4-6 led to a 38% conversion of attendees to sales accepted leads. However, a more dramatic finding was that a score of 6 or higher led to an 89% conversion of attendees to SALs.

NETLINE TIP

LEARN WHAT YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE IS LOOKING FOR

A key factor to keep in mind prior to content creation is assessing whether you’re truly addressing the needs of your target audience. In order to better understand what topics and formats are resonating with your ideal buyer, using free tools — like NetLine’s Audience Explorer — that give you access to real-time, custom content consumption insights helps inform and confirm your direction. Not to mention, analyzing real-world data points also ensures your targeting strategy is capturing the hungriest audience.

ENGAGEMENT PREDICTS OPPORTUNITIES

6+

Engagement Score



89%

Conversion of
Attendees to SALs



53%

Conversion of
MQLs to SALs



4-6

Engagement Score



38%

Conversion of
Attendees to SALs



25%

Conversion of
MQLs to SALs



ON24 TIP

**FOCUS ON THE QUALITY OF THE
EXPERIENCE TO AVOID TURNING
YOUR AUDIENCE OFF**

Today's B2B buyers are overwhelmed with low-quality approaches and low-quality content. Make sure that your webinars stand out and are compelling enough to view. To read more about why a high-quality experience is critical, read our e-book on *The Engagement Imperative*.

HOW TO STRUCTURE AND OPTIMIZE YOUR WEBINARS FOR ENGAGEMENT AND CONVERSION

In our last section, we made the case that even as you look to optimize the performance of your B2B marketing and webinars, it's vital that anything you create should be built for the needs of your customers.

The good news is that careful optimization can produce a win-win where you meet your goals and customers gain value from your interaction.

Earlier, we covered how to optimize webinars for attendance and driving MQLs. But we shouldn't stop there, because webinars can provide a valuable tool in establishing and strengthening connections across the entire customer journey. Indeed, data from SiriusDecisions shows that buyers see webinars as one of their preferred channels.

Delivering engaging webinars helps to drive conversations and ultimately, conversations that will deliver conversions when the sale is made.



With that in mind, here are some steps you should take to structure and optimize your webinars for engagement and conversion.

BE CLEAR ON CUSTOMER NEEDS AND WANTS

Before you begin with planning your webinars, make sure you are clear on the exact needs of your target customers. What do they want to achieve? What is valuable for them?

Getting clarity on this aspect will make sure that any webinar program you deliver provides a compelling reason to engage.

DEFINE YOUR GOALS AND KNOW YOUR BENCHMARKS

You can use webinars for a whole variety of goals. So, what are the metrics you would like to improve? The number of free trials or demos taken? Meetings booked with sales? The number of customers who successfully onboard or complete a training program?

Use your own figures to set a SMART goal you can achieve through optimization — that is, a goal which is specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed.

You may find it helpful to have a [marketing brainstorming session](#) which can help you align your own goals to the needs of your customers.

DESIGN AND PLAN YOUR WEBINARS WITH THESE IN MIND

Now that you have both an understanding of what your customers need and what you want to achieve, you can plan accordingly.

To see continual improvement, you'll need to deliver or promote more than just one webinar to optimize against your goals. With that in mind, here are some areas to consider:

- **What value will you deliver through your content?** Think about what you'll present, what assets you'll share, what questions you'll look to answer.
- **What engagement options will you offer?** In addition to the content, how else will you offer attendees and viewers the opportunity to engage? Will you take questions? Will you ask and respond to polls? Will you show a video or do a screenshare?

- **How will you structure your webinar console?** With many potential options to drive engagement, think carefully about how you will design the webinar console to make the most valuable widgets and interaction points as accessible as possible. Also consider branding your console to improve its visual appeal.
- **When will you encourage engagement through your delivery?** Planning the delivery of your webinar should be more than just running slides. During your delivery, plan when and how you will encourage your attendees and viewers to interact. For example, you might plan polls at the beginning and in the middle, Q&A throughout the session, or reference the assets as you present.
- **When will you deliver calls-to-action?** If you have a particular goal in mind (for example, to get attendees on a free trial or demo), plan how and when you'll ask attendees to take that next step.
- **How will you take the conversation further?** The webinar shouldn't be a single event where you speak with your attendees. Instead, look for opportunities to develop conversations that can continue after the session. Having your sales or customer success colleagues on board can be particularly valuable here.

ASSESS PERFORMANCE AND OPTIMIZE ACCORDINGLY

After you have sufficient data, assess your performance and look for areas where you can optimize your webinars.

For example, you might vary the layout of the webinar console to prioritize particular engagement options. You might also change the times at which you deliver engagement options and provide a call-to-action.

USE SIMULIVE AND ALWAYS-ON TO MAXIMIZE OPTIMIZATION OPPORTUNITIES

Every live webinar will have difficult to control variables. However, by running *simulive* and *always-on* webinars, you can make changes without even having to record the session another time.

Simulive and always-on sessions also offer the benefit of making webinars available whenever anyone wants to access them. ON24's *Webinar Benchmarks Report* also notes that buyers are increasingly accessing webinars that have already been broadcast, so offering content in this way helps to serve your customers in a flexible manner.

DON'T FORGET THE POST-WEBINAR OPPORTUNITY

Once your live webinar has wrapped, or when your viewer has finished with their session, look to optimize the post-webinar experience.

Consider how you can continue the conversation. Some options include:

- Inviting them to your next webinar.
- Sending a personalized message after attendance.
- Providing additional useful information to help them with their goals.

ON24 TIP

USE YOUR WEBINAR'S ENGAGEMENT SCORE AS A METRIC FOR OPTIMIZATION

The best webinars offer a wide range of choices through which your prospects can engage. But it can be difficult to separate all the different elements. For an easy-to-use metric, ON24's *Engagement Score* combines multiple behaviors into one number that you can benchmark your performance against.

HOW TO USE WEBINARS TO BOOST SALES AND SQLS

In the previous section, we looked at how to optimize webinars to increase engagement and drive conversion. However, from examining your performance across the customer journey, you may find a bottleneck at the point where marketing hands its MQLs over to sales — even if your sessions have been brilliantly engaging.

Where this problem might identify itself is in the proportion of MQLs that become sales-accepted leads and sales-qualified leads.

Because this has an impact on marketing's contribution to pipeline, it's something marketers need to monitor and find ways to keep the process moving forward smoothly. In this section, we are going to see how you can use webinars to improve this metric.

FIND OUT FROM SALES WHAT'S BEHIND SALS AND SQLS

Because marketing's job does not stop at the handover of an MQL to sales, you need to monitor your CRM for what happens to those MQLs. Does a lead become a SAL or an SQL, or did it get disqualified somewhere along the way? And, if they were disqualified along the way, why?

The best way to find this out is to go directly to the source. **Speak to sales directly and identify**



what stops leads from being accepted. Are leads going cold because they aren't being picked up as quickly as they should be? Is there information about the leads that marketing isn't including in their lead scoring process that is causing leads to be rejected when they get to sales? What questions and approaches do sales use to qualify a lead?

USE THESE ELEMENTS TO OPTIMIZE YOUR WEBINARS

In B2B sales, getting to conversion means you need to start a conversation. So, you can use your webinars to ask the questions sales reps typically pose and begin the conversation during your session. As an example, if sales wants to know about potential budgets, you can build a question about budgets into a poll and then pass those results over to sales.

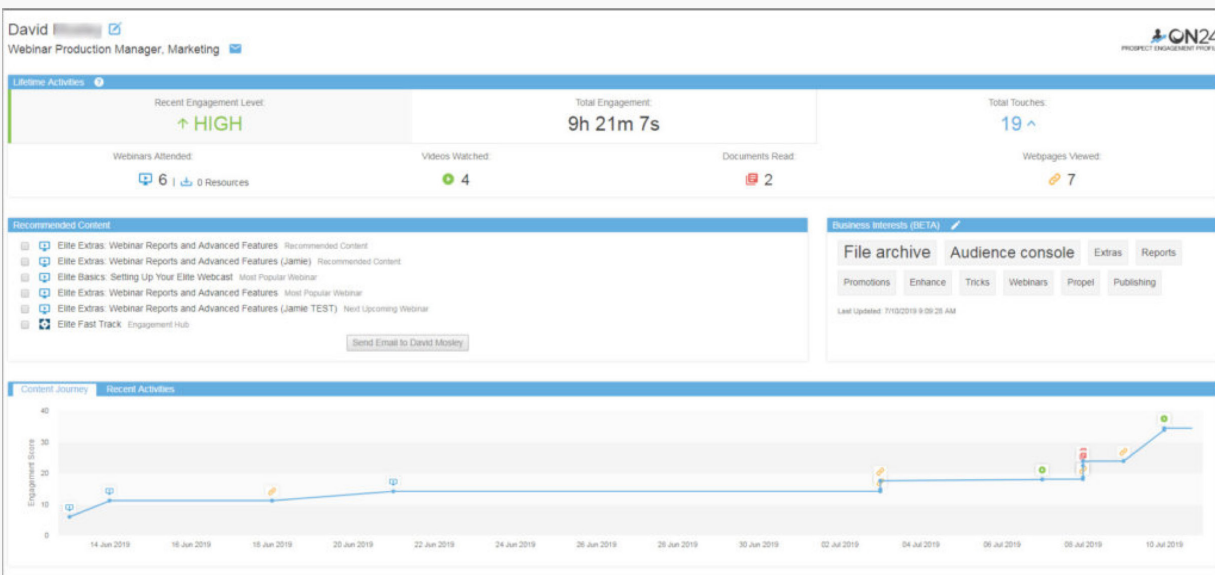
While it's always possible for marketing to start conversations within a webinar and then manually hand prospects over to sales to continue and expand those conversations, **it's also helpful to have someone from sales on the webinar.** They can either be out in front presenting or in the background doing Q&A.

Keep in mind it's not all about metrics. You want to enable your sales team to develop one-on-one connections. Webinars can help with that.

BRING WEBINAR DATA INTO THE WORKFLOW OF YOUR SALES TEAM

Another way you can help marketing leads to become sales-accepted leads is to **bring the insights gained through your webinars into the tools they use** — namely, the customer relationship management platform.

ON24's Prospect Engagement Profile can help here, as sales team members can see the actions and engagement points an individual takes during a webinar. This can help improve conversations by providing talking points based on what they have read or consumed.



ENCOURAGE WEBINARS AS AN ALWAYS-ON SALES ENABLEMENT TACTIC

All marketers want sales to have the tools they need so that they can do their jobs effectively. **Webinars act as a great sales enablement tool — both as a live session and one that is always-on, ready for viewing.**

For example, if the sales team is struggling with qualifying a lead because it has either gone cold or they are not getting a response, sales can invite them to attend a live webinar to ask questions, or refer them to a past webinar that they can watch on their own time. This can help to reignite engagement and conversation which can move the lead closer towards being sales-qualified.

ALIGN PROMOTION OF WEBINARS SPECIFICALLY FOR THE SALES STAGE

Consider creating webinars specifically for leads qualified by marketing, but have not yet progressed into opportunities. Typically these will be aligned further towards the end of the buyer journey, containing information to help them become engaged and interested in speaking to sales.

This could include doing customer webinars, where you invite brand advocates to discuss how your product or service has made them successful. Also, consider creating an on-demand demo webinar — Sage Intacct, for example, manages to drive 50% of their webinar pipeline purely from a daily demo webinar.

Use your marketing automation system to identify and target just those leads which have reached MQL status, but are yet to become SQLs.

MONITOR, TEST, IMPROVE

No matter what you are doing, be it amending your webinars to fill in the gaps for SALs and SQLs, creating webinars as a sales enablement tactic or creating webinars specifically for that stage of the buyer's journey, you need to always be monitoring, testing and optimizing over time. And don't forget to make sure marketing gets credit for opportunities in your CRM.

ON24 TIP

MAKE DATA FROM Q&A AND POLLS AVAILABLE TO SALES TO HELP WITH THEIR CONVERSATIONS

In an ideal world, your sales team will be present on your webinars to jump in on relevant questions and respond to the data your attendees are sharing. But that's not always feasible. To help them kickstart conversations and accept leads, bring that data into their workflow. For more information, check out ON24 Intelligence.

HOW CONTENT HUBS CAN ENCOURAGE ENGAGEMENT THROUGH CONTENT BINGEING

Throughout the past few sections, we've talked a lot about driving engagement and how it shouldn't stop just because marketing has handed over a lead. Equally, engagement shouldn't cease once sales closes a deal and customer success takes over. We want to keep buyers and customers, alike, engaged throughout their journey.

One way to keep engagement going is to have a place where buyers and customers can access content anytime they want. One way to do that is to create content hubs where anyone can access a veritable buffet of information as they see fit.

Demand generation portals such as [NetLine](#) are well-known for acting as one-stop-shops for a buyer's needs. But you should also create and optimize your own — and if you're an ON24 customer, [ON24's Engagement Hub](#) can help you create one. Read below to find out why and how.



WHY ARE CONTENT HUBS SO VALUABLE?

There are a whole host of reasons why content hubs are valuable to your customers, leads and your entire marketing team.

- **Content hubs provide an opportunity for continual engagement.** Whether your content hubs are used for early-stage marketing or existing customers, providing a hub allows your audience to access content whenever it wants in one location. And as you can continually update them, there are ample opportunities for optimization.

- **Content hubs allow buyers to educate themselves easily at their own pace.** Whether someone wants to learn everything as quickly as possible by consuming binge-worthy content, or if they prefer to ‘snack’ on content over time, having a single place allows them to engage content however it suits them without needing to search across multiple locations.
- **Content hubs can be personalized to fit your exact customer.** This can be particularly valuable if you’re engaged in account-based marketing or are targeting specific industries, roles or verticals.
- **Content hubs provide a resource for marketing, sales and customer success.** If anyone wants to send a lead or a customer to your website for further information, content hubs provide an easy and convenient resource.

WHAT IS CONTENT BINGEING AND WHY IS IT VALUABLE?

Netflix and other streaming services have made binge-watching, where viewers devour an entire TV series in one sitting, a common occurrence.

B2B marketers can encourage prospects and customers to consume content in a similar manner through content hubs. Presenting a lot of content of value in one place entices them to engage more than if they had simply been put in a

drip campaign or nurtured slowly over time. This webinar-bingeing approach offers the following benefits:

- **Bingeing allows for rapid learning.** Whether your prospect is trying to educate themselves on how to solve a problem, or a customer is learning how to use your product, bingeing allows that process to be accelerated.
- **Bingeing provides intent data.** The information collected as a user engages can be used by marketing, sales and customer success to help tailor their approach to that individual.
- **Bingeing helps to develop and strengthen relationships more quickly.** As people become more acquainted with your company and its offerings, conversations — and the conversions that follow — become easier.

HOW CAN CONTENT HUBS AND CONTENT BINGEING BE OPTIMIZED?

If you haven’t yet created a content hub, start off by creating key pages with compelling value propositions. Grab the viewer’s attention with titles and calls to action expressing how watching your webinars and downloading your content will help with a certain pain point or get them through a particular stage of their journey.

Once you have a baseline to optimize against, you can try to optimize the performance of your content hubs:

- **Test different content.** Explore both different themes and messages, and different types of content. You'll also want to embed and organize multimedia assets that will entice viewing video clips, signing up for webinars and downloading resources that viewers can engage with.
- **Create and test multiple content hubs.** See if different approaches work with different audiences, and use the lessons learned to improve your other hubs.
- **Use marketing automation to drive relevant visits.** Whether you're trying to push a prospect over the line to become qualified, or if you're trying to re-engage a customer that hasn't been seen in a while, invite them to check out your content hub. You can also use ad targeting to create a custom audience of people who haven't turned up recently and bring them back in.

NETLINE TIP

**REMEMBER THAT BUYING UNITS ARE
MADE UP OF A RANGE OF PEOPLE.
USE CONTENT TO ENGAGE THEM ALL.**

It's tempting to go straight for the most senior decision-maker when creating and promoting your content, but that only accounts for a fraction of the content consumed by your target accounts. 86% of all content consumption activity occurs below the C-Suite. To benchmark your own performance, download [NetLine's 2019 State of B2B Content Consumption and Demand Report for Marketers](#).